

### **Taken by Storm: The Troubled Science, Policy and Politics of Global Warming**

by Christopher Essex and Ross McKittrick. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2002.

In *Taken by Storm*, Christopher Essex and Ross McKittrick take on the current debate about climate change. They draw on an unusual set of ingredients: popular science, sociological speculation, a hard right political perspective, and even a little philosophy of life. Their book will comfort those of similar ideology. Other readers will find the book merely an extended effort at missing the point.

Essex and McKittrick have three objectives: to demonstrate that most peoples' ideas about climate change are wrong, to explain why so many have become so confused about this issue, and to outline the right way to make policy in cases of uncertainty. Their presentation emphasizes science, because, they argue, climate change is a scientific, not a political, question. Failure to realize this, they suggest, has led to emotion and fears displacing rational discussion.

The problem, they argue, is that rather than approaching the issue scientifically, most people instead believe a "doctrine" of climate change. According to this doctrine, climate change is happening now, it will have terrible effects, we must take strong action to prevent it, and any individual who disagrees is "bad." But according to Essex and McKittrick, every point of the doctrine is wrong. Climate change is not a threat. Our knowledge is too uncertain, and too full of ignorance to justify current fears — after all, the models used to predict climate can't even handle thunderstorms. In fact, all we can really know for sure is that climate change is not something to worry about; it might even be nice. Those with the courage to point this out are forced to recant or keep silent, just like Galileo (I am not kidding, these authors really do invoke him).

The heart of this book is a detailed but selective exposition of aspects of climate science. Their point

is that while discussions of climate should be grounded in science, instead the field is rife with scientific illiteracy and shoddy thinking. Thus, they suggest that the entire case for global warming hangs on concern about an increasing global temperature — a concept with no physical meaning. Discussions too often rely on incoherent clichés and misleading metaphors — most obviously, the "greenhouse effect" itself, which gives a distorted view of how the atmosphere actually works. Studies of the potential impact of climate change are not founded on reality, but on inherently unreliable models. There is room for doubt about climate change "facts," such as a rising sea level — it might even be dropping — and so on.

Shifting to the political sphere, Essex and McKittrick argue that even if climate change occurs, its costs will be small. Meeting the Kyoto Protocol, however, will be terribly expensive. There is no room for uncertainty on this point: environmental regulations are always bad news for the economy. Even if the protocol is implemented, at a cost of \$5 trillion (no source is given for this figure), it will have no effect on the global climate. Instead, the only sensible policy is further study, as well as efforts "to encourage freedom and prosperity around the world" (p. 295). In future, they urge, society could deal with complex science-based problems, like climate change, by forming two expert panels to debate both sides of the issue.

One hesitates to comment on these authors, given their one-size-fits-all reaction to those who disagree: all are simply dupes of the doctrine. But I cannot remember a book that combines so thoroughly tendentiousness with pretensions to objectivity. Readers will search in vain for reasoned discussion of climate policy, or even glimmers of awareness of the large literature in this field. There is no examination of the elementary concept of economic externalities, or "no regrets" climate policies, or the complexities of agricultural adjustment to climate change. The precautionary principle is dismissed, using only the hoariest of objections. Most crucially,

the book simply ignores the key policy debates about climate change, such as its economic costs and benefits. Instead, all arguments are bent in support of the well-worn conservative doctrine that environmental action is some kind of terrifying harbinger of collectivism. Among conservative commentators, Essex and McKittrick distinguish themselves only by the extreme nature of their views. What can one say about authors that view even a benign activity like planting trees as “crazy” (p. 284)?

There is a slapdash, careless quality to the book, evident in errors in fact (public concerns are described, incorrectly, as focused on change in the

“global temperature”); in analysis (absurd motives are attributed to both industry and environmentalists); in identification (for example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is consistently misidentified); even in basic arithmetic (e.g., p. 180). Overall, this book will be of limited use to the Canadian policy community, although parts are humorous, such as the authors’ confusion of scientific studies of climate change and Kevin Costner’s “Waterworld” movie.

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### **Pursuing Equal Opportunities: The Theory and Practice of Egalitarian Justice**

by Lesley A. Jacobs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 280.

*Pursuing Equal Opportunities* is a philosophical defence of much that liberal Canadians hold dear — universal health care, employment equity, equal opportunities after divorce — and some more controversial policies, such as workfare. Lesley Jacobs predicates his arguments on a belief in equality: “Pursuing equality is, for many of us, among the most noble and important endeavours of a modern government and society” (p. 3). What is new in his formulation is a “three-dimensional” model of equal opportunities as a regulative ideal, and the application of that theory to policy.

