

The Clean Air Act: on the road to perdition

by Carol White

In 1973-74, the United States was put through an economic shock as oil prices soared. To take one example, electricity prices, which had been decreasing at an exponential rate, suddenly began to increase. Effectively, the entire economy was taxed. That was almost 20 years ago when the U.S. economy, relatively speaking, was in sound shape. Today, the U.S. economy is on the verge of bankruptcy; yet the U.S. Senate has willfully passed a Clean Air Act which will administer an even more devastating shock on an already ailing economy. On April 3, the Senate passed a bill which had been vigorously debated for 13 years.

Estimates of the number of jobs which may be lost as a result of forced industry shutdowns as a result of the imposition of the Senate-mandated so-called environmental protection measures, range as high as 750,000. Immediately, 5,000 West Virginia coal miners will lose their jobs. The automobile industry will be hard hit by a minimal \$600 added to the price of cars, which are already difficult to move through dealer lots. And every sector of the economy will be similarly effected.

According to the Bush administration, the cost of the Senate bill, which would put stricter controls on factory smokestacks, cars, and light trucks, will be a whopping \$21 billion per year by the year 2005 when the specified measures would be fully implemented. The National Association of Manufacturers contends that this is a gross underestimate. NAM released a statement which called the Senate bill "a regulatory disaster that could cost double the estimated \$21 billion."

The steel industry, which lobbied hard to block provisions of the act that would require multibillion-dollar investments in upgraded pollution technology, was also upset, as were lobbyists for car, oil, chemical, and other industries. Chemical plants, refineries, and coke ovens which are unable

to meet the strict new emission standards within 10 years, will be forced to shut down.

The next phase

But as bad as the Senate bill now is, the House of Representatives is about to force through stiffer, more radical measures in their own version of the act. The House Energy and Commerce Committee began debate on their amendments to the act on April 4, taking up where the Senate left off.

Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), who chairs the committee, unlike the environmentalist Senate Majority leader George Mitchell, the Democrat from Maine, where President Bush has his Kennebunkport vacation retreat, has resisted much of the worst environmentalist insanity. Dingell is answerable to a constituency whose economic survival depends upon the viability of the U.S. auto industry. Mitchell, representing the trees of Maine, was the most virulent promoter of the Senate version.

But, strongly challenged for control of his own committee, Dingell has struck a compromise over alternative fuels with Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), who heads a key subcommittee and who has led the environmentalist charge to seize control of the Energy and Commerce Committee, that would require widespread use in the 1990s of cleaner-burning reformulated gasoline. A similar provision in the Senate would require gasoline to be blended with such additives as ethanol, made from corn. This is a bonanza for the grain cartels, but not for Americans who are already staggering under increases in basic food prices or for those populations in famine-ridden areas of the world who need the grain to survive but can no longer afford to pay for it.

The oil industry has warned it could cost motorists 25-30¢ a gallon extra if the new law includes the ethanol provision. The industry estimates the overall costs of rebuilding

refineries could hit \$50 billion.

U.S. environmental laws—even before passage of the new Clean Air Act—are the most stringent in the world. Concomitantly, the U.S. has been losing its productive edge to Germany and Japan where investment has been allowed to flow into technology upgrades, rather than into scrubbers and the like.

U.S. leads in environmentalism

The White House estimates that since 1970 when the original Clean Air Act was approved, the United States has spent \$225 billion to control air pollution. But substantial increases in the burning of high-sulfur coal and road-miles driven, have made improved air quality difficult. Both the Senate and House bills would give the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency greater authority to control emissions of toxic chemicals.

Just as pernicious as the economic toll from the bill is the regulatory aspect. The Environmental Protection Agency, headed by William Reilly, President Bush's point-man for environmentalism, will have been not only upgraded to cabinet-level status—as is now proposed—but he will effectively become the czar of all industry. His agency will control the certification of the compliance of industry to these new regulations—from top to bottom. This is suggestive of President Franklin Roosevelt's National Reconstruction Act (NRA), which also created an American brand of administrative fascism administered by his czar, Hugh Johnson.

The NRA, which sought to enforce codes governing every aspect of production, was ruled unconstitutional, and we can hope that the new, more pernicious, environmentalist version of American fascism will quickly suffer the same fate. But the immediate prospects that the presently constituted U.S. Supreme Court would intervene in an analogous manner to rule that the regulatory powers given to EPA are unconstitutional, are in fact dim. That the court is tilting in the opposite direction is exemplified by their ruling, at the close of March, that the censorship law enacted by the State of Michigan, which limits corporate free speech, is constitutional. This law, which is similar to laws of the federal government and twenty other states, makes it a felony for corporations to spend general funds in order to express their opinions about the functioning of candidates.

The new fascism

The court's decision gives states the right to suppress corporate free speech where it does not "reflect actual public support for political ideas." In other words, corporations which might wish to continue to campaign against the Clean Air Act, or the practices of the EPA in administering the act, can be found guilty of a felony. Ironically, the same court system which has enacted this abridgement of the constitutional right to free speech has, with the exception of a spirited dissent by Justice Antonin Scalia, seen fit to accord purveyors

of child pornography protection under the First Amendment.

Too many Americans have accepted the Big Lie that there is some undefined menace hanging over us because we are interacting with our environment. They have yet to accept the reality of what enforcement of the Clean Air Act will mean to their way of life. As electricity brownouts and blackouts multiply, because of the inability of already-bankrupted utilities to invest in necessary expansion because their funds are being absorbed in attempts to comply with new anti-pollution standards, television sets will have more and more down time. Hopefully, this might ironically result in an increase in the I.Q. of the viewing public, which is typically lulled into fantasy land in front of the boob tube.

As *EIR* has repeatedly documented, the "greenhouse effect" and the "ozone hole" are two deliberately concocted myths whose purpose is to convince the American population, and the populations of other Western nations, to accept policies which will inevitably force the United States into a depression so severe that it will beg comparison with the Dark Ages rather than the Great Depression of the 1930s. Fortunately, we can confidently predict that the cold bath of reality, as the measures spelled out in the act are enforced, will fuel the kind of response in the United States that Margaret Thatcher's poll tax has evoked in the United Kingdom.

The Big Lie

Since 1970, auto emissions have become 96% cleaner, yet environmentalists present the remaining 4% as some kind of dramatic threat to health and the environment. Yet a new study has just been released by scientists from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama who are also working with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), which found that there is no evidence of a global warming trend over the past decade. This alleged warming trend is one of the predictions made by scientists used as a justification for drastically curbing industrial pollution—thereby shutting down industry—in order to slow an alleged accelerating greenhouse, global-warming effect.

This latest report on global temperature trends is said by its authors to be the most reliable yet prepared. It relies on data gathered by a series of Tiros-N weather satellites launched into the upper atmosphere in late 1978 by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"While future global temperature variations were not specifically addressed, the decade from 1979 through 1988 showed no net warming or cooling trend," NASA said, summing up the report in a statement issued by its George C. Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville. The government satellites were equipped with devices able to measure the temperature in a layer of air 600 miles wide and 5,000 feet to 20,000 feet above sea level, a slice of the upper atmosphere where scientists predict the first telltale signs of global warming will appear.