

The Strange Life of Maurice Strong by William Shepherd

Maurice Strong was born into a poor Canadian home in Oak Lake, Manitoba on April 29, 1929 and as a boy knew the hardships of the *Great Depression* and was brought up to believe passionately in *Socialism* and the power of the public sector to create a better world for all mankind. In 1947, at the age of 18, Maurice Strong took a job with the UN's security staff in New York before returning to Canada to embark on a career in the energy industry.



Strong had his start in business as a specialist in oil and mineral resources for a leading brokerage firm, *James Richardson & Sons*. Moving to Calgary, Alberta, he became *Personal Assistant* to one of the most successful leaders of the oil industry, J.P. Gallagher. At Gallagher's *Dome Petroleum*, Strong occupied several key roles including *Vice President of Finance*.

In the 1950s he took over a small natural gas company, *Ajax Petroleum*, and built it into what became one of the leading companies in the industry, *Norcen Resources*, attracting the attention of *Power Corporation of Canada*, one of Canada's top investment corporations with extensive interests in the energy and utility businesses. Strong was appointed *Executive Vice President* and then *President of Power Corporation* from 1961 until 1966.

Strong was then asked by Canada's Prime Minister Lester Pearson to run *Canada's Overseas Development Agency (CIDA)*;¹ and he became a fervent early recruit to the fast-emerging *Environmental Movement*, regarding it as a means towards his UN goal of 'world governance'.

In 1971 Strong's skills at high-level networking led to him being chosen by *UN Secretary-General U Thant* to organise and chair the first *UN Conference on the Human Environment*, staged in Stockholm in 1972. This led to the launching of the *UN Environment Program (UNEP)* and to Strong being appointed the first director of the new UN agency based in Nairobi, Kenya.

In a speech at Windsor, Ontario, in 1974 at the age of 45, he explained his philosophy. Many of the problems of mankind, he believed, lay with the selfish materialism of the rich Western countries, which laid such a heavy burden on the poorer nations of the under-developed world and posed an 'acute moral, economic and political dilemma to the whole global community'. One notable expression of this, he had been advised by scientists, was that 'we may already be in the beginning stages of a major shift in the dynamics of the earth's climate system'.

In 1976 Strong retired from *UNEP* and started to build up a private fortune back in Canada through various business enterprises. At the request of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, he headed the newly created national oil company, *Petro-Canada*,² later becoming the head of *Ontario Hydro*...one of North America's largest power utilities...and *Chairman* of the *Canada Development Investment Corporation*, the holding company for some of Canada's principal government-owned corporations.

Meanwhile Strong had also become a member of the *Club of Rome*...a body set up in 1968 to bring together world leaders to discuss many of the concerns being voiced rather more luridly the same year in Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*.³ According to its website, the *Club of Rome* is composed of 'scientists, economists, businessmen, international high civil servants, heads of state and former heads of state from all five continents'. These concerns centred on the need for global action to meet the dangers of over-population and the over-exploitation of the world's

¹ I had personal reasons to be thankful to Maurice Strong's time at *CIDA* because in 1972 he was setting up his *UN Environment Program (UNEP)* on Harare Avenue in Nairobi, Kenya just across the street from the offices of *Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners (International Consulting Engineers)* with whom I worked. *CIDA* meanwhile had hunkered down across town at the *Business School at the University of East Africa* from where they recruited me to moonlight for them as their *Assistant Professor of Finance*...teaching international finance and economic development.

² Tennessee Senator Al Gore Jr. also had strong personal and family links with the oil industry. His father Senator Albert Gore Sr., had been a close friend and protégé of Armand Hammer, the head of *Occidental Oil*, which helped to set him up in the businesses which were the basis of the Gore family fortune. Hammer, who died in 1994, had been a friend of Lenin and throughout the Cold War was under official suspicion for his exceptionally close ties to the Soviet Union.

