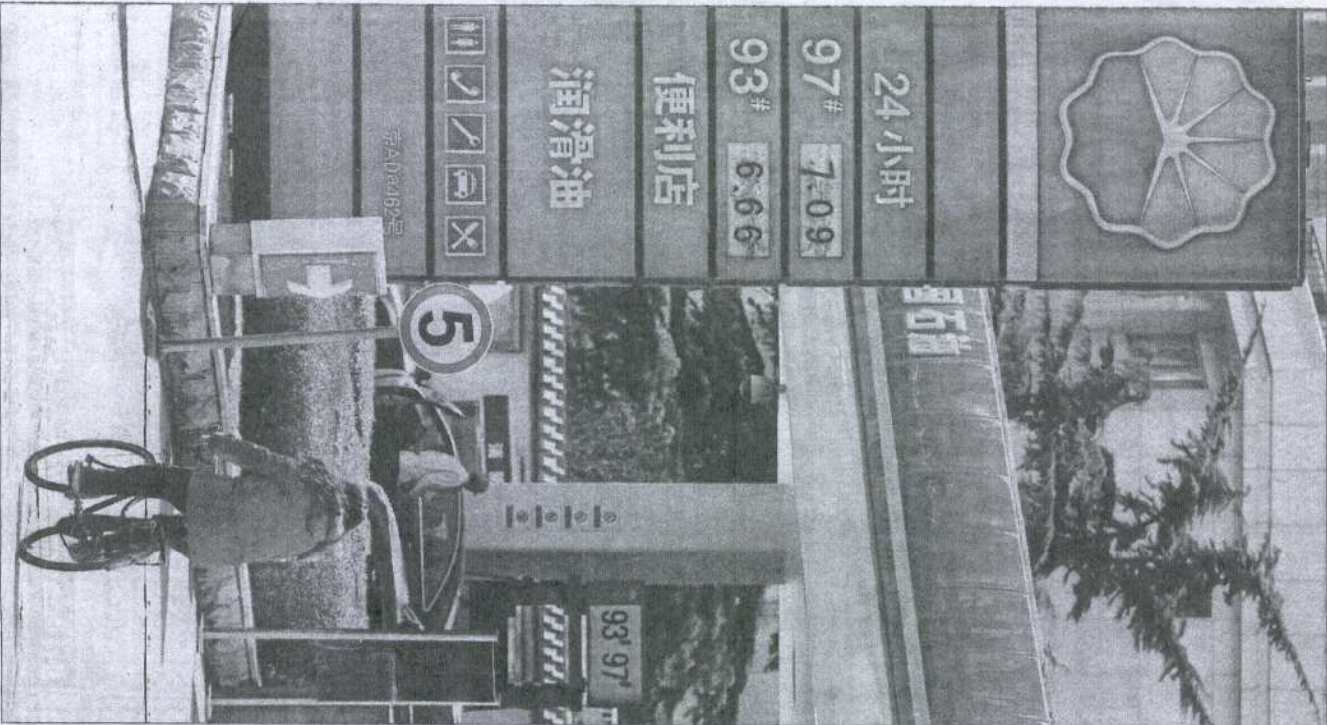


Strong voice for greener China

MARK PRAIN introduces the Hillary Institute's 2010 laureate for leadership, Peggy Liu, and explains her place in global action to combat climate change.



The world is at war with energy, and China is our battlefield," according to Qiu Bao Xing, the Chinese Vice-Minister of Housing and Urban Rural Construction.

His strong words are reported on the home-page of the Joint US-China Collaboration on Clean Energy (JUCCCE), and that organisation's chairwoman, Peggy Liu, has been named the 2010 Hillary Laureate for Leadership on Climate Change Solutions.

Honoured as an adviser to the Clinton Global Initiative, a *Time* magazine Hero of the Environment (2008), and a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader (2009), Liu is China's most eloquent "clean economy" advocate.

