



# Media Reality ✓ Check

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While the Earth Is Still Threatened by Capitalism, Time Offers Hugs to Pro-Environmental Businesses

## Trying to Make Green Ideology Mainstream

Ever since *Time* pompously pronounced “Endangered Earth” as the “Planet of the Year” for 1988 (“This year the Earth spoke, like God warning Noah of the deluge”), the magazine has made no secret of its liberal environmental agenda. *Time* has produced numerous “Special Reports” over the years, and issued an array of policy directives; if the magazine’s editors had their way, for example your gasoline prices would have been 50¢ a gallon higher for the past ten years.

Well, Earth is still “under siege,” according to the latest (August 26) special environmental issue, and there’s no backtracking from *Time* on the urgent need for collective action to thwart overpopulation, global warming, deforestation and mass extinctions. But mixed with the standard *Earth in the Balance* liberalism was the notion that environmentalists may have been too anti-business for their own good.

■ **People are a problem.** Jeffrey Kluger and Andrea Dorfman start their cover story by insisting the goal of “saving the Earth” is to ensure that the planet stays people-friendly. But later, reflecting the Ted Turner-esque fear that humans are a blight on the planet, they cheer the fact that there may be fewer of us in the future: “While the number of people on Earth is still rising rapidly, especially in the developing countries of Asia, the good news is that the growth rate is slowing....The population is expected to level off eventually, perhaps at 11 billion sometime in the last half of this century.” Also, the Khmer Rouge murdered more than a million Cambodian humans in the 1970s, but *Time* suggests their reign of terror was good for Cambodian trees (see box).

■ **No questioning of global warming.** *Time* refuses to debate whether mankind’s burning of coal and oil is significant enough to cause catastrophic climate change. “We know that global warming from heat-trapping carbon dioxide, a by-product of fossil-fuel burning, threatens to

cause chaos with the world’s climate,” correspondent Margot Roosevelt asserted. “Environmentalists are calling for taxes on carbon to slow the growth of fossil-fuel use.”

■ **Reward “green” businesses with good press.** While dissent on the scope of the planet’s environmental problems is still seen as sinister, *Time* peppers its pages with back-pats for capitalists that have joined the movement. “BP, the British oil giant, decided in 1997 to reduce its carbon emission to

10% below 1990 levels by 2010. To reach that goal, the company let each of its units trade the right to emit specified amounts of carbon....Result: BP hit its target this year — seven years ahead of schedule.” Of course, BP was one of the sponsors of *Time*’s special issue, and boasts of its anti-carbon efforts in a paid ad a couple of pages away, although BP says it hit its target eight years ahead of schedule, not seven.

■ **Liberal environmentalists need work with the system.** Something new: staff writer Andrew Goldstein scolds the greenies for their rigidly anti-business rhetoric, absolutist

demands, and often-hyped claims of doom: “The planet needs profitable, innovative businesses even more than it needs environmentalists...Fuzzy math and scare tactics might help green groups raise money, but when they, abetted by an environmentally friendly media, overplay their hand, it invites scathing critiques.”

*Time* seems to be suggesting Clintonian triangulation: stick with the liberal line that the environment threat is dire, but be kinder to businesses that are even a pastel shade of green. That’s a tad more nuanced than the old *Time* line, but it’s even more proof that the magazine places advocacy ahead of objective environmental reporting. — Rich Noyes

**Missing Forest-Friendly Khmer Rouge?**  
“For years the 2.5 million acres of rain forest and the wildlife that lives within it — including tigers, leopards, barking deer and gibbons — were left alone while Cambodia was at war. The Cardamoms were used as a sanctuary by the feared Khmer Rouge, who laid land mines and booby traps to keep people out. But when the civil war ended in the 1990s, loggers, hunters and farmers started moving in, slashing and burning the forest and eventually prompting environmental groups to scramble for a strategy to protect the region.” — *Time* correspondent Terry McCarthy in the August 26 issue.

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