



CLIMATE WATCH

BRIEF

AN INFORMATION UPDATE FROM THE GLOBAL CLIMATE COALITION

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"Most modelers now agree that the climate models will not be able to link greenhouse warming unambiguously to human actions for a decade or more."

-- *Science* magazine article by Richard A. Kerr, May 16, 1997

New Economic Studies to Show Cost of Climate Treaty: American Jobs At Risk

Two new economic studies to be released in September are expected to show that reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the United States will come with a hefty price tag and be paid for by American families. The studies, details of which were not available at press time (but stay tuned for a special edition of *Climate Watch* in October), were conducted independently by organized labor and the Global Climate Coalition. The studies are said to predict significant losses of American jobs if climate proposals currently under negotiation by the United Nations are adopted. These proposals call for drastic reductions in energy use by the United States, but do not require similar reductions by developing countries such as India, China and Mexico.

The Times They Are A Changin': Scary Headlines of Past Not Justified; Rush to Judgment by World Panel on Climate Change Undercut by Second Look at Computer Models

As negotiators look ahead to a final round of climate negotiations in October in advance of a expected climate agreement in December, it's worth taking a look back at how media coverage of the issue has changed. At first, headline writers bought it hook, line and sinker. *Global Warming No Longer in Doubt*, said one. *Experts Agree Humans Have 'Discernible' Effect on Climate*, echoed another. A chorus of certainty. No more doubts. That was only a year and a half ago. Now, as the U.S. and other nations consider a climate change treaty that would have a devastating impact on world economies, there is major disagreement about the basis for any action. The report's foundation (that touched off the headlines) is crumbling. Here's a quick look at the details.

✓ **Things Not Always As They Appear: UN Report, Ignored If's, And's and But's**

Inspiring the media excitement in 1995 was the official summary statement of the UN sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. It said the half-degree rise in global temperatures since the 19th Century may bear a "fingerprint" of human activity. Headlines shrieked. Global policy makers were emboldened. Clinton-Gore Administration negotiators pushed on, despite cries for caution from U.S. industry, labor and consumers on the harm that will come to America if binding – and competitively unfair – global climate rules are put in place. *SCIENCE* magazine cools off the global warming media hype, shows the uncertainties that were not clear in the IPCC report:

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...IPCC scientists now say that neither the public nor many scientists appreciate how many if's, and's and but's peppered the report. "It's unfortunate that many people read the media hype before they read the [IPCC] chapter" on the detection of greenhouse warming, says climate modeler Benjamin Santer of Law-

rence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, California, the lead author of the chapter. "I think the caveats are there. We say quite clearly that a few scientists would say the attribution issue was a done deal..."

(From *SCIENCE*, Vol. 276, May 16, 1997. www.sciencemag.org)

✓ **Congress Got a Bum Steer, Too, Science Reveals**

This gets complicated. This business of the "fingerprint" – which has been used to justify harsh action against the U.S. economy – was seen by the computer modelers when they used data on the effect of pollutant hazes or aerosols on climate. Modelers assumed that soil, dust, particles from burned fuel, ash, soot, agricultural burning – all reflecting sunlight – both shade and cool the earth surface beneath them. But wait a minute. Says *SCIENCE*:

...[T]he assumptions about how hazes affect climate may have taken a hit recently from Climatologist and modular James Hansen of NASA's GISS [Goddard Institute for Space Studies] -- the man who told Congress in 1988 that he believed "with a high degree of confidence" that greenhouse warming had arrived. In a recent paper, Hansen and

his GISS colleagues pointed out that recent measurements suggest that aerosols don't just cool; they also warm the atmosphere by absorbing sunlight. *The net effect of this reflection and absorption, Hansen estimates, would be small – too small to have much effect on temperature...*

(*SCIENCE*, Vol. 276, May 16, 1997)

Hobble the U.S. Economy and Damage the Environment?

Agreement on a climate change treaty could be advanced in December – at a UN organized meeting in Kyoto, Japan. Clinton-Gore negotiators have pledged their support for binding targets and a timetable for achieving them. GCC Chairman William F. O'Keefe has pointed out that agreement is moving toward placing limits on the use of energy in the U.S. to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, while exempting China, India and other major emitting countries from comparable restrictions. A DOE worst-case scenario says policy constraints on U.S. industries, which are not put on similar firms in other, less developed countries, would mean severe adverse *environmental* effects. Industries move to countries with fewer environmental safeguards resulting in a net increase in emissions. Energy use rules would also tilt in favor of emerging economies -- **and these countries become the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.**

What Do 2,000 Economists Actually Mean?

Without any economic analyses to support its case for climate action, the Clinton Administration is relying more and more on a petition signed by more than 2,000 economists apparently endorsing a get-tough, rush-ahead economic policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But in a panel discussion sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute, two of the petition's sponsors explained a somewhat different view. "My personal view," said Yale economist William Nordhaus, "is that if you had anything that looked like a sensible policy, it would probably not have reductions in global emissions over the next ten, or twenty, or thirty years." Harvard economist Dale Jorgenson told Congress that "stabilizing emissions at 1990 levels is not something that can be justified on economic grounds... When we think about setting the target, the Rio agreement is the wrong starting point."

CLIMATE WATCH BRIEF is published monthly by the Global Climate Coalition, an organization of business trade associations and private companies established to coordinate business participation in the scientific and policy debate on global climate change. Permission to quote or reprint is not necessary, although attribution is appreciated.

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