

Bush and the environment: Friends or foes?

In his first few months in office, President George W. Bush's environmental policies have already generated a great deal of support and criticism. While some argue his policies are saving our economy, others call him an environmentally unfriendly president who caters to big business.

The question is...

Who's right?



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FROM THE RIGHT: BUSH ACTING CAUTIOUSLY TO PREVENT ECONOMIC TROUBLES

By Brian Blase

President George W. Bush has once again come under fire from green groups since he announced the Kyoto Treaty signed in Japan is unfair to the United States and cannot be ratified. His opinion is in complete agreement with the U.S. Senate, which voted unanimously three years ago to reject the treaty because it placed significant burden on the United States to meet emission standards that other countries were not being forced to meet.

The Kyoto Protocol assumes that global warming exists and that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between carbon dioxide emissions and global heating. No such relationship has been proven to exist, yet environmental zealots from around the world are trying to shove Kyoto down the American throat.

Significant disagreement exists in the scientific community over the existence of global warming. Because the media almost never present the other side of the argument, I feel it my duty to present some facts about world climate change.

According to Dr. Kenneth Green, environmental director of the Reason Public Policy Institute:

"Our ability really to know what the cli-

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mate is doing is limited by a short observational record and by the uncertainties involved in trying to figure out what the climate was like in the past or might be like in the future, for comparison with recent climate changes.

While the Earth's climate has been evolving and changing for over four billion years, recordings of the temperature only cover about 150 years. In fact, temperature records are spotty before the 1950s and only cover a tiny portion of the globe mostly over land."

When the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change recently released its global warming report — a report many critics of Bush's environmental policies have cited — 14 international experts gathered on Capitol Hill to review it.

They unanimously concluded that it contained systematic errors and omissions bordering on scientific fraud. The report omitted that carbon dioxide levels, a major greenhouse gas of concern, was actually more prevalent in the pre-industrial era than it is today. In addition, the report used only surface temperature instead of satellite and balloon records, which do not indicate significant warming.

In fact, the little global warming that we are experiencing is, frankly, minute. It also should not be a surprise as it is following the "little ice age."

OK, so even if I give in a little and ignore a plethora of scientific argument and say global warming exists, then what? Determining the causes of global warming and the effects of global warming is even more difficult and more debatable.

So many factors go into determining the weather, and if we cannot accurately predict the weather for a period greater than 48 hours, how can we accurately predict the weather 100 years from now? And if we are unsure as to the existence of global warming, its causes, its effects, and whether it exists, why should the United States sign a treaty that could unilaterally disarm its economy? The Kyoto Protocol fails to require developing countries, such as China and India, to adhere to any emission standard.

Developed on the basis of spotty data and deeply flawed analytical models, the Kyoto treaty, if implemented, would produce only one certain result — severe harm to the U.S. economy. As Wall Street Journal columnist James Glassman has noted, "The

U.S. could meet the Kyoto targets only by sharply increasing the price of fossil fuels. ... [T]he growth of gross domestic product in the U.S. would be cut by more than half as businesses moved offshore to escape the high tax."

President Bush has been right to reject the Kyoto Treaty. In effect, Bush has rejected moving American jobs overseas, rejected \$3-gallons of gas, and has rejected skyrocketing home heating bills.

Though the media has fallen for the liberal environmental line, we must not. More research must be done before we could even contemplate signing the Kyoto Protocol, and we must never sign it if competing countries like China are not held to equal standards.

President Bush has also recently come under fire for his plan to open up space in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for drilling. The opponents of such a plan argue that this would tarnish our nation's natural beauty.

They seem to ignore that modern technology makes possible greatly expanded oil and gas drilling on federal lands without environmental damage.

A fatal flaw of the Clinton administration was its failure to form a national energy policy. Ten years ago we imported 40 percent of our crude oil as compared to today when we import about 60 percent of our crude oil. Unfortunately, we are becoming increasingly reliant on OPEC and the Middle East for our sources of oil.

In addition to the problem of ballooning trade deficit for oil, the current level of oil imports can easily produce shortages of fuel,

oil, and gas if the OPEC decides to further tighten its grip.

A national energy policy is badly needed and the Bush administration as cited the formation of such a policy as its top priority. Domestic oil production is a necessity; we must open up these plentiful oil reserves to drilling in order to avoid a major future oil crisis.

If gas becomes too limited and expensive, those less well off will not be able to heat their homes in the winter and people will become immobile because they won't be able to afford to drive their cars.

In order to avoid a potentially disastrous situation, we must immediately open up some lands to drilling while investigating alternative energy sources, such as clean coal technology and nuclear and solar energy.

The rejection of the Kyoto Protocol and the opening up of lands to drilling are good policy even though the liberals demagogue the issue and portray conservatives as enemies of the environment.

