

The Climate Cannot Wait For Bush

But if Bush doesn't change the climate will

Ratify Kyoto With or Without the US

President George W. Bush's announcement in late March that the United States was abandoning the Kyoto Protocol was met by a storm of protest, both in the US and internationally. Governments, scientists, religious leaders, labour and other public figures, as well as environmental organisations, condemned the move. The US was seen as abandoning its moral, political and legal responsibility to work internationally to address the most pressing international environmental problem of the 21st century: global climate change. President Bush's visit to Europe threatens to be marked by outrage created by the world's worst greenhouse gas polluter's rejection of the last 12 years of international climate negotiations.

Greenpeace believes that the Bush administration's isolationist policy will ultimately fail, both domestically and internationally. The recent defection of Senator James Jeffords of Vermont indicates the breadth of opposition to Bush's rejection of Kyoto, his energy policy and the rest of his hard core right wing agenda, even from moderates within his own party. George Bush does not have a mandate from the American people or the Congress to wreck the international climate negotiations.

Greenpeace urges the European Union to stand firm in the face of Bush's posturing, and to recognise that the majority of the American people support international action to protect the climate. Europe must stand firm in its resolve to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and have it enter into force in time for the Rio+10 Summit in Johannesburg in September of 2002. Failure to do so will be met with the harshest criticism from the vast majority of Europeans who want to get on with the business of preventing dangerous climate change. US public opinion and the US Congress are moving inexorably in the right direction. The White House will follow eventually.

Background

When George Bush was installed in the White House in January, after having received fewer votes than his main rival Al Gore, he pledged to act in a spirit of conciliation and bi-partisanship, seeking to tone down the acrimonious debate that had characterised the Clinton years. Indeed, his initial posture reflected that approach. However, in early March, it became clear that the representatives of the fossil fuel industry and military contractors which made up the majority of his cabinet (see Table I) had taken control, and that a hard core right wing agenda was on the table.

Environmentalists waited with bated breath for the first pronouncements on climate change from the new administration. The publication of the documents from the three working groups of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in January, February and March reinforced and strengthened the global scientific consensus that human activities were affecting the climate, and the consequences were going to be

worse, and sooner, than previous thought. This news put the climate issue back on the front pages.

In early March, the new US Environmental Protection Agency administrator, Christine Whitman, participated in the G8 environment minister's summit in Trieste, Italy, where climate change was at the top of the agenda. While choosing her words carefully, she struck an encouraging note about US willingness to participate constructively in the ongoing climate negotiations, and even signed a final text which read.

“We express our concern about the seriousness of the situation according to the findings of the IPCC report. We commit ourselves at the resumed COP6 to strive to reach agreement on outstanding political issues and to ensure in a cost-effective manner the environmental integrity of the Kyoto Protocol, making full use of all opportunities, including ministerial meetings. A successful outcome at COP 6-bis is necessary to allow early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. For most countries this means no later than 2002, with timely ratification processes.”

Whitman's remarks at the G8 summit emphasized domestic measures being undertaken by the US, in particular emphasizing President Bush's campaign promise to cap carbon-dioxide emissions from US power plants. Carbon dioxide emissions are the largest contributor to human-induced climate change.

Just over a week after Whitman's return to the US, President Bush, under severe pressure from the fossil fuel lobby and their representatives in the Congress, reversed his campaign promise. In a 13 March letter to Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel, he wrote, *“I do not believe, however, that the government should impose on power plants mandatory emissions reductions for carbon dioxide...”*, claiming that it was too expensive. He also cited, *“the incomplete state of scientific knowledge of the causes of, and solutions to, global climate change and the lack of commercially available technologies for removing and storing carbon.”*

Reactions domestically and from around the world condemning the move were swift, and the administration was immediately challenged for questioning the scientific basis of global warming. The administration has since backed off on the science question, in the face of repeated challenges. However, his posturing was sufficient to scare off the US National Academy of Sciences from signing on to a statement supporting IPCC science and calling for ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, which was signed by the national science academies of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, the Caribbean countries, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

On 28 March, President Bush removed all doubt about who was running the agenda in the White House by announcing that the US was pulling out of negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol. The response was swift, with nearly universal condemnation of Bush's move from around the world. It sparked a world tour of EU officials seeking support for Kyoto,

which met with success in most places, but none in the US. Since then, some European leaders have held out the hope that the US might come back to the table, but now it is clear that that is not going to happen.

The USA is bound by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to which the Kyoto Protocol is subsidiary. The UNFCCC was signed by President Bush's father in 1992 and ratified by the US Senate the same year. The US is bound by that treaty which seeks '*stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at safe levels*'. So whatever the US thinks about Kyoto, it is legally bound to seek its goals. The only course open to them seems to be to try and wreck the current negotiations in order to pave the way for its 'alternative'. This 'alternative' approach has been promised since late March, with no definite timetable revealed to either the public or interested governments. The Bush 'alternative' is now rumoured to be ready some time AFTER the climate negotiations resume in Bonn, Germany, in July. Originally scheduled for April or May, the Bonn meeting was delayed at the request of the United States in late January, shortly after Bush took office. More delaying tactics.

The Bush administration continues to express 'concern' over the issue of climate change, but the greater concern seems to be handing out subsidies and regulatory breaks to its friends in the fossil fuel industry. Bush's energy plan, released in May, calls for a dramatic increase in energy supply, primarily from fossil fuels and nuclear power, and is so vague that it is impossible to calculate with any clarity the impacts on US emissions. Condemned both in the US and internationally as 'heading in exactly the wrong direction', it is clear that implementation of the plan would result in at least a 35 percent increase, and that from the country which is already responsible for approximately one quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions. It seems unlikely that some of the worst aspects of the plan will receive Congressional approval, but there are still likely to be major investments in 19th century technologies such as oil and coal when what is needed is massive investment and development in the technologies of the 21st century such as wind and solar.

