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Mann, Michael E. & Toles, Tom - *The Madhouse Effect: How Climate Change Denial Is Threatening Our Planet, Destroying Our Politics, and Driving Us Crazy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2016, (pp.186). ISBN – 9780231177863

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Butler, Mark – *Climate Wars*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2017, (pp. 192). ISBN 9780522871685

For 25 years – as far back as the approach to the Rio Summit of 1992 – both the science of climate change, and attempts to respond to the threats arising from climate change, have been under attack. Climate science has run up against established industrial interests in the mining and energy sectors who have feared that their expensive infrastructure assets would become stranded and their stocks of hydrocarbons near worthless should their capacity to use the atmosphere as a free industrial sewer be removed. Equally, since fossil hydrocarbons were mainstays in transport as well as important components of fertilisers and pesticides, vast swathes of industry and manufacturing could believe they faced unimaginable upheaval and loss should the science of climate change be accepted. For ‘industry’, this made climate change science an existential threat – one order of magnitude larger than similarly contested scientific phenomena such as that arising from sulphur dioxide/acid rain, from the ozone layer deterioration associated with CFCs, and even the relationship between tobacco use and smoking. In this context, the two books under review approach the issue from very different perspectives – Mann from a macro (scientific, big picture) viewpoint and Butler from a micro (political insider’s) perspective.

Mann’s *The Madhouse Effect* is a highly accessible overview written substantively by arguably the best-known scientist in the field: along with Raymond Bradley and Malcolm Hughes, Mann authored the famous ‘hockey stick’ graph that illustrates the late 19th century uptick in the instrumental record and is accordingly the *bête noir* of climate contrarians everywhere. In a simply-worded 150-page discussion, Mann outlines the basics of scientific process – data gathering, modeling and peer review. He also covers the scope of the claims attending the IPCC-led consensus, the significance of the challenge to industrial societies, the various forms of science and policy denial and their aetiologies, their manifestation in politics and public policy, a critique of the integrity of denialist claims before finishing with a discussion of possible policy and community responses. *The Madhouse Effect* is heavily end-noted by chapter and contains a useful index. The book is therefore a kind of ‘dummies guide’ to the history of the challenges posed both to science and public policy in staunching climate change by the advocates of business-as-usual. The language and discussion is aimed at those who have perhaps heard the slogans and the spin but who want these explained in a coherent and plain-English account.

Published in late 2016 prior to the Trump presidential victory, the book unfortunately has nothing to say about post-Obama climate policy. Also absent are any graphs and tables, references to *Charney Forcing*, radiative energy budgets, albedo and much else of interest to those who have followed this area of policy with growing concern over the years since the Rio Summit. The inclusion of the Toles cartoons supports the attempt to keep the book light and non-threatening in an area that can be relied on to raise the cultural hackles of those on the populist right. From a marketing perspective therefore, the book is well-crafted for those inclined to reservations about ‘bureaucrats’ and ‘remote elites’ in ‘ivory towers’, or as Naomi Oreskes notes on the back cover, it’s for ‘Uncle Joe who doesn’t believe in climate change’. For those who have paid attention, however, its ‘lay’ register is disappointing. Then again, those paying attention probably wouldn’t expect detailed science in a book called *The Madhouse Effect* featuring a cartoonist.

Mark Butler’s *Climate Wars* doesn’t deal in climate science either beyond a nod to the IPCC-led consensus. Written by current Australian Labor Party’s (ALP/Labor) Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, the book is best seen as a *pamphlet* outlining the virtues of the ALP response in this policy area and the Labor perspective of the policy response shortcomings of the current Liberal-National Party (LNP) Coalition government. In the course of nine chapters and 165 pages, Butler describes the topography of climate policy in Australia since 2007, recalling the relatively brief period of bipartisan consensus on ‘carbon pricing’ prior to 2009, and lamenting its passing. He then turns to a more detailed articulation of the elements of ALP policy – Labor’s ‘Clean Power Plan’. This is followed by a discussion of some of the priority target areas for de-carbonisation – manufacturing, land management and transport. Butler then provides a sketch of what he sees as a ‘just transition’ – a social progressive approach that essentially seeks to prevent hardship in areas where de-carbonisation is likely to force job losses and to cap the effects of a swinging carbon price on those on low incomes.