The Hillary Institute's choice follows its international governors' selection of Jeremy Leggett in 2009, renowned author and chairman of Solar Century, the United Kingdom's leading solar provider.

China overtook the United States as the world's largest greenhouse gas producer in 2006.

If it continues unabated, it will emit more greenhouse gases in the next 30 years than the US has in its history.

China is the largest consumer of coal, second largest of oil after the US and now the world's largest energy consumer. On the positive side, its clean technology investment exceeds any other nation. From zero in 2003, China now produces more solar panels than any other country and will soon be the world's largest wind turbine manufacturer.

THE INSTITUTE

The Hillary Institute, launched in 2007, is a New Zealand-based international organisation named in recognition of the achievements and leadership of Sir Edmund Hillary. It aims to foster leadership worldwide.

argue that the willingness to set ambitious goals for the nation – and then quickly progressing forward – is more important than exact reporting at every point.

Given how rapidly China is changing, every day, comparing statistics is like taking a snapshot of a speeding bullet. At this stage of the climate game, it is more important to ensure that the trigger has been pulled and that the bullet has been aimed in the right direction.

Accepting scepticism of China's general transparency record, Liu nonetheless articulates a strong case – and in terms of the "politics of the possible" last week was a very interesting one for her Western contemporaries.

As the dust settles post-Copenhagen, a United Kingdom Government inquiry, cleared East Anglia University of blame over the "famed global emissions" and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown introduced long-awaited domestic feed-in tariffs, paying home-owners to generate their own clean electricity.

Leggett's Solar Century has experienced a four-fold increase in sales inquiries since February, as owners realise the benefits of powering their own homes plus cutting energy bills and CO₂.

Also last week, US President Barack Obama endorsed "Drill Baby Drill" – opening vast expanses of water along the Atlantic coastline, the eastern Gulf of Mexico and Alaska's



Peggy Liu

north coast to oil and gas exploration. Obama then imposed historic greenhouse gas emission standards on the entire US vehicle fleet, playing a controversially debt double-hand, re-orienting focus on the climate issue following his historic healthcare victory.

The new rules should reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent, saving the average 2012-2016 car owner US\$3000 in fuel while eliminating a billion tons of greenhouse gases over the lives of all regulated vehicles – at an additional new-car average cost of US\$1000 by 2016.

And Nobel Prize-winning US Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced this week the availability of US\$37.5 million for Chinese and American researchers working on clean energy projects.

Financing will go to American researchers and institutions, and grants will match the Department of Energy's money, totalling

President Hu Jintao, who doesn't have to suffer the pangs of democracy in getting on with it.

Whether New Zealand has the will or the will to seriously optimise our brand proposition is yet to be seen, but we would be unwise to ignore the direction taken by the world's two largest economies, one with whom we already have an historic free-trade agreement, and the other, the US, which we've long been chasing for a similar deal.

Moreover opportunities for Kiwi innovation in clean technology are real, not least in agriculture, but also in a host of arenas – where growth to scale will only be served by working with larger economies.

Despite the "hiccup" of Copenhagen global investors poured US\$1.9 billion into green start-ups during January to March 2010, up 29 per cent from 2009's fourth quarter and an 83 per cent rise on the same quarter last year. As Sir Ed would remind us, "it's not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves." Hillary Laureates Liu and Leggett could both be described as militant optimists and "solution delivery activists".

What Richard Branson terms a "war on carbon" will ultimately be won by hearts and minds, not brawn or economists or politicians.

Veteran Australia Institute executive director Clive Hamilton's *Reason for a Species* warns "steadfast buoyancy won't get us there – real urgency is required. Despite business-as-usual demographics, well-communicated, militant common sense plus strong, pragmatic global incentives to act, are vital – there's little point in dwelling on our legacy if we fail."

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Perspective

Rapid change: A cyclist passes a PetcoChina station in central Beijing. China overtook the US as the world's largest greenhouse gas producer in 2006. Photo: Reuters