Jacobs’ first two dimensions of equal opportunities are familiar. Fair equality of opportunities requires a “level playing field” (p. 14) — people enter competitions at roughly the same starting position, that is, there is background fairness. The rules of the game do not favour any one player or any one group of players, that is, there is procedural fairness. The novelty in Jacobs’ approach is the notion of “stakes fairness,” that is, “winning or losing one competitive opportunity in civil society shouldn’t affect one’s prospects in a competition for another opportunity. For example, financial success shouldn’t translate into better educational prospects” (p. 43).

A major practical difficulty for any theory of equal opportunity is that real life is not a level playing field. Some of us are born tall, dark and handsome; others nasty, brutish and short. Jacobs suggests that “natural inequalities are ... a myth” (p. 53). Although there are biological differences between, say, men and women, these do not naturally create inequalities: “sex discrimination has its origins in society, not nature” (p. 55). It is possible that “with different social institutions and practices, the relevant social inequalities might not exist” (p. 61).

In the world we live in, there are inequalities, possibly socially constructed, but real nonetheless. Jacob’s solution to background unfairness is, as I understand it, that if the playing field is on an incline, the rules of the game should favour those who have to kick the ball uphill. Hence Jacobs favours addressing inequality through affirmative action. Women are paid less than men, he argues, because they carry a greater burden of domestic labour (p. 213). Pay equity and affirmative action, including “timetables and quotas for the hiring of women,” are a way of “compensating women for this disadvantage” (p. 216).

I find Jacobs’ argument here problematic. He uses the terms “affirmative action” and “employment equity” interchangeably (p. 207), and characterizes affirmative action programs as ones that allow race, ethnicity or gender to count as a “plus factor” in competitions (p. 116). This is an inaccurate representation of employment equity legislation in Canada, which focuses on identifying and removing barriers in recruitment, promotion, and so on. It seems to me that there are serious practical problems with a “plus factor” approach, which Jacobs does not address. One is determining how large the plus factor should be. A second is the perception that gender or minority status is enough of a plus to lead to the hiring and promotion of less qualified candidates, tainting the accomplishments of all successful minority members and women.

Fundamentally, it would seem to be more just to level the playing field and make the rules of the game fair, rather than compensating one form of unfairness with another. For example, policies can attempt to reduce the background unfairness created by women’s extra household responsibilities by encouraging men and women to share domestic work (such as Sweden’s non-transferable paternity leave) or making it easier for everyone to blend paid and unpaid work (such as allowing sick days to be used to care for a sick child or introducing statutory limits on the length of the work week).

Jacobs rejects such policy options because he argues that families are beyond equal opportunity regulation. Equal opportunities apply to competitions, and the family “is not a competitive forum” (p. 224). Yet, as Rawls argues, society in general is characterized by both cooperation and competition: “social cooperation makes possible a better life for all than any would have if each were to live solely by his own efforts. There is a conflict of interests since persons are not indifferent as to how the greater benefits produced by their collaboration are distributed” (1971, 4). Families, firms, and just about any other form of social organization is characterized by both cooperation and competition: a theory of justice needs to account for both. And a theory of justice that has nothing to say about families must be of limited interest to those concerned with gender inequality.

The limits to equality of opportunity are an important element of Jacobs’ theory, particularly his analysis of health care. Jacobs writes “I have argued ... that health care should not be allocated on a competitive basis. For this reason, health care is outside the regulative scope of all equal opportunities models; it involves non-competitive opportunities” (p. 200). I find this argument difficult to understand. Competition is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “The action of endeavouring to gain what another endeavours to gain at the same time.” This sounds a lot like trying to find a family doctor or get a hip replacement in many parts of Canada. One might wish that obtaining health care was not a competition, but wishing does not make it so.

*Pursuing Equal Opportunities* is a flawed analysis. Yet it contains much that is innovative and interesting. A chapter on merit, standardized tests, and higher education documents systematic racial differences on standardized test performances, and provides food for thought for anyone who has ever wondered about the fairness of using GRE (Graduate Record Exam) scores to make admission decisions. The idea of “stakes fairness” is original, even if it could have been more fully developed. It is unusual and a bit refreshing to read a philosophical, egalitarian defence of workfare, although I was disappointed that Jacobs did not mention what is, in my view, the greatest obstacle to implementing workfare: it costs more to provide someone with gainful employment and adequate childcare than to write a welfare check.