³ In 1971 Ehrlich was to publish a rather more sober statement of his case in a paper co-authored with a young physicist John Holdren. Four decades later, in 2009, President Obama was to appoint Holdren, by now a leading advocate for man-made global warming, as his chief scientific adviser and director of the *White House Office of Science and Technology Policy*. The paper was entitled *The Impact of Population Growth*, (*Science*, 26 March 1971, Vol.171 No. 3977, pp. 1212-1217).

resources, which risked various potential disasters from the exhaustion of food and oil supplies to catastrophic environmental pollution. A book along these lines, *Limits to Growth*, published by *The Club of Rome* in 1972, sold 30 million copies, making it the top-selling 'environmentalist' title in history.

Maurice Strong's primary interest has never really been in the environment as such. The driving force of his life has been his dream of the *UN* as a stepping stone to world government. And now, through his association with the *Club of Rome* he had come to see 'environmentalism',⁴ transcending national boundaries, as the most powerful instrument whereby his own great ambition might be brought about. His setting up of the *UN Environment Program*, with its international commissariat, able to command funding from national government, was a step in the right direction.

In 1979 Strong's *UNEP* was a co-sponsor of the first *World Climate Conference* convened at the time of international alarm over the discovery of the hole in the ozone layer over the Antarctic.⁵ Here, it seemed, was a potentially devastating climatic phenomenon which could be blamed directly on human agency. It led with dramatic speed in 1987...thanks not least to the influence of Strong...to the signing of the *Montreal Protocol*, phasing out the use of CFCs. This treaty set the precedent for the nations of the world, under the auspices of the *UN*, agreeing to take drastic collective action to halt a major threat to the global environment.

In the same year, 1987, through the influence of Maurice Strong...and also of the Swedish scientist-politician Bert Bolin who was to become the first head of the *IPCC*...the *UN's Brundtland Report on Sustainable Development* called for the *UN* to set up both a panel of experts to advise on the *Threat of Global Warming* and a *World Summit Conference*, building on the *Montreal Precedent*, to agree measures to be taken to respond to it. Before the end of 1987 Strong's *UNEP* and the *WMO* had agreed that the following year the new *Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC)* would come into being with Bolin at its head.

Apart from Bolin, it was Strong who pushed for the setting up of the *IPCC*. He also got his way by winning the *UN's* support for his plan to stage a global conference to discuss what should be done to combat *Global Warming*. He would need the *IPCC* to provide scientific input for his *World Summit*. Its purpose would be to lay the groundwork for a historic international treaty, modelled on the *Montreal Protocol*, committing the world's government to the measures his conference agreed. It would be the most far-reaching step towards turning the *United Nations* into a *World Government* since Strong first conceived his ambition that it should become so.

In 1983 Strong returned more publicly to the global stage when he was picked by the *UN Secretary-General* Kofi Annan to serve as a key member of its *World Commission on Environment and Development*, chaired by the Norwegian prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland. The *Commission's* aim was to consider how the world's natural resources could be shared out more equitably between developed and under-developed nations, and how the global environment could be better safeguarded for the benefit of all.

Strong was convinced that one of the chief preoccupations of the *Commission's* report should be the threat posed by man-made global warming was a little-reported conference held in Villach, Austria, in 1985, under the sponsorship of two other *UN* bodies, his own creation, *UNEP*, and the *World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)*.

As early as 1979 the *WMO* and *UNEP* had organised the first *World Climate Conference* in Vienna, calling on the world 'to prevent potential man-made changes in climate that might be adverse to the well-being of humanity'. This led in 1985 to the conference at Villach, chaired by Strong's successor as director of *UNEP*, Dr Mustafa Tolba, to discuss the *Role of Carbon Dioxide and of Other Greenhouse Gases in Climate Variations and Assorted Impacts*. Strong and Tolba were among those members of the *Brundtland Commission* who ensured that the Villach recommendations of 'international agreed policies for the reduction of the causative gases' and 'strategies to minimise and cope with the climate changes and rising sea levels' featured strongly in its report.

This *Global Agenda for Change*, which was to put the term *Sustainable Development* into the vocabulary of politicians and bureaucrats for decades to come, predicted that the *Greenhouse Effect* caused by the burning of fossil fuels 'may by early next century have increased average global temperatures enough to shift agricultural production areas, raise the sea level to flood coastal cities and disrupt national economies.'

