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LAWYERS

The Warnings of Hurricane Katrina



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October 2005

It would be quite wrong to suggest that Hurricane Katrina was the result of Global Warming or was intensified by the climatic changes that Global Warming is predicted to produce.

All that can be said with certainty, at the moment, is that the world's temperature is increasing, the climate is shifting, the seasons are altering and a host of small changes are occurring in flora and fauna species. Some areas, such as South Eastern Australia, appear to be coming substantially drier causing water shortages. Other areas are regularly receiving substantially more rainfall than has previously been the case, causing about as many problems as our protracted drought.

With changes in climate and a general warming of the planet, what is certain is that storms of Katrina's size will become more frequent and their destructive capabilities will increase.

None of this, however, constitutes reasonable proof that climate change caused or contributed to Katrina.

Nevertheless, this Hurricane's sheer size and power, the massive number of its victims and the damage bill, now estimated at over \$120 billion must give us cause to stop and think whether our continued use of fossil fuel is worth this kind of result occurring more frequently and on an even more destructive scale.

Once upon-a-time Hurricane Katrina would have been regarded as a 'once in 100 years' storm, but no longer is this the case. Storms of this size and larger are predicted to occur regularly as global temperatures rise.

Industries such as the Insurance industry have become exceptionally concerned with what the result of all this might be. Insurance is, after all, only a sharing of loss between many people, thereby reducing the burden on the relative handful who

actually suffer the damage. When circumstances alter to such an extent that damage is suffered regularly by many people, insurance premiums must rise substantially in order to cover the cost. Either in conjunction with a rise in premiums or as an alternative to it, whole areas may become uninsurable. Imagine the results of a whole city like New Orleans becoming uninsurable? Who would want to continue doing business there or even living there? Would property owners be able to find anyone prepared to pay a reasonable price for their homes, shops and businesses? Nor should we think that this is possible only in a city like New Orleans that has a history of storm damage. Global Climate Change will cause frequent and massive storms in areas of the world where big storms in the past have been very rare indeed.

These are the rapidly approaching problems of Global Climate Change that we have yet to face up to.

That is why we are still silly enough to continue using fossil fuel just as if there were no alternatives. Spare a thought then for the victims of Katrina but remember also that Katrina is a pointer to our future as well.



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