Nicola Sturgeon’s Very Reasonable, Pro-science and Evidence-based, Flight from Fracking Disaster: Professor and Deputy Lieutenant for Tyne and Wear, Paul Younger’s Unreasonable Neglect of Scientific (Health) Evidence

Here’s what Prof Younger is quoted as having said, in ‘a blistering attack’ in the Herald, this morning, under the headline: ‘Nicola Sturgeon has ‘taken flight from reason’ over fracking with ‘anti-science’ statements, expert claims.’

‘NICOLA Sturgeon has "taken flight from reason" after cynically hardening her stance against fracking in a move that will damage the case for Scottish independence and be warmly welcomed by Vladimir Putin, a former Government advisor has claimed.

In a blistering attack, Professor Paul Younger, who was appointed to a Scottish Government taskforce to examine unconventional oil and gas extraction, said the SNP "need not be surprised when any scientist who respects the most basic norms of professional integrity" refuses to work with its ministers in future, following comments made by the party leader in the recent election campaign.’

It’s stunning, isn’t it? It’s stunningly aggressive language for an academic in the physical sciences as opposed to us lefty socialist scientists. Isn’t suggesting that Nicola will now be a ‘Friend of Putin’, the same as saying someone is a ‘Nazi Apologist?’ If you say it often enough, does it then become true and you don’t need evidence? Professor Younger’s language clearly suggests anger. He accused Nicola of a ‘flight from reason’ but might she actually know the tragic story of Daedalus watching his risk-taking son, Icarus, burn and crash and be on a well-advised ‘flight from the fires of the Sun’. He (Younger, not Daedalus) was on the Scottish Government’s taskforce. Did he not win the arguments there? Is he
angry in some way at not winning? Is he used to winning all the time, as a Deputy
Lieutenant, doggone it?

There was a word missing in the Herald piece. My apologies to the Prof, if the Herald
sneakily edited it out but where was the word ‘health?’ When you attack someone for being
‘anti-science’, isn’t that an all-embracing term which would include geology and geopolitics,
which he does, but also health science? Is it possible that the Scottish government might be
concerned about evidence of this kind (health) and even be considering letting these
override, considerations of economics? So, if Professor Younger has not respected the
importance of the scientific evidence of health risks (see below) from fracking, then he
‘need not be surprised when any scientist who respects the most basic norms of professional
integrity’ points that out.

Isn’t blistering one of the risks from fracking? See this example from the National Resources
Defence Council in the USA, in 2011, with stock photographs as illustration only:

‘Pennsylvania: A gas well near the home of the Simons family in Bradford County was drilled
in 2009 and re-fracked in February, 2011. Shortly after the 2011 operation, the Simons
family reports that their tap water turned gray and hazy. After the water changed, family
members began getting severe rashes with oozing blisters, and one child had to be taken to
the hospital for torrential nosebleeds that would not stop, nausea and severe headaches.’

Could this science, health science, be the science, the Scottish Government has been in a
reasonable, flap, over? Remember this on the importance of the precautionary principle,
from December 2014?

‘Could fracking follow thalidomide, tobacco and asbestos among innovations that turned
sour?’ UK HM Chief Scientific Advisor’s Annual Report.

I feel sure Prof Younger knows the precautionary principle well, being a scientist.
Also and leading to the **complete ban of fracking in New York**, from the *Physicians, Scientist and Engineers (PSE)*, their review of 400 peer-reviewed papers on the impact of shale gas development with the following key findings:

1. 96% of all papers published on health impacts indicate potential risks or adverse health outcomes.

2. 87% of original research studies published on health outcomes indicate potential risks or adverse health outcomes.

3. 95% of all original research studies on air quality indicate elevated concentrations of air pollutants.

4. 72% of original research studies on water quality indicate potential, positive association, or actual incidence of water contamination.

5. There is an ongoing expansion in the number of peer-reviewed publications on the impacts of shale and tight gas development: approximately 73% of all available scientific peer-reviewed papers have been published in the past 24 months, with a current average of one paper published each day. (PSE, 2014)

Further, the **Concerned Health Professionals of NY** (Commie, Pinko, Treehuggers clearly) listed hundreds of reports, over 100 pages, indexed as below:

1. Air pollution

2. Water contamination

3. Inherent engineering problems that worsen with time

4. Radioactive releases

5. Occupational health and safety hazards

6. Public Health Effects, Measured Directly

7. Noise pollution, light pollution and stress
8. Earthquakes and seismic activity
9. Abandoned and active oil and natural gas wells (as pathways for gas and fluid migration)
10. Flood risks
11. Threats to agriculture and soil quality
12. Threats to the climate system
13. Inaccurate jobs claims, increased crime rates, threats to property value and mortgages and local government burden
14. Inflated estimates of oil and gas reserves and profitability
15. Disclosure of serious risks to investors
16. Medical and scientific calls for more study and more transparency.
(ecowatch.com, December 2014)

Now look, this is the ‘real deal’ in research. Comprehensive longitudinal reviews of hundreds of related studies, all credible in source, should be listened to. These were all in the public domain as the taskforce met. As I write, I think of all the shoddy little outbursts presented in the mainstream media as if they were authoritative in any way and despair at the neglect of the above.

*Dr John Robertson, former Professor of Media Politics at the University of the West of Scotland, 11th May 2016 – Student of the Flight of Icarus, lover of Puttenesca, bloody-minded social scientist, and proud of it!*

**Links:**

**HM Chief Scientific Advisor’s Annual Report** (see especially page 51) at:  

**Concerned Health Professionals of NY: COMPENDIUM OF SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL, AND MEDIA FINDINGS DEMONSTRATING RISKS AND HARMS OF FRACKING (UNCONVENTIONAL GAS AND OIL EXTRACTION) at:**  
PSE: SCIENTIFIC REVIEW OF SHALE AND TIGHT GAS DEVELOPMENT (FRACKING) REVEALS PUBLIC HEALTH HAZARDS AND DATA GAPS, at:

http://www.psehealthyenergy.org/events/view/185