

SHIPPING

Cruise control

An iceberg sank the Titanic, now it seems international shipping is getting its own back. **Jacqueline Savitz** reports on an industry given the green light to carry on polluting

Suppose we found ourselves in the midst of an epidemic of a disease so contagious that to have any hope of preventing global catastrophe it would be imperative not only to contain it, but also drastically to reduce its prevalence worldwide. Suppose the experts were divided, not on the magnitude of the problem, but on the world's ability ever to contain it. Would we then expect one or more sectors of society to argue that they should be allowed to continue to spread the illness? What reason could they possibly give to justify continuing to infect people?

This hypothetical situation has distinct parallels to our current climate change challenge. There is no disputing that climate change is occurring. Each day brings new evidence that global climate change is accelerating even faster than we thought, causing ecological disturbances that are more serious than we expected. It will take action by every sector of society to contain the resulting damage. We do not have the luxury of picking and choosing one source of global warming pollution over another, or designing a portfolio of a few things that must change – every sector must improve. If we might ultimately fail in some areas, that is all the more reason

to focus on the others in the hope that they can make up the difference.

Many industries argue that its business is so far superior to others that it should be exempt from reducing its global warming pollution. Shipping is one such industry. Shippers say they have the most efficient method of transporting many goods, but with everyone else paying the cost of global warming, should shipping get a free ride?

Even if shipping releases less carbon per 'metric-ton kilometre' than its competitors, ships are still a major source of greenhouse gases, and therefore present one of many opportunities for the reduction of emissions. Carbon dioxide emissions from shipping are comparable to the entire CO₂ emissions of many industrialised countries – in fact, according to the latest statistics, only five countries release more CO₂ than the global shipping industry. That means giving shipping a free ride makes about as much sense as giving a free ride to the UK, Canada, Germany or Australia.

The shipping industry is also responsible for nearly a third of the world's nitrogen oxide emissions, as well as emitting soot, or black carbon, which is a stronger warming agent than CO₂. On top of all that it is responsible for a quarter of all Arctic warming.

Unfortunately, current Government requirements do not drive needed reductions. In fact, shipping is essentially getting to carry on full speed ahead gratis. It is not regulated under the Kyoto protocol. The US does not directly regulate global warming pollutants (carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide or black carbon) from shipping. The Bush Administration seems to be looking to the International Maritime Organization to step in and regulate ship pollution internationally, but history has shown this process to be extremely slow and ineffective, which means action is needed at the national level now.

While some in the industry have argued against regulation, their actions point to viable solutions that could put a big dent in shipping's contribution to the problem. One of the best pollution-control measures that could be required of ships is one that each of us contends with every day – simple speed limits.

Reducing speed by just 10 per cent would result in a 23 per cent reduction in emissions from ships. This simple action, which requires no retrofit and no new equipment, could single-handedly reduce by nearly a quarter the contribution of ships to the climate problem. A larger reduction in speed could achieve even more pollution control. Moreover, this is fiscally beneficial to the companies since that 23 per cent emissions reduction is achieved by increasing fuel-efficiency – less fuel is burned, translating into a 23 per cent saving on fuel costs. The actual amount saved is increasing

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as we speak due to escalating fuel prices.

Industry sources agree that reducing speed makes sense. George Gratsos, president of the Hellenic Chamber of Shipping, said a 20 per cent speed reduction would have 'few repercussions' for the world economy. Such a reduction would reduce emissions by more than half, possibly as much as 65 per cent. Ever since fuel prices started rising, shippers have got on the speed reduction bandwagon. Koji Miyahara, president of Japan's NYK Group, initiated a 10 per cent speed reduction fleetwide, expecting to save 25 per cent in fuel costs – possibly translating into \$25,000 daily savings for an average-sized container ship.

Critics may complain that 'time is money', but if the fuel savings don't make up for lost time, a little creative thinking and improved planning can easily ensure that any time lost is made up for in port. For example, scheduling ship loading and unloading the way airports schedule gate times could eliminate the multiple lost days that ships commonly spend waiting in port.

