

August 4, 2013 10:45 pm

Going to the moon was easy by comparison

From Prof Roger Pielke, Jr.

Sir, David King and Richard Layard (“We need a new Apollo mission to harness the sun’s power,” Comment, August 2) call for new spending on solar energy technology of the magnitude that was spent on the Apollo moon missions in the 1960s and 1970s: “To match the spending on the Apollo project would require only 0.05 per cent of each year’s gross domestic product for 10 years from each G20 country.”

Over the next 10 years, assuming an aggregate 4 per cent gross domestic product growth rate across the G20, this new spending would equate to more than \$430bn. However, in 2013 dollars the Apollo moon mission cost a relatively paltry \$130bn. What they are really calling for is spend more than three times the cost of the Apollo missions.

The problem with Apollo analogies is that going to the moon was easy in comparison to the challenge of doubling or tripling global energy supply, while at the same time all but eliminating carbon dioxide emissions. Sir David and Lord Layard are in the ballpark on the scale of investment that is needed. They just have their analogy wrong.

Roger Pielke, Jr, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, US

Most Popular on Social Networks

State of emergency declared as forces storm Cairo protest camps

Two traders charged over London whale case

London's ban for spy bins highlights lure of big data to business

Technology: Vanity or visionary?

Predicting the weather is not like spotting a bank crisis

A primer in how corruption works

Always look on the bright side of life

Tesla founder reveals Hyperloop amid hoopla

Bernanke's grilling is an entanglement to be avoided

BlackBerry to explore strategic alternatives

City of London orders Renew to stop recording smartphone data

US acquirers cut taxes by relocating to Europe after mergers

Blame bank regulation for Britain's stagnation

That difficult conversation

Labour's problem is its lack of political artistry

Steinway receives \$38 a share offer, topping Kohlberg bid