

Here is something I didn't know: that in the 1950s the tobacco companies first used the technique of 'muddying the waters' to keep people smoking. A paper was produced where the scientists painted mice with cigarette tar, and all the mice got cancer. The cigarette companies responded with 'Yes, we know that the mice got cancer, but cancer is caused by many things, and you can never tell which of these factors causes any one individual cancer.' And on it went. Those people who were addicted to smoking found enough reason to keep on smoking. The cigarette companies produced their own 'scientists' (who were not cancer specialists) to say that they thought that smoking was 'OK'. So the cigarette companies could say 'Scientists say that cigarette smoking is OK'.

These same methods are still used. In the recent debate about the 'plain paper' packaging of cigarettes, there is an organisation which purports to be a group of small shopkeepers who claim that their business will be harmed. This is a front organisation for the cigarette companies.

It has been so successful that the coal companies and other fossil fuel burning companies, whose interests are opposed to the development of renewable energy sources, employs the same tactic of getting 'scientists' to muddy the waters about climate change. Ross Gittins wrote in 'The Age' (Monday 23rd May) that the latest report which has been prepared for the government by the Climate Change Commission says four things: The evidence is clear. Things *are* getting warmer. Sea levels *are* rising; the social and environmental effects of changing climate *are* already here; the changes are caused by us; and last, we have ten

years to make a difference.

Then out come the 'deniers' and muddy the waters, so that we can keep on being dependant on coal. We are kept ignorant of the moves in Europe and Britain and China to reduce carbon emissions. They do not tell us about the Australian renewable energy companies who have moved to Germany (with their jobs) because of the subsidies they get from the German carbon tax!

Like those addicted to cigarettes, we cling to any shred of evidence that will allow us to justify our addiction.

Ross Gittins finishes his piece with the telling words 'The one thing humans are meant to care about is the survival of their young. Yet people with the highest standard of living in history are whingeing that they couldn't pay a bit more for their electricity.'

Christians are uniquely placed to see through the clouds of 'bull dust' purposely spread by vested interests.

This is because we have a long history of being aware that we fight 'not against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities and spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places' (Ephesians 6:12). Christians know that evil is a reality and that there *are* forces which operate in the background. These 'powers and principalities' represent human ways of being which are not under God's reign of truth and love. We all have parts of ourselves which are like this, and at the collective level of human action, there are ideas and ways of being that are opposed to God too. Christians are called to be 'children of the light,' so that we are committed to truth. I think that it is time to name and shame these 'powers' who make it more difficult for ordi-

nary people to get at the truth by deliberately confusing matters, not for our benefit, but for their own interests.

This Sunday, we will hear about the Spirit (Advocate) as the 'Spirit of Truth'. That is what we need.

But there is a second reason why Christians should get on board the move to both reduce carbon emissions, and look for sustainable ways of producing energy. First is the question of justice. When I look at the palace at Versailles, and see the opulence in which a few French people lived, and the number of poor people it took to keep them there, I think it is no wonder that there was a revolution. We in the West are living in the equivalent of the 'worlds Palace of Versailles' while the majority of the worlds population is supporting us. Justice and self interest coincide to make sure that it is not the poor who suffer the most from climate change.

Second, the role of humans on the earth is to be stewards of something that does not belong to us. The Common Testament is full of laws about how people did not own their land, but held it in trust for God. When people sold land, they were in effect selling its 'earning potential' for a number of years before it had to be returned to its original owner.

The early system of agriculture in Europe is designed on the basis of leaving some of the land fallow, so that it could renew itself.

We have forgotten how to think about the long term consequences of our actions, so that we become addicted to ways of living (like our dependance of fossil fuel) which are, with our knowledge now, making it more difficult for the world to regen-

erate.

We are being 'bad stewards'. As such we will be called to account, not only by God at the judgement, but the earth itself will set limits for us.

This is the meaning of 'the fall'. It is human nature to push the limits. It will be possible to continue being human after the worst effects of climate change have come upon us. But we will know that it is because of our refusal to be humble before God, and recognise our responsibility to keep the earth, not just for future generations, but for God, whose it is.

This makes me very scared, because I am implicated too in the world that does not respect the limits set for us. I drive a car, I fly in planes, I use electricity generated by coal, I throw 'away' things that go to landfill and waste about as much as anyone else. Everyone is implicated in the collective responsibility of the human race.

There are some small things I do to try to keep my responsibility of the planet going. Writing about 'waking up to the Truth' is one of them.

Your 'Companion on The Way' and Priest



Paul Dalzell.

