

# Combating global warming: the environmental costs

**W**ASHINGTON — In a campaign without peacetime precedent, the media-entertainment-environmental complex is warning about global warming.

Never, other than during the two world wars, has there been such a concerted effort by opinion-forming institutions to indoctrinate Americans, 83 percent of whom now call global warming a "serious problem." Indoctrination is supposed to be a predicate for action commensurate with professions of seriousness.

For example, Democrats could demand that the president send the Kyoto Protocol to the Senate so they can embrace it. In 1997, the Senate voted 95-0 in opposition to any agreement which would, like the protocol, require significant reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions in America and some other developed nations but would involve no "specific scheduled commitments" for 129 "developing" countries, including the second, fourth, 10th, 11th, 13th and 15th largest economies (China, India, Brazil, South Korea, Mexico and Indonesia).

Forty-two of the senators serving in 1997 are gone. Let's find out if the new senators disagree with the 1997 vote.

Do they also disagree with Bjorn Lomborg, author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist"? He says: Compliance with Kyoto would reduce global warming by an amount too small to measure. But the cost of compliance *just to the United States* would be higher than the cost of providing the entire world with clean drinking water and sanitation, which would prevent 2 million deaths (from diseases like infant

diarrhea) a year and prevent half a billion people from becoming seriously ill each year.

Nature designed us as carnivores, but what does nature know about nature? Meat has been designated a menace. Among the 51 exhortations in Time magazine's "global warming survival guide" (April 9), No. 22 says a BMW is less responsible than a Big Mac for "climate change," that conveniently imprecise name for our peril.

This is because the world meat industry produces 18 percent of the world's greenhouse-gas emissions, more than transportation produces. Nitrous oxide in manure (warming effect: 296 times greater than that of carbon) and methane from animal flatulence (23 times greater) mean that "a 16 ounce T-bone is like a Hummer on a plate."

Ben & Jerry's ice cream might be even more sinister: A gallon of it requires electricity guzzling refrigeration, and four gallons of milk produced by cows that simultaneously produce eight gallons of manure and flatulence with eight gallons of methane. The cows do this while consuming lots of grain and hay, which are cultivated by using tractor fuel, chemical fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides, and transported by fuel-consuming trains and trucks.

Newsweek says most food

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travels at least 1,200 miles to get to Americans' plates, so buying local food will save fuel. Do not order halibut in Omaha.

Speaking of Hummers, perhaps it is environmentally responsible to buy one and squash a Prius with it. The Prius hybrid is, of course, fuel-efficient. There are, however, environmental costs to mining and smelting (in Canada) 1,000 tons a year of zinc for the battery-powered second motor, and the shipping of the zinc 10,000 miles — trailing a cloud of carbon — to Wales for refining and then to China for turning it into the component that is then sent to a battery factory in Japan.

Opinions differ as to whether acid rain from the Canadian mining and smelting operation is killing vegetation that once absorbed carbon dioxide. But a report from CNW Marketing Research ("Dust to Dust: The Energy Cost of New Vehicles from Concept to Disposal") concludes that in "dollars per lifetime mile," a Prius (expected life: 109,000 miles) costs \$3.25, compared to \$1.95 for a Hummer H3 (expected life: 207,000 miles).

The CNW report states that a hybrid makes economic and environmental sense for a purchaser living in the Los Angeles basin, where fuel costs are high and smog is worrisome. But environmental costs of the hybrid are exported from the basin.

We are urged to "think globally and act locally," as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has done with proposals to reduce California's carbon dioxide emissions 25 percent by 2020. If California improbably achieves this, at a cost not yet computed, it will have reduced its contribution to global greenhouse-gas emissions 0.3 percent. The question is:

Suppose the costs over a decade of trying to achieve a local goal are insignificant. And suppose the positive impact on the globe's temperature are insignificant — and much less than, say, the negative impact of one year's increase in the number of vehicles in one country (e.g., India). If so, are people who recommend such things thinking globally but not clearly?