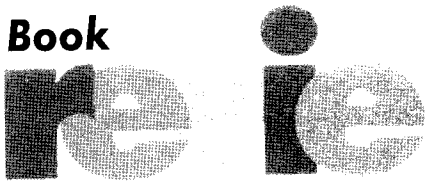


Book



Environmental principles and policies: *an interdisciplinary approach*

By Sharon Beder, School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication, University of Wollongong

Reviewed by Dennis Matthews

The title of this book does not do it justice. Its essence is given in chapter 9 where it asks: "*Are economic instruments, whether based on prices or property rights, appropriate policies for environmental protection?*"

Given the current debate over how to manage greenhouse gas emissions and the pivotal role that global warming is likely to play in the 2007 Federal elections, this book could not have come at a better time.

Professor Beder critiques economic solutions to major environmental problems in terms of six basic environmental and social principles - ecological sustainability, the polluter pays, the precautionary principle, equity, human rights, and public participation.

The first half of the book thoroughly elucidates these

principles and where they have been applied around the world. This is followed by a short section on economic methods of environmental evaluation - putting a price on the environment - and an even shorter section on prices and pollution rights. The last third of the book is devoted to the crucial issue of using economic instruments such as fees, taxes, and tradable permits to solve environmental problems with special attention to fishing and to water.

The experiences related by Sharon Beder have led her to the conclusion: "*...the fundamental goals and assumptions underlying economics-based policies are at odds with the environmental and social principles concerned communities and governments around the world are seeking to achieve.*"

Like many I had come to accept the inevitability and the appropriateness of economic instruments such as trading schemes in countering the burgeoning emissions of greenhouse gases. My first inkling that things might not be as they seem came in August 2006 when the National Emissions Trading Taskforce issued its "Possible Design for a National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme".

For environmentalists, politicians and lobbyists who are considering supporting such economic instruments I strongly suggest that you read this book as soon as possible. You may well change your policy on measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

* *Dennis Matthews, BSc Hon, PhD, former Senior Lecturer in Chemistry at Flinders University.*