

Jeremy Leggett: *The Carbon War: Global Warming and the End of the Oil Era*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

In *The Carbon War: Global Warming and the End of the Oil Era*, Jeremy Leggett guides readers through the *realpolitik* of international global warming policy negotiations. He traverses surface-level views of climate talks, and delves into the often hermetically concealed climate controlled corridors of power and influence. Through this exploration, Leggett investigates the cumulative impacts of key players' tactical maneuvering, and exposes certain covert and conspiratorial undertakings.

Leggett relates his experiences primarily in journal entry form, beginning in 1989 (when he became director of Greenpeace's Climate Campaign) through the 1997 Kyoto Protocol negotiations. This narrative blends personal ponderings with international events.

In the prologue, Leggett describes his training as a geologist, and his 10-year teaching position at an industry-cozy university. There, he was "dedicated to training young people...to go forth and find fossil fuels, to add carbon as heat-trapping carbon dioxide and methane to the atmosphere" (p. x). Over time, Leggett became more aware of evidence that his work was contributing to mounting climate dangers. In 1988, a series of key events shook his commitment to oil exploration and extraction. New scientific and anecdotal evidence of global warming surfaced, NASA scientist James Hansen testified to U.S. Congress about the dangers of the oil era, and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher voiced concern over global warming. This prompted Leggett to break with his past exploits, and begin work with Greenpeace.

Key themes emerge in this book. First, Leggett carefully disaggregates and details corporate capitalist interests and stratagem. Particular attention is paid to the activities of the "carbon club," a powerful element in the business community comprised of fossil-fuel industry interests, lobbyists and spokesmen. Leggett outlines the malign intent of vested carbon club representatives who influence the policy process with skeptical global warming stances. One example of such a carbon club character is Don Pearlman, former Under-Secretary in the Department of the Interior for President Ronald Reagan, head of industry group Global Climate Coalition in 1990, and continued close associate of OPEC countries lobbying against emissions reductions.

Leggett analyzes splinters that begin to appear within the wider business community over time regarding methods for approaching

increased evidence of global warming. The author sees this emerging industry fragmentation as an intriguing and promising vehicle for spurring market changes. Therefore, beginning at the 1992 Rio Conference, Leggett embarks upon the challenge to convince financial services, banking, and lending institutions that it is in their interest to take action to reduce global warming impacts. In *The Carbon War*, his work culminates at the 1996 Oxford Solar Investment Summit (which he organized).

A second theme permeating Leggett's decade-long narrative is his concern for the risks caused by the release of methane hydrate reservoirs into the atmosphere. Methane hydrates are pressurized forms of methane that form and reside under permafrost in the Arctic Ocean. Global warming risks releasing these pools of methane into the atmosphere, and in quantities far surpassing current methane emissions. The US Geological Survey estimates that approximately 10,000 billion tons of carbon exists in methane hydrates globally, making it one of the biggest reservoirs of the carbon cycle.

A final key theme Leggett highlights is that many experts mistakenly focus attention on recoverable oil beneath the surface of the earth while overlooking carbon saturation in the atmosphere. As oil extraction continues, concatenate atmospheric deposition of carbon may amplify positive feedbacks in the earth's spheres and force a "runaway greenhouse effect." Leggett emphasizes that "burning just a few percent of this buried fossil fuel would amount to a flirtation with ecological catastrophe" (p. 59). Along these lines, Leggett also cautions that characterizations of natural gas extraction and consumption as a more sustainable energy path are harmful. He stresses that natural gas is a false environmental savior, and, in addition to problems of leakage during extraction, "stabilizing atmospheric greenhouse-gas concentrations required deep cuts in emissions from all fossil fuels." Leggett continues, "We had to get to a solar future running on renewable energy sources and energy efficiency as soon as possible, and right now the expanding gas industry was busy setting itself up to make things worse, not better. It was taking money away from renewables and efficiency" (pp. 125-126).

Overall, this book effectively provides the reader with a clear panorama of the global warming policy landscape. Leggett carefully surveys the plans of various strategic alliances, from foot-dragging collusion of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to urgent pleas of leaders from the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). He also details the United States government's wide

chasm between rhetoric and action in global warming policy. This tenuous position — from the nation first in greenhouse gas emissions — is illustrated by Albert Gore's poor showing in the 1997 Kyoto Conference, and the failure of his actions to meet the rhetoric in his book, *Earth in the Balance*. In sum, through Leggett's unique insider's angle, readers are awarded backstage passes into a fascinating forum of high-level negotiations with global implications.

However, Dr. Leggett could have better situated global climate negotiations within the flurry of travels and numerous conferences. The reader would have benefited from a clearer explanation of the purpose and agenda of each conference to provide a better context for his narratives. Also, at various points in *The Carbon War*, Leggett refers to the mainstream media's role as an active agent in the environmental and political processes. Leggett accurately hints at media bias in its coverage of global warming issues through the extraordinary media access given to the greenhouse skeptics in the carbon club. But, more systematic attention to the impacts of this bias — portrayed as journalistic balance in the media — would have further improved the book.

The Carbon War concludes with Leggett's central messages clearly stated: the hydrocarbon century is over, and we must now look to diminish oil consumption at once. Also, absence of certainty should not be interpreted as the absence of risk. And, in reality, amid the requisite "decarbonization," incremental steps warrant cautious enthusiasm and optimism. However, Leggett's final question in the book still burns: "will (necessary and adequate change) come in time?" (p. 332) — **Max Boykoff**

Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke: *Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water*. New York: The New Press, 2002.

Blue Gold by Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke is a primer on water in peril. According to the authors, "humanity is depleting, diverting, and polluting the planet's fresh water resources so quickly and relentlessly that every species on earth — including our own — is in mortal danger" (p. 5). *Blue Gold* is a cogent, far-reaching synthesis that draws from a wide range of sources, from scholarly journals to business journals, from working papers to newspapers, from Public Service International publications to UN reports, from the books of Sandra