Conclusion

While this right wing drama plays out in Washington, the rest of the world must not be distracted from combating climate change, and the first step is the ratification and entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. The United States' 'alternative', if it ever appears, is very likely to be strong on rhetoric, but very weak on targets and timetables for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and will try to postpone the hard choices to a time in the future when they will no doubt be much harder and more expensive to take.....and perhaps to a time when it is too late to reverse the damage that we are doing to the world's climate system.

The Kyoto Protocol does not go far enough, it is true, but it was watered down to its present text largely as a result of US demands and corporate intervention. The EU and the rest of the world cannot wait until the political climate in Washington improves, or expect some miraculous 'alternative' from Washington. It will not come while the current

administration lasts. The EU must show real leadership, fulfill its promise to its people, and agree now to ratify and implement the Kyoto Protocol. Then it must implement it fully, developing the next steps within the convention for further and deeper cuts in greenhouse gases, and at the same time wait for signs that sanity is returning to Washington and welcome the US back into the process. Waiting for Bush is not an option.

Details of President Bush's Energy and Military Ties

Cabinet

Vice President Dick Cheney - Former CEO of Haliburton, one of the world's largest oil field service providers.

Secretary of State Colin Powell - Until recently had large investments in General Dynamics, a military contractor.

Veteran Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi - Former COO at Lockheed Martin, a military contractor.

Attorney General John Ashcroft - Received \$100,000s from Auto, Oil and Gas corporations during his failed US Senate re-election campaign.

EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman - Until recently had nearly \$100,000 invested in Texas oil wells and \$100,000s invested in various oil and defense related corporations.

Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans - Former President of Tom Brown Inc, an oil and gas corporation. Was recently a board member of TMBR/Sharp Drilling.

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton - Former national chair of the Coalition for Republican Environmental Advocates which was strongly connected with BP and Ford. Former lobbyist for Delta Petroleum and several other oil related businesses.

Secretary of Transportation Norman Minetta - Former VP for Lockheed Martin, a defense contractor.

Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill - Former CEO of Alcoa, the largest aluminium producer in the United States.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld - Made millions when the defense contractor General Dynamics bought Gulfstream-Aerospace.

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham - Among top recipients of donations from energy and auto industries during his failed Senate re-election campaign.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Thomas Thompson - Has ties to General Electric including recent ownership of \$10,000s in stocks.

Other important advisors

Chief of Staff Andrew Card - Former Chief lobbyist for General Motors and former President of American Automobile Manufacturers Association.

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice - Until recently sat on the board of Chevron.

Director Office of Management and Budget Mitch Daniels - Until recently had nearly \$100,000 invested in GM.

White House director of legislative affairs Nicholas Calio - Former lobbyist for oil and auto corps.

Top economic coordinator Lawrence B. Lindsey - Received \$50,000 last year from Enron for consulting

Vice President Cheney's chief of staff I. Lewis Libby - Until recently owned \$10,000s in Texaco, ExxonMobil, Chesapeake Energy and Enron stocks.

President Bush's chief political strategist Karl Rove - Until recently owned \$100,000 in Enron stocks. Also had substantial holdings in BP Amoco and Royal Dutch Shell.

Clay Johnson, director of presidential personnel- Still owns \$100,000s in El Paso Energy stock

Appointments

State Department

Richard Armitage, deputy secretary of state- Until recently on the board of General Dynamics Electronic Systems.

Otto Reich, assistant secretary of state for western hemisphere affairs- Former lobbyist for Lockheed-Martin.

Veterans Affairs Department

Maureen Patricia Cragin, assistant secretary for public and intergovernmental affairs- Former lobbyist for Raytheon.

Leo S. Mackay, Jr., deputy secretary- Recently president of a division of Bell Helicopters.

Commerce Department

Kathleen B. Cooper, under secretary for economic affairs- Former chief economist for Exxon.

Interior Department

Steven Griles, deputy secretary of interior- Former lobbyist for various energy corporations.

Office of Management

Sean O'Keefe, deputy director- Served on the boards of various military and energy corps.

Office of Transportation

Michael Jackson, deputy secretary of transportation- Former VP for Lockheed Martin.

Sean B. O'Hallaren, deputy secretary for government affairs- Former Government Affairs executive for Union Pacific.

Treasury Department

David Aufhauser, general counsel- Former lawyer for Lockheed Martin.

Defense

Pete Aldridge, undersecretary for acquisition, technology and logistics. Former CEO of Aerospace Corporation.

Gordon England, secretary of the Navy- Former General Dynamics executive.

James Roche, secretary of the Air Force- Former Northrup Grumman executive.

David Shu, under secretary for personnel and readiness. Former VP of RAND corporation's army research division.

Thomas White, secretary of the Army. Former Enron executive.

Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary. Received \$300,000 from Hughes Electronics as a Dean at Johns Hopkins.

Energy Department

Vicki A. Bailey, assistant secretary of energy for international affairs and domestic policy- Former Utility executive.

Francis S. Blake, deputy secretary- Former VP at General Electric.

Robert Gordon Card, undersecretary- Former CEO of nuclear clean-up corporation.

Most information found at:

<http://www.essential.org/monitor/mm2001/01may/may01bushcc.html#colin>

<http://www.opensecrets.org/bush/cabinet.asp#1>