Bush has used science and technology as the basis of his energy and environmental policy instead of ceding to the pressure of extreme environmentalists, Al Gore, and The New York Times.

Whatever the political consequences of standing for principle and science, Bush cannot yield to this dangerous Green Machine.

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FROM THE LEFT: BUSH IS CALLOUS TO ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

By Mike Still

I'd like to start out this week's column, oh fearless readers, with a little etiquette lesson: Remember, everyone, if someone gives you a gift, you must be grateful and give thanks. And when you are in the position that you can do a favor for the gift-giver, please be gracious and do so.

Take for example, our president, Mr. George W. Bush. During his election, the electric utility and coal mining industries gave the gift of almost \$560,000 to his campaign. Mr. Bush, proving to be an ever-gracious head of state, showed his thanks for the gift by deciding to withdraw United States support from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol that regulated international carbon dioxide emissions.

In showing his appreciation for such big business' fine monetary gifts, Mr. Bush has won the "Mike Still Gentleman of the Week" award. Thank you, Mr. Bush. You have once again made the world a better place.

Oh jeez, I'm sorry everyone. I just spilled sarcasm all over my keyboard.

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No one imagined that Bush would be an ecologically conscious president. After all, he was the governor of Texas, and I've seen "King of the Hill" — I know what it's like down there.

Or, for those of you who aren't as well-versed in Fox television programming, the Sierra Club nicely painted a picture of the environment in Texas when they said "Texas ranks first in toxic releases to the environment, first in total toxic air emissions from industrial facilities, first in toxic chemical accidents, and first in cancer-causing pollution." Ye-haw.

Even if no one suspected that Mr. Bush would be the greenest president ever, the fact that he has approached the environment in such a callous manner has shocked many. By overturning and blocking key ecological measures, Mr. Bush has set the world on a course for a very warm 21st century.

For the first time in the five billion-year history of this blue sphere called earth, significant global environmental changes have been forced into motion by an organism that the earth itself created. These changes, caused by humans spilling billions of tons of

carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air over the course of two centuries, will wipe out entire populations of species, flood large portions of land, and basically lower the earth's resell value by quite a bit.

At this rate, we're not getting our security deposit back.

Most Americans recognize the fact that our planet earth is faced with an environmental crisis. Our president, unfortunately, is not most Americans.

Bush believes that the jury is still out on global warming and believes that the problem must be studied further before action can be taken.

Humm ... studied further as in assembling an international team of scientists to gather data and run countless computer simulations to attempt to glean what the next century might look like if we keep going the way we are going? Well, that's already been done.

Just a few weeks ago, the U.N.-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released the most authoritative report yet on global warming. Bill Easterling, a Penn State professor in geography and agronomy, was one of the lead authors

of the report, and although he hails from "Happy Valley," his team's findings are anything but cheerful.

Using seven different computer climate models, they came up with 235 independent predictions of global temperature change. From the data collected, the IPCC has predicted that the global temperature rise over the next century will be anywhere from 2.5 to 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

If climate change ends up being at the high end of this range, parts of land all over the world will begin to be engulfed by the rising seas.

Most of Louisiana will disappear as will the entirety of coastal Florida. (President Bush, I know that you had some trouble in Florida last fall, but I don't think this is the best possible revenge.)

So what should the world do about this? Well, way back in the 20th century — 1997, to be precise — world leaders came together to draft the aforementioned Kyoto Protocol, a set of international guidelines that would reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

But Mr. Bush recently pulled our country out of the treaty. He didn't see any reason why we should have to answer to the rest of the world for our polluting ways.

Forget about the fact that America holds only 4 percent of the world's population, but produces one quarter of the world's greenhouse gases.

We're pulling out 'cuz ain't nobody gonna tell us what to do.

Meanwhile, the European Union, Mexico,

and China — all formerly notorious polluters — have been making concerted efforts to clean up their act.

All the rest of the world needs is America's support, and the goals set by the Kyoto Protocol could be met.

Unfortunately, Bush seems to think that reducing carbon dioxide levels means reducing the luster of the economy. And while, yes, some businesses might initially be harmed by reducing carbon dioxide levels, by earnestly investing in alternative energy sources and figuring out way to responsibly clean up our act, the resuscitation of the environment does not require the smothering of the economy.

America needs to stand up and acknowledge the responsibility for our share in harming the earth. By actively committing ourselves to the fight against global warming now, the unnatural rise in temperatures can be stymied.

But as long as our president worries more about satisfying corporate donors than about cutting carbon dioxide emissions, we cannot and will not be able to stop this oncoming ecological catastrophe.

Who knows, though? As sea levels rise, maybe our grandchildren will have a great time vacationing in Ocean City, Pennsylvania.

With Bush's backwards ecological policy, we just may find out.

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