With some reservations, *Climate Wars* is a fair account of the difficulties in attempting to craft de-carbonisation policy in an atmosphere of partisan animus – a notable characteristic of a policy area that has become totemic of the divide in Australia between left and right. Butler correctly notes the constraints imposed on the current Turnbull LNP government arising from the presence in their ranks of climate deniers connected to Tony Abbott, the most recently deposed prime minister. Although Butler doesn’t address the matter directly, a party that is the product of an alliance of convenience between right-wing populists and hardened neo-liberals is going to find almost any area of policy hard to craft, and this one especially so. As Butler correctly notes, Tony Abbott, now the notional challenger to regain the government’s top job, has since 2007 occupied every possible position on climate change and policy permitted in mainstream politics.

It is in *Climate Wars*' purpose as a pamphlet that its flaws appear. Butler passes rather selectively over the ALP's role in the period immediately following the release of the 2009 Labor-commissioned *Garnaut Report* (26-30). Neither the report nor its author, Kevin Rudd's policy advisor Professor Ross Garnaut, is even mentioned. This is the period in which it was Abbott's position that the LNP, fearing a double dissolution on climate policy at a time when the then Rudd-led ALP had a massive lead in the polls, should simply 'roll over' and give the ALP what it wanted. This detail is omitted as is the remark by then climate minister, Penny Wong, referring to the *Garnaut Report* as 'input' – a remark that triggered the subsequent push-back by right-wing members of the LNP.

Further, Butler's account omits discussion of the tedious and protracted negotiations between the ALP and LNP representative Ian MacFarlane, designed one may conclude to exacerbate tensions within the opposition and undermine then-leader Malcolm Turnbull who had famously proclaimed his disinclination to lead a part less committed to de-carbonisation than he was. Instead, Butler shifts quickly forward to the outcome of this negotiation – the removal of Turnbull as leader in November 2009 (just prior to the pivotal Copenhagen Climate Conference), the repudiation of the 2007 LNP Howard-Shergold policy and the subsequent defeat of Labor's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) in the Senate.

Butler then turns his vitriol on Labor's left-of-centre rivals, The Greens, for voting with the LNP to defeat the CPRS, arguing that had it passed, 'an Emissions Trading Scheme would likely have been operating for some years before Abbott was likely to become prime minister' (28). With hindsight, this seems an extravagant claim. The CPRS was not due to start until July 2010 – the month before the election which resulted in a minority ALP Gillard-led government whose subsequent 2011 'Clean Energy Futures' legislation was abolished after the 2013 election of the Abbott-led LNP coalition. Butler chides The Greens for not recognising 'their mistake' while neglecting to admit the ALP's strategic error in preferring political game playing over addressing what Kevin Rudd had famously called 'the greatest moral, economic and social challenge of our time'. He further describes the decision to put the policy 'on ice' as 'political drift' before acknowledging the serious political damage this decision inflicted on both Kevin Rudd personally, and the ALP government more broadly.

It's at this point worth noting that Butler, a long time Caucus ally of Kevin Rudd, manages to get to the August 2010 election with only a passing reference to the controversial ousting of Rudd as prime minister in June 2010. Butler also passes lightly over the ALP's decision to assist the subsequent LNP government in cutting the Renewable Energy Target (RET) and neglects to mention the decision to allow the burning of woodchips to be deemed 'renewable' (37-38). Equally absent is any mention of struggles to resist coal seam gas – a contentious issue that has both driven a wedge within the LNP coalition but also troubles sections of the ALP. Additionally, Butler fails to mention the struggle against the development of the Carmichael coal project in the Queensland Galilee Basin (which the Queensland Labor government formally supports). These omissions almost certainly reflect his desire not to enter political terrain in which the ALP is at best ambivalent. For those aware of the history of this period, Butler's account presents as selective and self-serving, and underscores the book as first and foremost, an ALP document rather than one of a dispassionate observer.

Finally, and unsurprisingly given its purpose and the speed of its publication, *Climate Wars* is not footnoted and contains only a cursory index and a 'further reading' list – something which further reduces Wong's description of 'Garnaut' as 'input' to utter irrelevance. Tellingly, the only endorser on the book is Greg Combet who, as former Gillard government climate minister, was party to the trainwreck that Labor and the LNP have authored in climate policy. Butler's account is a reasonably useful primary resource for anyone wanting to get across the ALP's perspective on climate policy but with all of the caveats one expects. Much wider reading would be needed for anyone wishing to understand the options and constraints in this area of policy in Australia.

About the reviewers

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