Besides slowing down, ships could take a host of other steps to reduce global warming pollution, including using cleaner fuels and improving the design of the hull, the bow, the stern and even the propellers. Most of these steps work because they increase fuel-efficiency and thus they too have financial benefits to the companies.

So why not start now? This industry is growing rapidly – marine transportation, as measured in metric-ton kilometres, has nearly tripled since 1970, and has grown by about five per cent per year for the past several decades. If current growth continues, shipping emissions may double 2002 levels by 2020, and triple them by 2030.

Speed limits are a solution that can be applied immediately; the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are already requiring them. But speed should be regulated at the national and international level as a first step in controlling emissions from ships – an important piece of the overall puzzle – and then other measures can be considered to finish the job. One thing is certain: we are all facing a global challenge and there should be no more free rides. **E**

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CURRENTS

Getting on the 'risk list'

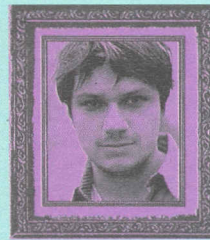
Remember last summer when, in an attempt to thwart the upcoming climate camp, BAA went to the High Court to try to get millions of opponents of airport expansion banned from using motorways, the London underground and parts of Paddington station? At the time the National Trust said the idea 'smacked of absurdity', Lib Dem Nick Clegg said it was 'daft, illiberal and dangerous nonsense' and the Mayor of London called it 'an attack on the right to peaceful protest'.

You might have had an inkling that BAA didn't have much time for democratic processes, but what they've been up to since really takes the biscuit. Secret documents reveal BAA and the Government set up a joint 'Heathrow Delivery Group' to steer through the third runway plans. BAA supplied the data on noise and pollution that formed the premise of the 'consultation' document. Opposition groups have been refused the chance to challenge this data.

The documents also reveal that elected councillors in West London, who represent two million people, have been put on a 'risk list' of those posing a threat to the runway.

BAA wrote part of the 'consultation', despite being one of the official 'consultees'. That could explain why it is littered with phrases like 'net present value terms' and 'mixed mode operations' – not exactly accessible language. Of course that's the whole point. Theoretically an opportunity for democratic participation, this 'consultation' was a fix-up from the start.

It asked nothing about whether or not the third runway should be built. It made no reference to global warming. Even worries within the barriers of the 'consultation'



– noise and local air pollution – were dampened by only 'consulting' one small region of London. Places like Putney and Fulham, for example, were not considered, despite councillors there reporting more constituent concern about unbearable noise levels than any other issue. That will be why they were excluded from the survey.

Encouragingly, affected communities are literally in revolt. Thousands of people have turned out to over 50 public meetings in the past couple of months. John Stewart, chair of HACAN, which represents people under the flightpaths, was overwhelmed by the outpouring of those speaking up against the runway plans. Indeed, political pressure has grown so great that even Brown loyalists like health minister Ann Keen have broken ranks on the issue. Every Mayoral candidate opposes the expansion; so great is the strength of feeling in London it would be political suicide if they didn't.

There is a pattern emerging with these 'consultations'. First the High Court found the one on nuclear power to be 'misleading', 'seriously flawed' and 'procedurally unfair'. Now I've seen Whitehall emails that show the coal plans for Kingsnorth are also subject to conniving between E.ON and the Department for Business. The German utility wrote to a BERR official, 'We need to work out a strategy with BMA' (Bob Marshall-Andrews, the local 'rebel' MP). It also 'profiled' the councillors opposing its plans and briefed Government officials – exactly as BAA did.

With ever-growing numbers of species 'at risk', we need more people willing to put themselves on the 'risk lists'. **E**

Joss Garman is an environmental campaigner and journalist

Elected councillors in West London have been put on a 'risk list' of those posing a threat to Heathrow's proposed third runway