

18 October 2016

Dear member

I'm delighted to let you know that Clive James AO, CBE will be contributing a chapter to *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* which will be published by the Institute of Public Affairs.

To make a tax-deductible donation to support the publication of *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* [click here](#).

Clive James AO, CBE is the English language's leading cultural critic and essayist. He is the author of more than forty books including novels, essays, poems, and literary criticism.

His *Unreliable Memoirs* has sold more than one million copies. PJ O'Rourke called it the best memoir in the world.

Clive James is writing for *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* because of his admiration for the work of Professor Bob Carter, to whom the book is dedicated. Clive's contribution to the climate change debate is noteworthy because he regards himself as a person of the political left. But he is also an uncompromising supporter of liberal democracy.

Clive's most important book is his 850 page history of the modern world *Cultural Amnesia: Notes in the Margins of my Time*, which is a passionate defence of liberalism and Western Civilisation. It was described in *The New York Times* as 'a capacious and capricious encyclopaedia of essay about everyone he considers worth knowing about in the 20th century'.

When I read *Cultural Amnesia* a few years ago one passage in particular struck me. Talking of the challenges to liberal democracy in the twentieth century and into the future, Clive wrote this:

'Liberal democracy deserved, and still deserves, to prevail – one of the aims of this book is to help stave off any insidious doubts on that point – but in both components of liberal democracy's name there are opportunities for the ideologist: in the first component lies inspiration for the blind devotee of economic determinism, and in the second for the dogmatic egalitarian.

From within as well as without, the Procrustean enemies of our provokingly multifarious free society are bound to come, sometimes

merely to preach obscurantist doctrine in our universities, at other times to fly our own airliners into towers of commerce. What they hate is the bewildering complexity of civilised life, which we will find hard to defend if we share the same aversion. We shouldn't.

There is too much to appreciate.'

Clive joins Matt Ridley, the author of *The Rational Optimist*, Bjørn Lomborg of the Copenhagen Consensus Center, Professor Peter Ridd, Professor Ian Plimer, and Dr Roy Spencer, as contributors to *Climate Change: The Facts 2017*. The book will be edited by Dr Jennifer Marohasy, Senior Fellow at the Institute of Public Affairs.

Clive will be writing on science, scepticism, and the human condition. He'll analyse how language is used to communicate to the public about climate change and how this language is less about science, and more to do with ideology and philosophy. Clive's chapter will run to just over 5,000 words. He is writing it exclusively for *Climate Change: The Facts 2017*.

Science and scepticism is of special interest to Clive. In 2009, he wrote a wonderful essay entitled *In praise of scepticism*.

To give you an idea of what we can look forward to in *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* I've extracted parts of the essay below. Clive begins by considering the sixteenth-century French sceptical philosopher Montaigne:

'What do I know? Montaigne asked himself, and in answering that question during the course of several volumes of great essays he touched on many subjects...

He was a sceptic. He didn't want to take things just on trust. As it happened, there were lots of things he did take on trust.

If he liked the sound of an ancient legend, he would refer to it as if it must have been true. He thought astrology had something to it, and his position on the religious quarrels of his own time was that all this Lutheranism could undermine the church and lead to atheism, substance abuse and the contemporary equivalent of reality television.

From our viewpoint, he often doesn't seem very sceptical at all. But at the time he seemed sceptical enough to excite a whole generation of readers with the idea that some falsehoods might masquerade as facts, and that an enquiring, critical attitude was the one to have.

Shakespeare was only one of his many readers who caught fire at that idea. Shakespeare knew Montaigne's writings inside out. They

helped set the standard for the way our greatest playwright separated what he knew from what he didn't know...

In Montaigne's day you could get into terminal trouble for taking scepticism too far, which is probably one of the reasons why not even he pushed it on the subject of religion.

Since then, a sceptical attitude has been less likely to get you burned at the stake, but it's notable how the issue of man-made global warming has lately been giving rise to a use of language hard to distinguish from heresy-hunting in the fine old style by which the cost of voicing a doubt was to fry in your own fat...

Nobody can meaningfully say that "the science is in", yet this has been said constantly by many commentators in the press until very lately, and now that there are a few fewer saying it there is a tendency, on the part of those who still say it, to raise their voices even higher, and harden their language against any sceptic, as if they were protecting their faith.

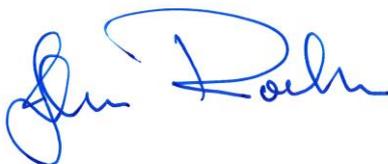
Sceptics, say the believers, don't care about the future of the human race. But being sceptical has always been one of the best ways of caring about the future of the human race. For example, it was from scepticism that modern medicine emerged questioning the common belief that diseases were caused by magic, or could be cured by it.

A conjecture can be dressed up as a dead certainty with enough rhetoric and protected against dissent with enough threatening language, but finally it has to meet the only test of science, which is that any theory must fit the facts, and the facts can't be altered to suit the theory.'

Clive's decision to commit his energy and his intellect to the IPA's *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* is an inspiration.

I hope you will consider making a tax-deductible donation to support *Climate Change: The Facts 2017*. You can make a donation to the IPA by clicking [here](#), or by ringing Naomi at the IPA office on 03 9600 4744.

Yours sincerely



John Roskam - Executive Director, Institute of Public Affairs