

Senator MILNE (Tasmania) (5.24 pm)—
I am afraid I have to quote Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*: ‘A plague on both your houses.’ The fact of the matter is that the CSIRO is nothing like the research organisation that it used to be. It has been cowed by successive federal governments, with the Howard government being an absolute champion at turning the organisation into one too afraid to say anything about climate change because of the attitude of the Howard government. It has continued under the Rudd government.

It is a disgrace, and I have to say that I totally agree with what Graeme Pearman had to say about the CSIRO’s censorship under the Howard government. Why would I be surprised when the then management at CSIRO, Dr Garrett, employed Donna Staunton, a tobacco industry lobbyist, to be the Communications Officer for the CSIRO? This is a person who had told the Senate Community Affairs References Committee:

I do not think smoking is addictive on any reasonable definition ... If it means that tobacco smokers would become physically dependent, like heroin users, then tobacco smokers are not addicted.

That is the person who went ahead and was appointed by Dr Geoff Garrett to be the head of communications, and she has been on the board of the right-wing think tank the Institute of Public Affairs, which also defended smoking and opposed the Kyoto Protocol. She was also on the board of the Global Foundation, which recruited the CSIRO as a member and Dr Garrett as its representative. So let us get real here about the extent to which, over the last decade if not 15 years, the CSIRO has become a shadow of its former self. It has now become an organisation in which management manages the science. There is not fearless recognition of the sci-

ence. Science is managed out of that organisation, and this most recent example with Dr Spash is absolutely classic.

So let us not hear from the coalition that they are suddenly outraged by censorship of the CSIRO. It was made perfectly clear to the CSIRO over all those last 15 years that it had better self-censor, and that is why the organisation is unable to debate the merits of government policy, and the merits of government policy have become enshrined in the charter that Minister Carr has now given the CSIRO, such that the CSIRO scientists know that managers interpret the charter so narrowly that it is practically impossible to publish anything critical of the government.

The problem for the government here is that climate change and the financial mechanisms that one might apply to reducing greenhouse gas emissions are a matter of public interest, and a huge amount of science is being done around the world on issues of reducing emissions, talking about what the science demands and talking about how to actually achieve it. The issue here before us today is that Dr Clive Spash presented a paper, 'The brave new world of carbon trading', at the Australia New Zealand Society for Ecological Economics in Darwin, Australia. At the time he said that the full written version of his paper was accepted for publication by the journal *New Political Economy* after being internationally peer reviewed. So tick that: it had been peer reviewed. But a letter was sent by the CSIRO management to the editor of *New Political Economy* demanding that it not be published. I quote Dr Spash:

The CSIRO is currently maintaining they have the right to ban the written version of this paper from publication by myself as a representative of the organisation and by myself as a private citizen.

So he cannot publish either as part of the CSIRO or as a private citizen. It has been

contested since June 2009 and is now awaiting a response from the CEO. So from June this scientist has been harassed by the management and told he cannot publish his work because it is on emissions trading.

Emissions trading is something on which there are hundreds of papers written from one end of the planet to the other. Carbon trading is a mega-issue, a multibillion-dollar affair these days. People are looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the ETS in the European Union and at what is happening in the US. We are looking at the Australian scheme. But the CSIRO cannot publish on it in case that is interpreted to be a criticism of the government's ETS. So this is censorship by the CSIRO.

What is interesting is that the CEO, Dr Megan Clark, said that she wanted only tiny changes, but Dr Spash has since come out and said that the demand was that he cut out 11 per cent of the text of his paper, delete half the conclusions and change the meaning of some passages. Well, that is not tiny changes; that is censorship of Dr Spash's paper. Science minister Kim Carr has said himself that he does not approve of that, that he thinks that peer reviewed science ought to be published, even if it is critical of government policy. But the weasel words here are all around the charter. The CEO, Dr Clark, is interpreting the charter narrowly so that anything CSIRO does that could be interpreted as being critical of the government has to be changed. Thank goodness we have got some scientists with integrity who are saying, 'No, you will not change half my conclusions. No, you will not rewrite it to make it mean what you want it to mean. Either you publish it as it is written and peer reviewed or you don't publish it but admit to the fact that you are trying to fiddle the conclusions to fit with government policy,' and that is not because Dr Clark would have one particular view or another. But she has got one eye on the char-

ter that Minister Carr has given them and they know the bounds in which they can work. It was just like the situation with Dr Martin Schaaper. He was driven out of the organisation under Dr Geoff Garrett because he knew full well that in the CSIRO there was no political support for natural agricultural systems, which is the area he was working in, and he was driven out because there was a particular focus on genetic modification and different kinds of agricultural research being supported by the agricultural chemical companies in particular. I am glad to say that Dr Schaaper is doing a fantastic job in rural communities around Australia and his work is still very much appreciated on the ground. He was driven out of that organisation, as several other scientists have been.

What I did here in the Senate was to ask this minister, who said he believes that peer reviewed science should be published—even if it is critical of government policy—to table the unadulterated version of Dr Spash's work. He is now saying he will defy the Senate and not do that. That is why I have today put in a return to order for that document, because I will bet anything that it is simply, as with Dr Spash's presentation at the conference, a critique of emissions trading, outlining why emissions trading is not necessarily the most efficient and cost-effective way of reducing emissions. It is an analysis of the economics of this particular process. In the paper that he presented, *The brave new world of carbon trading*, he makes it clear that 'mainstream economics currently provides an inadequate account of institutions, theory of the firm, political economy, human behaviour, ethical pluralism and non-efficiency goals'. He says that efficiency claims cannot be substantiated and appear unjustified. He is talking about emissions trading and pointing out the problems with it as a mechanism. He is comparing it around

the world and comparing it with regulatory instruments but he is saying that they are not neutral either, politically or identically, but that they play to specific groups within society. He is calling for a much more open debate of many of the problems associated with emissions trading. That is the role of scientists—to give us their view on what the situation is as far as the science is concerned and as far as the economics is concerned, and to give us their critique. That is what this community deserves to have, not a charter that tells the CSIRO that it cannot bring out any paper which debates the merits of government policy. Government policy in responding to climate change is going to be totally inadequate in virtually any developed economy around the world, so any scientist is going to be bringing out a paper which would immediately be seen to be critical of governments, because ipso facto it would be because they are so inadequate.

I want to say here that it is time the community understood that the CSIRO is not free to publish, that it has got a managerial ethos which puts absolute pressure on its scientists to self-censor if they want to get on, if they want to maintain research grants, if they want to have promotion. (*Time expired*)