It added that urgent action should also be taken to limit the use of greenhouse gases other than CO₂, particularly CFCs. These it was estimated, would by 2030 'cause about half the problem. But international action would above all be vital to curb the use of CO₂, emitting fossil fuels, as the greatest single contributor to rising temperatures.

Behind the scenes Strong then played a part in ensuring the signing of the *Montreal Protocol* six months later, on 16th September 1987, based on evidence provided by a *UNEP* team chaired by Dr Robert Watson from *NASA*. The

⁴ See *Carbon Emissions Trading* by William Shepherd: I: *Carbon Exchange Basics*; II: *Carbon Emissions and the IMF*; III: *Polluter Never Pays Principle*; IV: *Profit Forecasts from Emission Trading*; and V: *Nuclear Power & Carbon Trading* at http://climate.blog.co.uk/2006/06/12/carbon_emissions_trading~872534/.

⁵ Imagine a new tennis ball...the 'fluff' is the Earth's atmosphere. Rotate it in a viscous medium of a similar consistency to Earth's atmosphere...smoke from a wood-burning fire for instance...and the surrounding medium will form itself into a cylinder with holes at both ends at right angles to the direction of spin. The size of the holes at each end of the cylinder will fluctuate over time. Thus holes in the Earth's ozone layer over the poles are to be expected...and to vary in size.

Swedish scientist-cum-politician and first head of the *ICPP* Bert Bolin would write two decades later in *History of the Science and Politics of Climate Change* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) that ‘a group of scientists that had been brought together by *UNEP* had played an invaluable role in evaluating available knowledge in the field under the leadership of its dynamic chairman Dr Robert Watson’.

Up to this time no country had expressed alarm over the threat of global warming more vociferously than the US, although in November 1989 Margaret Thatcher was to express the UK Government’s misgivings in an address to the *UN General Assembly* and again to the *Second World Climate Conference* staged by the *WMO* in 1990.

The report issued on 30th March 1987 by the *Brundtland Commission* included a foreword from Gro Harlem Brundtland which paid particular tribute to report the part played by *UNEP*’s director Dr Tolba, who had warned so strongly of the dangers of ‘human-induced climate change’ at the Villach conference in Austria two years earlier.

But the alarms expressed by scientists, environmentalists and the media had conspicuously not been echoed by the US government of Bush Senior (President 1989-1993). He had, in any event, been profoundly uneasy about attending the *Earth Summit* in Rio at the end of May 1992 being well aware that, as the world’s leading emitter of CO₂, America would be cast in Rio as the chief villain of the story. Bush Senior and his advisers could hardly have been unaware that, because of the pronounced ideological slant given to the conference by Maurice Strong, intense pressure would be put on rich countries to accept highly damaging curbs on their emissions, while countries such as Brazil, China and India would be exempted. Bush was also concerned that Senator Gore might be present in Rio.⁶

In fact Bush’s White House⁷ advisers were worried by the rising alarm of US environmentalists. As his chief of staff John Sununu later recalled, in 1989 they called in some of the leading US scientists who were expressing alarm over global warming and subjected them to serious questioning on the science, notably on the failure of their computer models to take proper account of interactions between the atmosphere and the oceans. Sununu, a qualified scientist, told them that they needed seriously to improve the quality of their research. For this purpose the federal government was prepared to increase its funding programme for climate research tenfold from around \$200 million annually to \$2000 million.

Two decades later he wryly expressed regret that it was the Bush government which had thus given the biggest ever financial boost to research underpinning climate alarmism⁸.

When Margaret Thatcher came to write her memoirs in 1993 she had moderated her position dramatically. Omitting any reference to the scientific details, she now insisted that the relationship between CO₂ and climate change was ‘a good deal less certain than the relationship between CFCs and ozone depletion’. The only quotation reference he made to the subject in *The Downing Street Years* was for ‘further research’ and that ‘any political response to climate change must be based on ‘good science’ to establish cause and effect’.

