

VOICE OF THE LEFT

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Republicans Ice Cold on Global Warming

The world is getting warmer.

The average surface of the earth has been increasing annually since 1900, but in the past 35 years the rate of increase has nearly tripled. This exponential increase has produced a number of record-breaking temperatures. In fact, 22 of the warmest years on record have taken place in the past 27 years! Frighteningly, if this recent trend continues, the 21st century could see temperatures rise 3 to 8 degrees, weather patterns sharply shift, ice sheets shrink, and sea levels rise several feet.

Every bit as shocking as these statistics is the reaction of President Bush and the Republican Party leadership. You see, the United States is virtually the only place where the so-called “debate” on this phenomenon exists. It’s true. Virtually the entire world’s scientific community outside our country accepts that global warming exists and that it is a direct consequence of the release of heat-trapping gases produced by the burning of fossil fuels. Even the British Ministry of Defense (not exactly a bastion of die-hard, left-wing fanatics) is unequivocal in its acceptance of global warming and its true cause. Perhaps even more convincing than the Brits (with all due respect to our greatest ally) is that even the birds know what’s happening. Yes...Several credible studies show that the migratory patters of our feathered friends have changed significantly in recent years as a result of the earth’s higher temperatures.

So how has the Bush Administration reacted to this “global call to arms”? Glad you asked. Just three months after taking office (largely as the result of massive campaign contributions by the oil industry), George II announced that the United States was withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol, the “evil” United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This was just the beginning. Almost as soon as you can say “yee haw,” the president initiated his agenda of record tax subsidies to Big Oil and the relaxation of emission restrictions on the power industry. (All cleverly disguised mind you as the “Clean Air Act.”). George wasn’t done yet. In addition to the giveaways to his oil buddies, the president began pushing to open up one of our country’s last natural wildlife refuges to the energy companies.

But George still wasn’t done.

Consistent with his disdain for science (whether it’s his “distrust” of evolution or disdain of stem cell research), the president began an all out assault on anyone who dared to tout the “myth” of global warming. He even brought in professional spin masters (some of the very same “scientists” who used to lobby on behalf of the tobacco industry that there was

no definitive link between cigarette smoking and cancer) to provide us with “the truth.” And of course, dissent within his ranks could not be tolerated.

A few weeks ago, James E. Hansen, longtime director of the agency's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and the top climate scientist at NASA, said the Bush administration has tried to stop him from speaking out since he gave a lecture last month calling for prompt reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases linked to global warming. Fortunately, Hansen has said that he will ignore the Bush threats intended to silence him; however, the courageous scientist has confirmed that the public affairs staff at NASA “feels their job is to be this censor of information going out to the public.”

My message is simple. The solution to this potentially devastating problem is not to encourage the oil companies to drill for more oil and cut back on air quality standards for the power industry. We must demand higher fuel-efficiency standards for automobile manufacturers and increased air-quality standards for the utility industry. We must also stop the giveaways to Big Oil and insist upon a Manhattan-type Project dedicated to the research and production of alternative energy sources. While making good economic sense in the long run, this commitment will also make for a more prudent foreign policy and enhance our homeland security.

There is no greater cause than to save our planet. Let's all join hands in a united call for action.

The time is now.