

Asinus Muses

The road to Bali

Who won what at Bali? Some say the USA because it convinced others that it had entered into the spirit of environmentalism; others say the EU because of their cuddly behaviour towards the group of 77; others say the 77 won because everyone else had to please them. My comrades and I, however, are in no doubt that, as always, the bipeds won. This is the verdict of the Quadruped International to which *Asinus* proudly belongs.

QUILS and QUIPS

To be specific, my section of the organisation is the Quadruped International Livestock Section (QUILS). We aim to represent what FAO statistics say are the roughly 3 billion quadruped livestock in the world (dominated by 1.4 billion cattle and including 40 million of what the FAO calls 'asses'). On environmental questions we often work hoof-in-paw with the more conservative and pro-biped Quadruped International Pets Section (QUIPS). It was QUILS, however, which sent me as its observer to the conference at Bali.

Trains...

Getting to Bali was a problem. There are no facilities for voluntary quadruped transport in the world. The transport companies, however, stung as if by a sextuped by accusations that they are responsible for global warming, are falling over themselves offering green transport. So Eurostar claim that all Eurostar journeys are now carbon neutral, meaning that they pay (in advance) something in the order of £500,000 a year to carbon reducing schemes. So you travel safe in the knowledge that the carbon that Eurostar is churning out on your behalf is somewhere being breathed in by a little tree. But it could only get me to Paris.

...and planes and ships

The ubiquitous owner of Virgin Airlines with the name like livestock feed (Rich Hard Bran Some) has plans to run one engine of a 747 on ethanol, but I could not persuade him to fly me to Bali running each engine on a different biofuel. I did, however, find the Container Shipping Information Service, recently set up to improve the bad environmental image of long distance shipping. They claim that the carbon emissions from transporting goods in a container ship is about one fifth of the emissions from road traffic and one fiftieth of those from air transport. This sounded good to me so I selected a ship for the trip.

To what end?

I went to Bali to denounce the biped plot to blame global warming on quadrupeds, most particularly on the emissions of methane from livestock. The most influential source of this slanderous idea is a document produced in 2006 by the FAO (part of the Biped International known as the United Nations). *Livestock's Long Shadow – Environmental Issues and Options* blames livestock for producing 18 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions – more than the whole transport sector. An impertinent suggestion, given that virtually all livestock are slaves of bipeds, human variety (BHV), and so they produce emissions while they are being fattened, skinned, or ridden or forced to pull or carry heaving loads by BHVs. So, in our opinion, all quadruped emissions should be put on the negative side of the account of BHVs. With this argument I hoped to join China which is also accused of excessive emissions. Many of these, however, arise from making exports to the developed countries. Emissions should surely be attributed not to the producers of goods and services but to their consumers.

From which end? Factoogles.

I also wanted to combat detailed misinformation about livestock emissions. Scientific sources say that 80 percent of methane emissions are due to burping and not to the emission of wind from the other end. That the popular view is the opposite can be established by the use of a factoogle. This is not a scientific fact but a presumption derived from comparing numbers of hits in two or more Google searches. For instance, a search for 'burp AND global warming' produced 56,500 hits while 'fart AND global warming' produce as many as 201,000. Fortunately, this whole issue will soon be illuminated by modern BHV science. The Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences has received \$590,000 from the government to investigate 'how bovine methane levels are affected by the animals' diet...the cows in the study will be stuck on different diets and the methane monitored by a device strapped to their necks' (from 'Swedes to probe cow-belch threat to planet', *The Register* (internet journal)). When will somebody do this to BHVs?

My intervention at Bali

Alas and ironically my contribution to the debate at Bali did not take place. The owners of the shipping line on which I travelled had decided, as a contribution to reducing carbon emissions, to reduce the ship's speed from 24 to 20 knots which meant that we arrived in Bali to find the BHVs in their final session, doing their equivalent of braying, barking, mooing and even some crying. Next time I may get there because at the end of January a giant version of a wonderful new device (the shape of a modern parachute), was due to be attached to a transatlantic ship to increase its speed without increasing its emissions. It is called a sail. BHVs are so clever.

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