The *Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit* in May 1992 was very much the pet project of its chosen secretary-general and chief organiser, Maurice Strong. As a gifted top-level political networker and behind-the-scene operator, it was the high point of his career. As a lifelong crusader for world government and the need to redress the balance between the world’s richer and poorer nations, it perfectly expressed his long-held belief that the ideal cause to further those aims was *Environmentalism*, and above all *Climate Change*, which he argued would hit the poorer nations hardest.

The *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)* was sponsored by the *Brundtland Commission* on which Strong had played such an influential part in the 1980s. Although it covered other environmental issues, such as *Biodiversity*, it was also that ‘global convention’ on climate change called for by the *UNEP-WMO* sponsored conference at Villach back in 1985.

The world had never seen anything like the gathering which assembled in Rio at the end of May 1992. Strong, who chaired the conference, had long believed in using the influence of the leading environmentalist campaign groups, such as *Greenpeace*, *Friends of the Earth* and the *World Wildlife Fund*, of which Strong was to become a board

⁶ Although Senator Al Gore was excluded from the official US delegation, Strong now working closely with Gore on Global Warming, gave him a personal invitation to attend (interview with Strong, *Executive Intelligence Review*, 29 January 1999). Despite his President’s insistence that the US would not sign unless China and India participated, Gore signed a treaty which exempted them.

⁷ This is in sharp contrast to the *Obama White House*. Appointed as *Chief Scientific Adviser* to the *Obama White House* was Professor John Holdren, whose record as a prophet of planetary doom went back to the 1970s, when he had famously co-authored a paper with the most apocalyptic doom-sayer of them all, Paul Ehrlich of *The Population Bomb*. As an adviser to Gore on *An Inconvenient Truth* and director of the *Wood Hole Research Institute*, a think-tank dedicated to climate alarmism, Holdren was a much more obviously hard-line advocate for drastic action on warming than Obama’s *Secretary of State for Energy*, the somewhat unworldly *Nobel Prize*-winning physicist Professor Stephen Chu, who had gone on record as saying that he wanted to see taxes raised on fossil fuels to make the US’ cheap gasoline as expensive as it was in Europe. Like Maurice Strong before him, Holdren believed in ‘moving towards some kind of world government’, to ensure that rich countries reduced their selfishly high standard of living in order to redistribute wealth to poorer countries.

⁸ From a speech by Sununu to *Heartland Institute Conference* in New York on 11 March 2009...see *Heartland Institute* website.

member. Many of them, as members of the *Climate Action Network*, had received official funding through UN bodies to rally support for his *Rio Conference*. No fewer than 20,000 activists were sponsored to come to Rio itself.⁹

This seeming evidence of worldwide popular concern did much to ensure that politicians from 172 countries agreed to fly in to Rio for the great occasion. They included 108 prime ministers and presidents, ranging from President George Bush Senior of the USA to President Fidel Castro of Cuba. Also attended were 10,000 representatives of the media. It was easily the largest such political get-together in history.

Strong, with his passion for the idea of *World Governance*, opened the two-week conference by proclaiming that:

‘The concept of national sovereignty has been an immutable, indeed sacred, principle of international relations. It is a principle which will yield only slowly and reluctantly to the new imperatives of global environmental cooperation. It is simply not feasible for sovereignty to be exercised unilaterally by individual nation states, however powerful. The global community must be assured of environmental security.’

While most activists staged a giant non-stop rally nearby...the *Non-Governmental Organisation Forum*...2,400 of them were invited as official delegates to the main conference and here on 12 June they cheered as politicians from 154 countries queued up to sign a *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*.¹⁰

On ratification this framework would commit all the signatory governments to a voluntary reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, with the aim of ‘preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with earth’s climate system’. These actions were aimed primarily at industrialised countries, with the intention that, by the year 2000, their CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions would be no higher than they had been in 1990. At this stage the commitment was only voluntary. But the *Convention’s* aim was that, in close cooperation with the *IPCC* on the science, it should be replaced by a series of treaties or *Protocols*, setting targets for curbing emissions which would be mandatory. The first would be that to be agreed five years later in Kyoto.

For Strong it was ‘a historic moment for humanity’. For the campaigners against *Global Warming* it was the headiest moment they had known so far. Barely four years after the campaign had begun in earnest, their issue was being raised towards the top of the world’s political agenda.