Reading *Pursuing Equal Opportunities* provides an opportunity to step back and think about the philosophy of justice underpinning Canada’s social policies. And although I did not agree with all of Lesley Jacobs’ answers, he raises serious, fundamental and challenging questions.

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**For a New Political Economy** by Bernard Lonergan. Vol. 21 *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*

edited by Philip McShane. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1998.

**Macroeconomic Dynamics: An Essay in Circulation Analysis** by Bernard Lonergan.

Vol. 15 *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* edited by Frederick G. Lawrence, Patrick H. Byrne and Charles C. Hefling, Jr. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1999.

Bernard Lonergan, a Canadian theologian and philosopher who studied and taught in Europe and North America, is best known for his major works, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1992) and *Method in Theology* (1972). Both books have been widely translated. His attention to economics was motivated first by the economic crisis of the 1930s and, later, by the structural changes and recessions of the 1970s and early 1980s and the revival of interest in business-cycle theory. Recently published in a collected works edition, Lonergan's economic writings address current concerns about corporate governance and the shape of economic and social policy.

These two volumes bring together essays that rethink the macrodynamic theory of growth and stabilization. They work from Keynes' views on employment and money, but focus strongly on production lags; they build on Schumpeter's theory of economic development, but include growth; and they propose behavioural constraints that go beyond profit maximization and depend on the phase of development.

Lonergan's essays develop the notion of a "pure" cycle as a dynamic counterpart of general equilibrium. The pure cycle links growth and cycles, echoing in part the work of Pasinetti (1999), the real business cycle model of Kydland and Prescott (1982), the cyclical growth tradition, and work in evolutionary economics (e.g., Erturk 2002; Hirooka

2003; Nelson and Winter 1982). Thus the pure cycle includes the stimulus of innovation in production that leads to productivity growth, as well as the growth needed to maintain employment as jobs are eliminated by that increase in productivity.

Crucial to Lonergan's pure-cycle mechanics is economic behaviour that has a social dimension. For Lonergan, although an economy building a new expansion does need to emphasize profit maximization, it is a rise in the standard of living of the whole society that must be its primary economic goal. He argues that a major expansion that develops new means of production necessarily precedes an increased output using the new means of production. This two-phased approach requires a variation in economic behavioural emphases in response to production dynamics.

Lonergan's understanding of production dynamics translates into the following guidelines to economic policy. First, the extraordinary profit of an expansion has a social purpose and should be invested broadly to maintain output and employment. Second, savings and investment are required for economic growth in the development stages, at which point a slogan of "thrift and enterprise" would be appropriate. Third, in the subsequent phase of mass production, when unit profit declines, slogans pertaining to "benevolence and enterprise" would apply. Income distribution should vary during the cycle so that unemployment does not result, and the benefits of the expansion can be broadly enjoyed. Thus income distribution would bear the costs of adjustment to the expansion, much as proposed in the work of F.H. Hahn (1972) and the classical economists.

Lonergan's early work on economics preceded the growth of the welfare state in Canada. But in his later writing he opposes welfare construed as a dole given by the "winners" to the "losers" as the economy grows. Consequently he criticizes income transfers that do not develop human capabilities, including productive capabilities, through education

and training broadly understood and through auxiliary facilities to support the capabilities of those with special needs (*Macroeconomic Dynamics*, p. 86).

Loneragan sees the need for both government and corporate bureaucracies that can respond to the initiatives of individuals and groups, thereby moving a society in worthwhile directions. “Without a large measure of community, human society and sovereign states cannot function. Without a constant renewal of community, the measure of community already enjoyed easily is squandered.” However, Lonergan acknowledges that civil institutions are needed to “train personnel, offer roles and set tasks within already understood and accepted styles and modes of cooperation” (1972, 361).

Loneragan contends that the role of political economy is to clarify for politicians and people in general how the economy works. He praises the “old political economists” as effective in influencing “nineteenth century development of commercial, industrial, financial, juridical and even political structure” by releasing “the spontaneity and the creativeness that reside not in red tape but in human beings.” He argues that the economists did this because “their whole doctrine could be synthesized in slogans of thrift, enterprise, *laissez-faire*, intelligent self-interest” (*For a New Political Economy*, p. 4). Lonergan recognizes the importance of the later development of economics in correcting the errors of the early political economists. But he argues that

the science has developed the “particular fields of statistics, history, and a more refined analysis of psychological motivation and the integration of decisions to exchange” instead of moving to a new level of generality — as was the case in the physical sciences.

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