One thing we have learnt this week – climate action

Posted on **December 07,2018** by **admin**

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2015-11-28 13:05:21 As the climate change talks in Poland grind on climate action is at risk. Governments worldwide are not doing enough. It looks like CO_2 emissions for this year are going to be at new high. After no increase for a new years which was very encouraging CO_2 emissions are rising. Added to which President Macron has at least delayed increases in fuel costs which were officially aimed at tackling climate change. If governments continue to back down in the face of political protest on this issue we are doomed. The particular politics of Macron, the way he was elected and the scheme itself maybe mean we should not read to much into it. The British Colombia climate tax scheme which I may cover in a future blog is a better model. Nevertheless its discouraging news and leads me to think that a number of fundamental errors have been made over the the last nearly 4 decades. The first is not to start immediately on climate action. The first Earth summit took place in 1986 in Rio. If governments had started making modest changes then we could have at least mitigated the problem earlier. Climate change is a classic frog in cold water scenario and a future generations issue. It creeps up on you and will largely affect someone else. This makes it difficult for politicians to manage why upset the electorate when there is little gain to be had today. This lack of action in the past means change now has to be more drastic. This leads me to the second mistake made by policy makers. Not to link climate change to resource depletion. They are two sides of the same coin. To remind people we live on the finite planet and we are using finite quantities of uranium, coal, gas and oil in my view would have helped make the change argument. I largely blame green groups for this. Their counter argument when I have discussed it with representatives was two fold. First that it muddied the waters and and second that we could not afford to burn all the fossil fuels anyway. This last point is true but clearly the climate only argument has not resonated with the public. I rest my case. The last argument on taking climate action is that change is good. New technologies can create jobs and in many ways what we would be loosing is not worth having anyway. Tackle this and we should end up in a kinder gentler world. This point has not been made forcefully enough. On the positive side we can see that people will take action and lobby when they see something, the classic current example being plastic. This summer's heatwave does seem to have tripped something. My church has written environmental care into its next 5 year strategy. Neil

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