In 1992 when Strong staged his extraordinary *World Summit* in Rio de Janeiro, to approve the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*, the scene was one of politicians lining up to sign the *Rio Convention* to the applause of the activists. The contents of the convention had however been drafted by the officials working for Strong’s own commissariat.

Despite the private reservation of many governments, so heady was the collective enthusiasm generated around the conference that none of the politicians present dared question what was happening. Swept along by the pressure of the general euphoria, they thus committed their countries to a set of general principles dictated by Strong’s officials, and to turning up at the next conference - to take place in Kyoto five years later - at which they would agree to specific targets, requiring their nations and peoples to make very drastic cuts in their CO₂ emissions.

One major government in the world, that of what was about to become the *European Union*, had already for its own reasons laid out the template for all the new laws and regulations it would introduce to comply with the recommendations of the *IPCC’s* first report. These had been drawn up by the officials of the *European Commission* after discussions with officials from the governments of the member states. Elected politicians nodded all this through on the instructions of unelected officials who advised them that this was what the *IPCC* had recommended.

The UN had already moved to play the role of world government in at least two other areas. One covered food safety and veterinary standards, drawn up by a body known as the *Codex Alimentarius Commission*. This was subordinate to the *World Health Organisation* and the *Food and Agriculture Organisation*, each of which in turn were subordinate to the *United Nations*. These rules bound national governments throughout the world and were implemented in Europe, for instance, through legislation drafted by the *European Commission*.

Another was the drawing up of standards governing the safety of road transport. These were passed on to Europe through the *UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)* implemented by Brussels issuing directives and regulations which member governments had no power to question and were legally obliged to comply with.

The next five years were to see an endless succession of meetings, as part of what was now the *UNFCCC Process*, to negotiate the contents of what was to become the Kyoto treaty. These were almost entirely conducted between officials of all the countries signed up to the Rio treaty, with elected politicians playing only a peripheral role.

⁹ *Climate Action Network* attendance on this scale had only been possible by the millions of tax dollars Strong had been able to distribute to ensure they would be there to support him and set the tone of the gathering.

¹⁰ *Wikipedia’s* profile on Maurice Strong includes an intriguing observation...which it does not elaborate...that ‘Strong lobbied to change *NGO* perspectives of the *World Bank*.’

As the world's politicians left the conference, their duty was to go home to persuade their governments to ratify a treaty which, even if implemented to the full, its supporters could only claim was likely to hold back the process of global warming for at best six years.



This was the crowning moment of Strong's lifelong dream that the *UN* might be transformed into a fully-fledged world government. He was never to play such a leading role on the world stage again, not least because of a curious episode which had occurred five months before the *Kyoto Conference* took place.

Two events took place in July 1997 six months before the *Kyoto Conference*. One was a very public event while the other was hidden from the public gaze for the next seven years. Both involved Maurice Strong in heavy defeats.

On 21st July 1997 the *US Senate* voted by 95 to 0 for a resolution opposing the proposed Kyoto agreement. As international treaties require the support of two-thirds of the *Senate*, this meant the US would not ratify the treaty. This unanimous veto on US participation was principally on the grounds that it was being formally proposed that the already developed countries would have to accept very severe restrictions on their *Greenhouse Gas Emissions* while the still-developing countries, which included China and India, would be exempt even though their economies were growing so fast that they would soon be among the world's major CO₂ contributors.

The *Senate* noted that the reductions required by the industrialised world with such a one-sided treaty would be so great as to result in 'serious harm to the US economy, including significant job losses, trade disadvantages, increased energy and consumer costs'. Despite the likelihood that the world's leading economic power and CO₂ emitter would not take part, the planned treaty remained on course.

In November 1997 just two weeks before the Kyoto conference was due to begin, President Clinton endorsed the *Senate's* decision, confirming that the US would not agree to the treaty unless China and India agreed to participate. All this was public knowledge.

