

DEFRA - NO TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

A junior British government minister has been told to make no further comments, after accusing British, Irish and US airlines of failing to take global warming seriously. The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said it was to avoid fuelling the controversy further, after Ian Pearson branded no-frills carrier Ryanair 'the irresponsible face of capitalism'.

Defra also denied that the minister of state for climate change and environment had been told off for the outburst by his boss, Environment Secretary David Miliband. Pearson told Friday's edition of The Guardian newspaper that Ryanair chief executive Michael O'Leary's attitude was "just completely off the wall". "When it comes to climate change, Ryanair are not just the unacceptable face of capitalism, they are the irresponsible face of capitalism," he said.

But a furious O'Leary hit back, saying the minister was "foolish and ill-informed" and "hasn't a clue what he's talking about". The Times newspaper quoted an unnamed adviser to Miliband as saying Pearson's comments were "incredibly unhelpful".

But a Defra spokeswoman insisted: "There hasn't been any dressing down," though admitted that Pearson's comments had come as a surprise. She denied that the minister had been silenced, but said: "He has been told not to do any more interviews which might accelerate the story." The European Commission proposed last month to set carbon dioxide emission quotas for airlines from 2011 that it estimates could raise ticket prices by up to \$12 dollars by 2020 for internal European flights.

EXTRACT FROM

<http://www.7days.ae/2007/01/07/uk-minister-silenced-over-ryanair-comment.html#comments>