

# Editorial

## Global boring

The media backlash is just beginning. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, global warming is morphing into 'global boring' and the potential consequences of such cavalier wordplay are immeasurable.

As the reality hits home that we have to stop doing things the 'normal' way and abandon our sense of superiority to the rest of the living planet, a wider backlash gains momentum. Maybe it's not a backlash against the fact of global warming *per se* but, instead, against the way this phenomenon is presented as a fad. 'Cutting your carbon footprint is the new black' suggests something temporary. That next month, or next year, some other jolly wheeze will sweep in to take its place, and we all can go back to a life dominated by regular lightbulbs, cheap flights to Spain, sweatshop T-shirts and high-performance cars.

The media, like business, loves novelty. The shift from reporting news responsibly to reporting it in a fashion-driven way is one of the saddest things I have witnessed. It makes for lazy journalists and a lazy public. Reported as it should be, the news would be a very different animal.

I am reminded of a comment by James Hansen, the NASA scientist who broke ranks and publicly exposed the Bush administration's efforts to stifle scientific evidence of the dangers of global warming in an effort to keep the public uninformed. Recently he opined that what we read in the mainstream media is at least three years behind the scientific data. Scientific journals are about one year behind, while the scientists actually doing the research are only about one month behind. They know what's going on, yet often are terrified to speak out about what they know ('reticent' is the word Hansen used – even he is inclined to be measured on occasion) because often, and especially these days, it is information that is at odds with mainstream beliefs.

Being fashionable, in whatever sense you use the word, is not about liberation, it's about the oppression of anything different. It takes a

brave media to engage with those scientists at the fore, rather than just parroting what is said by the paid mouthpieces for vested interests.

The *Ecologist* has always aligned itself with those at the leading edge. This was made apparent to me in a humbling way two years ago when we published *The Doomsday Funbook*, a collection of essays, many of which were by the magazine's founder Edward Goldsmith. It was eye-opening to read again the impassioned, intelligent, courageous analyses and critiques of a world gone gaga over GM, nuclear power, economic growth, medical 'miracles' and the intoxicating milieu of corporate power, whilst ignoring the fallout of these things: the devastation caused by pollution, displacement of indigenous people, loss of culture and quality of life, the rape of the natural world. It takes a brave soul to stand up against the oppressive enthusiasms of popular culture.

Which brings us to this month's cover. Hot on the heels of the superficial, even suicidal, stupidity of Live Earth, a 'celebrity' cover – our first ever and possibly our last – may seem an odd choice.

But while most other celebrities are still talking about lightbulbs and how many squares of toilet tissue to use, Leonardo DiCaprio has done a very brave thing. He has chosen to align himself with the scientists, philosophers, activists and teachers on the front line. He's chosen to be the channel through which their ideas and views can be amplified. He's done it publicly and he's done it with great panache. He's put his face and his name to a documentary that could break all box office records for films of this type – or it could end his career. He's done it because, as he told the *Ecologist*, it needs to be done.

We respond to courage wherever we see it – in science, in the media, in everyday life and in celebrity – because courage is in short supply these days, because courage begets courage and because courage is a powerful force for change.

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