However in July 1997, unknown until Paul Volcker completed his independent inquiry into Iraq's *Oil for Food* programme in 2005, the foreign minister of Iraq had handed \$1 million to a Korean contact of Strong's to persuade the *UN* to allow Saddam's government more favourable arrangements under the *UN* programme.¹¹ Saddam's money was passed to Strong in the form of a cheque, which he personally endorsed to be paid into the account of one of his family's companies. Strong stepped down as *UN Under-Secretary* when this became public knowledge.

The two years before the world's politicians were finally to gather in Kyoto were taken up with long and complex negotiations. These were conducted through a process set up under the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* known as the *Conference of the Parties (COP)*.

¹¹ The *UN's Oil for Food Programme* for Iraq was a project devised to allow certain exemptions from the *UN's* ban on Iraqi oil exports, on condition that the proceeds were used to feed the impoverished Iraqi population.

The first COP meeting was held in Berlin from 28 March to 7 April 1995 to agree the framework and goals of the negotiating process, vote themselves a preliminary budget of €18,664,200 and assign the permanent secretariat to Bonn. The most fractious feature of these negotiations would be the split between the rich industrialised nations of *The North* and the poor under-developed nations of *The South* championed by Brazil, China and India. But finally in December 1997 2,000 official government delegates gathered in Kyoto for COP III accompanied by 3,000 from the world's media and 5,000 lobbyists and activists from 200 NGOs...funded by Strong as in Rio five years before.

After days of haggling in an attempt to find some compromise formula acceptable to the US Senate on the morning of 11 December 1997 after yet another marathon session lasting through the night a much-revised text of the Protocol was finally agreed. No one had any idea how the targets were to be achieved. It would be up to each country to work out its own way to meet them. But *Emissions Trading*¹² was there in the treaty to be administered by the UNFCCC through its *Clean Development Mechanism*. This was key to what was to follow.

The UN had every reason to be grateful to Strong. He had used the issue of *Global Warming* at *Montreal*, *Rio* and *Kyoto* to persuade politicians and governments to accept the supranational authority of the *United Nations Organisation* on a scale it had never enjoyed before, handing it powers considerably more far-reaching than anything in the minds of those who drew up its original charter. After the exposure of his part in the 'oil for food' scandal, he retired to Beijing, which he had visited many times as a long-time friend of the Chinese Government.¹³

Between 1998 and 2005 Strong was a personal intermediary for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and UN envoy for the Communist regime in North Korea. But he did not stay out of the news for long. One of the biggest stories of 2008 was the continuing rise of a massive array of vested interests benefiting financially from the *Gore-Strong Global Warming Scare*. Billions were going into every kind of academic research, making it the fastest growing sector in the academic world; tens of billions were going into every sector of the 'renewables' industry; and vast sums were going to *Experts* advising governments and industry on how to move towards a *Low Carbon Economy*.

The greatest bonanza of all, however, was the exploding global trade in *Carbon Credits*, officially estimated in 2008 at \$126 billion. Buying and selling the right to emit CO₂ was growing so fast that estimates of the eventual cost were anything up to \$10 trillion a year, making *Carbon* the most valuable traded commodity in the world. Among those who stood to make fortunes from *Carbon Trading* was Maurice Strong who had been on the board of the *Chicago Climate Exchange*, one of the world's foremost centres for broking the carbon deals. He was reported as being involved in setting up the *Tianjin Climate Exchange*, the first in China, the world's biggest seller of *Certified Emission Reduction Credits* under the UN's *Clean Development Mechanism*.

¹² See *Environmentalism* by William Shepherd at <http://climate.blog.co.uk/2011/05/29/environmentalism-11233208/>.

¹³ According to Christopher Booker in *The Real Global Warming Disaster* (2009, Continuum, London & New York, ISBN 9781441110527) Strong 'like to boast that he had been close to those at the top of the [Chinese] totalitarian government for 40 years, going back to the time of the Cultural Revolution under Mso-tse-Tong' and that 'after his disgrace he lived quietly in the Chinese capital in a penthouse flat at the top of a building occupied by various UN agencies'. Booker cites as his source an item *Maurice Strong named in UN oil-for-food report* on the CTV News website on 8 September 2005 and a *Wall Street Journal* article by Claudia Rosett on 11th October 2008 entitled *The UN's Man of Mystery*.