

[Will Hutton's very strange thoughts on climate change](#) [1]

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Apparently we free marketeers are almost entirely responsible for the fact that Flipper is going to boil in the coming end of times. It's all our fault that not enough is being done about [climate change](#) [3].

However, it will be met by a barrage of criticism from the new "sceptical" environmental movement ? almost entirely on the political right ? which, while conceding that global temperatures are rising, insists that there is still insufficient scientific proof to make alarmist predictions. There is certainly no need for governments to tax and regulate the burning of fossil fuels, or subsidise renewables, or come to "freedom-denying" international agreements. Economic growth, technology and the magic of human adaptation through tried and tested market mechanisms will see civilisation through what is already an over-hyped crisis.

With one slight proviso that is indeed what we argue. It's happening but it's unlikely to be catastrophic. Economic growth and technology will indeed be the way out of it. And market mechanisms are going to be vitally important in ensuring this happens.

But this does not put us out on some extremist wing of the argumentation: the reason we support such things is because they are the scientific consensus on what to do about climate change.

The markets, economic growth and technology thing comes from the Special Report on Emissions Scenarios, the foundational economics study upon which the entirety of the IPCC process is built. It's very clear indeed that the globalised scenarios are better than the not globalised (lower population, a richer population and lower emissions). Further, it's equally obvious that a free market/capitalist society produces a better outcome (lower population, a richer population and lower emissions).

The one proviso is that we (or at least I) do agree with taxation of carbon emissions. They are an externality, externalities should have Pigou taxes applied to them. We even have a very large report called the Stern Review that is supposed to guide our actions in this matter. And that Stern Review says apply a carbon tax of \$80 per tonne CO₂-e. Which is largely what we already do here in the UK.

Free market globalised capitalism with a carbon tax. That's what this "political rightist" thinks should happen. And the amazing thing is that this particular solution is boringly mainstream, it's actually the considered scientific consensus.

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