Senator Kim Carr
62 Lygon Street
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Australia

Email: senator.carr@aph.gov.au

24/11/2009

Dear Senator Carr,

I am writing as the member of the New Political Economy editorial board responsible for the special issue on climate change to which Dr Clive Spash is a contributor. I approached Dr Spash to consider submitting a paper on the basis of my knowledge of his work on climate change which includes his major book on the subject Greenhouse Economics: Value and Ethics (London: Routledge, 2002) and his important recent journal contributions to the debates following the publication of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change. The paper he submitted, ‘The Brave New World of Carbon Trading’, was accepted for publication having been subject to the journal’s rigorous international peer-reviewing procedures.

The editorial board was therefore very surprised to receive a letter from the CSIRO on July 22nd attempting to block the journal’s publication of the paper. However, we were subsequently informed that the matter was a subject of internal discussions within the CSIRO. We also welcomed your public statement on the matter:
"transparent public debate, unfettered by political interference but subject to peer review, is something I have advocated for my entire public life". We were then pleased to read the report in Nature, November 13th, from a spokesman for the Chief Executive of the CSIRO Megan Clark stating that there had been agreement to endorse publication subject to ‘minor but important changes’.

However, when Dr Spash sent us a copy of the suggested changes to the paper, it became clear that the CSIRO is asking not for minor but for major changes in the central arguments of the paper. This is clearly unacceptable to the author. I should add that is also unacceptable to me as the editor of the special issue. It involves interference in our own peer-reviewing procedures that would be incompatible with academic integrity of the journal. We understand that on the 16th November Dr Spash was given an ultimatum to accept all the changes or the CSIRO would again block publication.
The original paper argued that, contrary to the predictions of many standard economic models, emissions trading schemes will not solve and potentially could exacerbate the problem of human induced climate change. The version as re-written by the CEO of the CSIRO and her staff wants him to argue for a weaker position, that any problems with emissions trading are a matter of design, suggesting that a well-designed emissions trading scheme would be an adequate policy response.

The differences between those who think the problems with ETS are just problems of design and those who think they are more fundamentally flawed are matters of reasonable academic disagreement. When I put the special issue together I approached people I knew had different views on the question of the ethics and effectiveness of emissions trading. At present the special issue has another paper presenting the view that problems in emissions trading can be resolved by better design. Dr Clive Spash's original paper takes a more critical view. When I approached potential authors I did so in part to provide a platform for debate between these different perspectives. This is how proper academic and indeed wider public debate on these important issues should be conducted.

If the CEO of the CSIRO wants to argue for a different position to that of Dr Clive Spash she can do so by publicly replying to the paper and presenting arguments for the contrary position. The journal would consider any such submission for publication, subject to the normal procedures of blind peer review. What is clearly improper is for her to use her position to insist on changes to the paper which alter its conclusions prior to publication. No international journal would accept a paper under those circumstances. Neither would or should any academic scientist be expected to agree to such alterations to his or her work. From your own public statements on this subject I am sure that you would agree.

For this reason, on behalf of the editors of *New Political Economy*, I am writing to ask you to contact the CEO of CSIRO with the request that she agree to the publication of the paper in the original form in which it was accepted for publication after peer review. We will look forward to hearing your response.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

John O'Neill
Professor of Political Economy