



Media Reality ✓ Check

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FMP Study: Networks Tout Alleged Harm of Global Warming But Hide Massive Costs of Kyoto Treaty

Peddling a “Cure” Worse than the Disease

The 2004 election is over and defeated liberals are urging President Bush to pander to them, not the conservative majority that re-elected him. One issue liberal activists have pushed since Election Day is global warming, and network reporters are again ringing alarm bells about the climate catastrophe that supposedly awaits.

“Severe climate change is accelerating,” ABC’s Bill Blakemore warned on Monday’s *World News Tonight* as he quoted a pair of alarmist reports. “Polar bears are starving as the ice they hunt on vanishes, along with the seals they eat. Millions of birds are affected as spring comes too early and the fish they eat [have] gone to seek cooler waters.”

ABC directly attributed global warming to “the increase in man-made gases since the Industrial Revolution,” and passed along advice that “cutting back emissions from burning fossil fuels should eventually stop the warming, but will still take many decades.” But ABC was silent on the high costs associated with such a severe cutback, and ignored the fact that many scientists doubt liberals’ alarmist predictions.

ABC’s one-sided approach is all too typical, according to a new study by the MRC’s Free Market Project. Researchers looked at coverage of global warming on ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, and the Fox News Channel on each network’s evening newscast from January 20, 2001 through September 30, 2004. They found the coverage reinforced liberal theories about a dangerous man-made global warming, while all but ignoring the dangers of enacting liberals’ solution:

■ **No Debate Over the Science.** Of the 107 stories that discussed the causes of global warming, the vast majority (83 percent) failed to mention scientific doubts about the truth of environmental activists’ claims of an impending global warming catastrophe. No story was biased against the liberal view, and only one out of six (17 percent) offered a glimpse of the conservative position alongside liberal theories. But

doubts abound: One flaw in liberal arguments: Satellite and weather balloon data show none of the warming found by land-based thermometers.

■ **Hyping the Harm.** TV reporters tried to link specific weather events to global climate change. On August 6, 2003, NBC’s Patricia Sabga blamed a European heat wave on global warming. “Learning to live with blistering heat may prove a long-term strategy,” she counseled. But that same week, the eastern United States was experiencing much cooler than normal temperatures.

■ **Little Coverage of Kyoto’s Costs.** Environmentalists got their wish in 1998 when the Clinton administration signed the Kyoto treaty, agreeing to a sharp reduction in carbon emissions. The U.S. got the worst of that deal — other countries were assigned lower reductions or completely exempted. The Senate voted 95-0 to reject those terms, but liberals still insist Kyoto is the

model for “solving” the global warming problem.

But while network coverage stressed the need to reduce emissions, only ABC and Fox — just once each — gave viewers statistics summarizing the conservative point that Kyoto would cost millions of jobs and punish families to the tune of \$2,700 a year. In 1998, the Clinton administration also estimated the high costs of complying with Kyoto, but those numbers never made it on the airwaves. (See box.)

During Bush’s first term, the networks aligned themselves with activists hoping that America would punish itself by accepting something like the onerous Kyoto treaty. Coverage since November 2 indicates more of the same awaits.

— Dan Gainor and Rich Noyes

Clinton Officials Estimated Kyoto’s Burden

“The total cost to the economy can be estimated as the loss in actual GDP (the loss in potential GDP plus the macroeconomic adjustment cost) plus the purchase of international permits....Total costs range from an average annual level for the period 2008 to 2012 of \$77 billion to \$338 billion 1992 dollars depending on the carbon reduction case and how funds are recycled back to the economy.”

— Report on projected annual costs of enacting the Kyoto global warming treaty, prepared by the U.S. government’s Energy Information Agency in October 1998.

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