

## LACK OF CONSENSUS - INTRODUCTION

Nothing epitomises the irrationality of the global warming debate as the success of the Greens' use of "consensus" as an argument. In any rational debate this would be swiftly recognised as one of the oldest fallacious arguments and be quickly dismissed. Sceptics are disappointed that it appears to carry so much weight with so many people. To add salt to the wound, this consensus has been fabricated. Even if everyone did agree, it is not a logical argument to use. Instead of being dismissed quickly, the sceptics find themselves showing that there is no consensus and, in so doing, apparently giving ill-deserved support to this fallacious argument.

This introduction to this section, will look at this fallacious argument itself, then look at the trouble that can be caused by those who accept such arguments, before looking at how such an argument undermines the methodology of science if used in this field. The rest of the Handouts in the section will unnecessarily show that there is no consensus in both the general and scientific community, so those who argue illogically may be shown that even the basis of their illogical argument is not factual.

### A FALLACIOUS ARGUMENT

In any debate you will come across people using irrational thinking or fallacious arguments. Many of the common fallacious arguments were first identified in ancient Greece and survived the Middle Ages. Enlightenment scholars knew them well, as do we all, if not by name<sup>1</sup>. In the global warming debate, the Greens' information machine does not hesitate to use illogical or fallacious arguments. Consequently, you will find many Green followers repeating such arguments. One such fallacious argument is appealing to "consensus" or more formally "Argumentum ad Populum".

#### **Argumentum ad Populum: popular consensus**

This is an argument that appeals to the people; that is to the emotions of others. The argument implies that if enough people feel strongly enough that something is true, it must be so. You will note that the content of the debate is not considered, or defended, only that there are a lot of people who feel strongly that something is true, therefore it must be true. This fallacy should not to be confused with merely expressing how one feels about the facts, the fallacy occurs when such feelings take the place of, or alter the facts.

For example, the Greens regularly avoid debating the global warming issue and will declare that they are right because "everyone agrees with them". They will then follow up by unilaterally declaring the debate is over because of this "self-

evident truth". You should note that at no time is the issue discussed, let alone debated! They also fail to accept the debate has hardly started let alone run its course. Their fallacious argument is used to shut down debate.

What they also fail to acknowledge is that this "consensus" is an assertion - they may have a majority of people who might agree with their views, but there is a very large minority who disagree. A similar argument is used when the Greens unilaterally declare that all the scientists agree. This is the same fallacious argument, but one that can be criticised on other grounds as we will see later.

## **A POST MODERNIST VIEW**

Post Modernism is a philosophy originating from the work of a French philosopher by the name of Foucault. By using several fallacious arguments in their philosophy, as a by-product, they have enshrined the concept of consensus. One of the tenants of this philosophy is that they do not believe in "objective facts" as understood by most people. They define a 'fact' as any agreed view that is held by a group of people<sup>2</sup>.

So if post modernists were looking at the date that Captain Cook landed in Australia, they would find no difficulty in having three dates identified, that were agreed by three different groups of post modernists. Each of the three "facts" would be treated as equally valid. To then take this madness a little further, the post modernists would argue that even over a short time and in a different political context, all three dates could be changed as the views of the three groups changed. Talk about consensus rules! Imagine how such a view of the world could damage work in our legal, business, or scientific professions.

### **Petitio Principii, or begging-the-question by arbitrary definition**

They also employ the fallacious argument of Petitio Principii to support such a claim by redefining the word 'fact' in such a way that a Post Modernist's 'fact' will always be right. Unfortunately, they retain the word 'fact' and do not necessarily explain to non-post modernists that when using the word 'fact' their meaning is very different to the common meaning.

This fallacious argument arbitrarily defines a term in such a way that it assumes the validity of the proposition under consideration. For example, when the Greens redefined the term global warming to mean any global warming caused by Man, they then could quite correctly, although illogically, declare that "One hundred per cent of global warming is caused by Man".

However, unless the Greens declare that they are born again post modernists redefining a "fact", sceptics will continue to highlight the fallacious argument of "consensus" whenever it is used.

## A SCIENTIFIC VIEW

*“No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can prove me wrong.”*

**Albert Einstein**

The idea of a scientific consensus is a complete repudiation of the scientific methodology that has been used for hundreds of years. For those who have never studied science a quick explanation of this methodology is needed.

Scientists very carefully document their scientific hypothesis and any of their experiments that support their hypothesis, in the hope that other scientist might:

- Critically review their work,
- Replicate their work, and finally
- Attempt to falsify their hypothesis.

For example, a scientist might have studied swans that lived in a pond near his house, noticed that they were all white, and proposed a hypothesis that stated “All swans are white.” After reviewing his pond, swans, and his work, other scientists might have gone home and replicated his work and found that all the swans in their ponds were also white.

As Albert Einstein states above, science cannot be “proved” but it can be “disproved”. As other scientists try to falsify the first scientist’s hypothesis, they might find millions of white swans all over the world. This strengthens the hypothesis but proves nothing. Finally, a scientist arrives in Western Australia and finds one black swan. The initial hypothesis has been falsified (i.e. disproved) and it is now ‘dead in the water’. The scientific community now has to either abandoned the theory or modify the hypothesis by saying “All swans are either white or black”

The discovery of the black swan is what is called a “black swan event”. There have been multiple “black swan events” with the Global Warming theory as interpreted by the Greens, and so far they have neither modified the theory, nor abandoned it. They have put their heads in the sand and ignored these events. To avoid the obvious failure of their theory they resort to the fallacious argument that all scientists agree so it must be right – rather than defending the science. The progress of science is not a democratic path that is decided by numbers of supporters. It only takes one “black swan event” to falsify a scientific theory.

## A CONSENSUS OF WHAT?

This fallacious argument is used to stop debate. There is a consensus, therefore anything I say is right. Greens using this argument rarely clearly specify what the consensus is about. For example, is there a consensus that there has

been slight warming in the last 150 years? Yes. Is there consensus that the 0.7°C rise in that time caused climatic Armageddon? No. Is there consensus that warming will occur as you come out of the Little Ice Age? Yes. Is there consensus that this warming is abnormal? No. Is there consensus that sea levels might rise in the next hundred years? Yes. Is there consensus that in the next 100 years sea levels might rise the same amount in the last 150 years? Yes. Is there consensus that this will cause Sea Level Armageddon? No. Is there consensus that temperatures in the Medieval Warm Period were higher than the predicted future temperatures, yet man adapted and survived? Yes. Is there consensus that temperatures in the future will cause climatic Armageddon? No.

The list goes on yet, when talking to a Green, the words “scientific consensus” is used as a full stop to any debate, rather than being attached to some informative phrase that explains what the consensus, or lack thereof, is about.

## CONCLUSION

The use of “consensus” in a debate should be rejected on the grounds that it is a fallacious argument. Unfortunately, this rarely happens.

In the global warming debate the “consensus” argument can be rejected on two grounds. First, and most important, it is a fallacious argument. Second, there is no consensus. There is an assertion of a “consensus”, with Greens asserting that all agree and, then when pressed, they add there are only a few crazy people who disagree. However, it takes little effort to discover that there is a significant minority in the general population that question man made catastrophic global warming, and tens of thousands of scientists world-wide that disagree. The remaining Handouts in this section detail this false “consensus”.

### Notes:

1. A list, and an explanation of such fallacious arguments can be found in most texts about logic such as *Introduction to Logic* by Leonard Peikoff.
2. I have yet to find a post-modernist who will define a ‘group’. Without such a definition, a post modernist’s ‘fact’ could be manufactured by as little as two people.