

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 21, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

ROGER BALLENTINE 

RE:

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES WEEKLY

Climate Change

Press, Science and Industry

Researchers at the University of Michigan and elsewhere studying the impact of increased carbon dioxide levels on plants have discovered that while CO₂-rich air causes plants to grow faster, it decreases the nutritional value of their leaves. *The Seattle Times* reported (7/18). In one study, caterpillars eating plants grown in tanks that simulate global warming ate 50 percent more food but grew fifteen percent slower than caterpillars eating plants grown in tanks that simulate current conditions.

The Greenland Ice Sheet is melting at the rate of about twelve cubic miles per year, according to a NASA survey published in the journal *Science* (7/21). The study, based on laser surveys taken from an aircraft since 1993, shows the sheet is "amazingly stable" at the highest points, but is shrinking three feet or more per year at the margins. Scientists do not have an exact reason for the shrinkage, and are uncertain as to whether the melting is natural or due to global warming.

In his third column in a row on global warming ("Global Cooling", 7/17), *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert urges aggressive domestic leadership as well as international cooperation to effectively curb human-induced global warming. The column advocates a mix of approaches very similar to our programs (we urged him to write about solutions and briefed him on our initiatives). Herbert writes, "To ignore those solutions, to be aware of them but not make use of them, is not just profoundly destructive, it's suicidal."

Legislative

Our progress on the appropriations front is a mixed bag. The House has underfunded your CCTI request by a total of \$403 million (28% below your request and \$66 million below last year's enacted level), funded only 54% of your International Clean Energy Initiative and is 31% (\$90 million) below your request for bio-energy. The Senate is not as far along, but appears prepared to fund more than 95% of your request for renewable energy.

International

I traveled to Beijing last week with Undersecretary of State Frank Loy to conduct the high level dialogue on climate change called for by Vice President Gore and Premier Zhu in April 1999. The twice-cancelled event assumed particular importance in light of COP6 this November in The Hague. Predictably, the Beijing meeting produced no major breakthroughs, but enabled us to achieve our primary goals. We explained to the Chinese the importance we attach to developing country action on climate change and indicated our willingness to work with them to structure a new international dialogue on this subject in a manner that would promote economic growth. We also expressed our willingness to consider new avenues for bilateral cooperation to increase exports of U.S. clean energy technologies.

The Chinese reaction was less than positive. In their view, we are not nearly as generous as other countries (Japan being the best example) in direct assistance and financing terms that would allow greater deployment of U.S. technologies. They also, of course, noted our sanctions.

Overall, our visit was productive. It was clear that, despite some difficulties, the Chinese understood and appreciated our offer to structure a dialogue about developing country action around the notion of the economic benefits and opportunities (as opposed to obligations and burdens) of greenhouse gas abatement.

State and Local

The National Association of Counties (NACO) failed to reaffirm an anti-Kyoto resolution passed at last year's annual meeting, thereby allowing the existing policy to expire. The group agreed to reexamine the entire issue of climate change next March at its annual legislative conference.

Lands Legacy

The Senate Energy Committee finally began its markup of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). The markup was the result of an agreement on the bill reached by Chairman Frank Murkowski and Ranking Member Jeff Bingaman. A majority of the Republicans on the Committee strongly oppose the bill and Members have invoked procedural objections resulting in limiting the markup to two hours each day. Nevertheless, if Murkowski and Bingaman continue to stick together, the bill should make it out of Committee next week.

cc: The Vice President
John Podesta
Steve Ricchetti
Martin Baily
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George Frampton
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