LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

FUEL POVERTY (TARGET, DEFINITION AND STRATEGY) (SCOTLAND) BILL CALL FOR VIEWS

SUBMISSION FROM DAVID STARK

Fuel Poverty and Unnecessarily Expensive Energy

Summary

Between a third and a quarter of Scottish households suffer from fuel poverty, depending on its definition. Either way, this is grossly unacceptable. The key factor is the high cost of energy due to the policy of the Scottish and UK governments. A person in the UK pays around 20 US cents per kilowatt hour, in comparison with the USA at 12, and India and China at 8 (statistics from the IEA, EIA, national electricity boards and OANDA). Carbon dioxide emissions taxation, directly and indirectly, imposed on each UK household will be £600 by 2020 (£300bn: the Cost of the Climate Change Act, by Peter Lilley MP, published by GWPF) and yet the result, in terms of Scotland's contribution to global CO2 emissions, is so small as to be almost unmeasurable. Politicians are not being honest about how much their policies are costing the poorest in society who suffer most from high energy prices.

For those in fuel poverty, this is cruel austerity in the extreme. Unless the cost of energy is reduced, any notional target for reducing fuel poverty will be irrelevant.

Politicians are robbing the poor to reward the rich, to advance policies which have little effect, to solve problems which have been greatly exaggerated, without understanding the scientific basis on which the whole bizarre scenario has been based.

Robbing the poor to reward the rich

The main reasons for the high cost of energy are as follows.

- We pay subsidies to rich landowners and multinational companies to build and run wind generators.
- On windy days in summer, when wind farms produce more energy than we need, we pay rich energy companies for electricity we do not use.
- We pay subsidies to rich people with large roofs on their houses to install solar panels, and to rich landowners and multinational companies to build solar farms.
- We pay subsidies to rich people who can afford £30,000 electric cars.
- Because “renewables” only provide energy when the wind blows (27% efficiency on land and 40% offshore) and the sun shines (8% efficiency in winter), fossil fuel electricity production (mainly gas) has to be kept on standby to kick in to meet demand, reducing its efficiency from 95% to 70%, making it commercially unviable and needing public subsidy.
- Because we rely on gas for energy security but do not allow hydraulic fracturing to obtain it locally, we freeze fracked gas from America and natural
gas from Qatar and transport it across the oceans to Britain, where we unfreeze it. This is an expensive process. (I have met the Qatari prince who used our money to buy Harrods, and most of Europe relies on Putin’s gas and Saudi Arabia’s oil for energy security, so we must kowtow to these nasty regimes.)

- We buy wood pellets from America whose production involves cutting, drying, processing into pellets and transporting across the Atlantic, to burn them at the Drax power station in Yorkshire. Although this expensive process involves a lot of energy, and the forests take almost forty years to regenerate and become carbon neutral, we erroneously call biofuels carbon neutral to fiddle the emissions figures.
- We give financial guarantees to foreign companies who build nuclear power stations at rates almost twice what it would cost to obtain the power from gas generators.

The poorest in our society are suffering for little or no significant outcome

Britain and Scotland perform well compared to most developed countries in reducing emissions, but it is still very small in global terms. More than half of the UK’s 1,000 million tonnes CO2 equivalent of emissions is embedded in imports. Fuel costs in India and China are so small because they predominantly use dirty and cheap coal power, so we are exporting our industry, jobs and emissions to these countries, and importing the emissions back embedded in goods. The Paris Agreement allows these countries to increase emissions up to 2030, and there is no guarantee that they will reduce them significantly then. This is shown on the attached graph which I have compiled. Any emissions reductions by Europe (America is not implementing the Paris Agreement, although it is reducing its emissions better than Europe because it is converting from coal to gas) will be tiny compared to the increase by Asian countries.

**Figure 1:** Comparisons of the CO2 Emissions of Major Emitters
Think of it another way. Let’s say we wish to reduce Scottish CO2 emissions by 80%. CO2 makes up 3.6% of greenhouse gases by volume. Scotland contributes about 0.2% of the world’s emissions. Therefore our carbon tax penalty, even if the policy were successful, will result in Scotland contributing 80% x 3.6% x 0.2% to global greenhouse gas reduction. That is, 0.00576%, which is so small as to be little more than zero. Has anyone explained this to more than a million Scots who are in fuel poverty?

The exaggerated problems of climate change

The United Nations is keen to encourage countries to reduce CO2 emissions and regularly issues catastrophic predictions about what might happen if we do not. None of these tales of woe have come true so far, which is not surprising since no human being has ever been able to predict the future more than a short period in advance, especially in areas so complex and “chaotic” as the climate or the economy.

For example, the UN uses computer models to predict how much the world will warm, and these suggest a rate of more than 0.3ºC per decade. Over the last forty years, since we have had satellites to measure the whole world, the actual rate has been about 0.1ºC per decade. John Christy of the University of Alabama in Huntsville, and previously of NASA, has prepared the graph below to illustrate this. He presented this to the US Congress (YouTube: Alabama State Climatologist John Christy Testifies) and has told me that this public document can be reproduced. He concluded: “The disturbing implication is that the current understanding of climate sensitivity to CO2 is systematically wrong - all models over predict the warming - so the basic claim of ‘understanding’ is wrong”.

Figure 2 Global Temperature Data Versus UN IPCC Prediction Modelling
Politicians do not understand the science used to justify the policy that causes fuel poverty

Faulty science leads to faulty energy policy which leads to the human misery caused by fuel poverty. When we are in a hole, we should stop digging. Politicians should not advance policy unless they understand the science used to justify it. Members of the Local Government and Communities Committee cannot absolve themselves from their part in penalizing the poorest in society by blaming another parliamentary committee, and should be able to answer the following questions.

Why have human emissions risen in an upward curve (see Figure 1) but world temperatures have risen in a series of steps, 1850-1880, 1915-1945 and 1975-1998, with drops and pauses between? Why do emissions rise in this way but CO2 in the atmosphere displays a straight line rise, as do ocean sea level rises? If there are poor correlations between human emissions, atmospheric CO2 and temperature rises, why do we think that humans play the biggest part in climate change, and that we can invent a CO2 dimmer switch to control climate?

When we burn gas (methane) in power stations, the chemical process produces twice as much water vapour as carbon dioxide (CH4 + 3O2 > CO2 + 2H2O). Why do we only demonise the latter when water makes up 95% of greenhouse gases, operates over a wider bandwidth than CO2, and is a much more dynamic element in the atmosphere since it exists in gaseous, liquid and solid forms?

When passing the 2008 Climate Change Act, politicians were told:

1. Temperatures are rising by 0.3°C per decade;
2. We are running out of fossil fuels so we must invest in renewable technology;
3. If Europe sets an example, other nations will follow.

Temperatures have only been rising by about 0.1°C per decade; new extraction techniques mean that there are many decades’ supply of fossil fuels left (we never seem to reach peak oil and gas); Asian countries have postponed taking action until after 2030 (if they ever do) and America has developed fracked oil and gas to become the world’s largest producer of these fossil fuels.

Even in Europe, only a few countries are meeting their emissions targets, the main reason for the small reduction in the last decade being economic decline after the 2007/08 recession. In Germany the Greens forced a phase-out of nuclear power after Fukushima, despite there being no deaths from radiation there, and fracking is not permitted, so, to ensure energy security, it relies on additional coal generation from plentiful local supplies, and 36% of its gas from Russia.

The three premises on which energy policy was based have changed. So the policy which impoverishes more than a million people in Scotland should be reviewed. According to the 2018 British Social Attitudes Survey, “only 36% of people believe that humans are entirely or mainly the cause of climate change.” Is the British public ahead of its politicians, and how annoyed will people be if it becomes clear that they
are being taxed for nothing? Why do we subsidize more windmills when we could use the money to employ more nurses?