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## NEWS UPDATE - February 22, 2001

### In the News...

- *PRESCRIPTION DRUGS - PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS VICTORIOUS IN PRESSURING BUSH TO PRESERVE EXECUTIVE ORDER:* The New York Times reports that the Bush Administration announced it will not change executive orders that permit poor nations to acquire low-priced AIDS drugs needed to fight the worldwide epidemic. When reports first arose that Bush was considering rescinding these executive orders, the Progressive Caucus authored a letter, signed by 29 Members of Congress including Republicans demanding that he keep those executive orders on the books.
- *TRADE – MORE FODDER THAT FREE TRADERS SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF:* The Economic Policy Institute releases a detailed report analyzing new trade deficit numbers showing how disastrous the China PNTR deal will be.
- *EDUCATION – GOVERNMENT STUDY FINDS COLLEGE AID SYSTEM FAVORS MIDDLE CLASS STUDENTS OVER LOW-INCOME STUDENTS:* The Associated Press reports that Congress's Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance released a report that found that "low-income students who are otherwise qualified academically to get into college may soon be shut out of the hallowed halls anyway because of a financial aid system that favors middle class students."
- *ENVIRONMENT – BUSH CONSIDERING MAJOR BUDGET CUTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS:* The Wall Street Journal reports that President Bush is "considering significant budget cuts for some environmental programs." As the article states, "as Mr. Bush works to fit his big tax breaks and defense" spending increases into his budget, "the cuts in environmental programs could represent a political risk for the new administration."
- *POLITICS – CONSERVATIVES SHOW TRUE COLORS AT PAC EVENT:* The Nation reports on the recent right wing fanfare at the Conservative Political Action Committee's annual conference. As the article states, at the conference, "the National Right to Work Foundation's Stefan Gleason reported that the AFL-CIO 'has now embraced communist influences'" while "Senator Mitch McConnell noted that campaign finance reform is a plot mounted by Hollywood, academia and the media to "quiet your vote [so] they'll have more power."

### From the Editorial Pages...

- *BOB HEBERT* of the New York Times writes about how pathetic it is for many U.S. lawmakers to continue denying that global warming is a problem. As he states, while we must act now, it seems too many leaders feel we can "just ignore the problem and continue to feast like gluttons at the table of the world's resources. That will work for awhile. Why not? All you have to do is convince yourself that damaging the planet is somebody else's problem."
- *JOHN NICHOLS* of the Madison Capital Times writes that "if most American politicians and jurists lack the courage and the intellectual honesty to oppose capital punishment, leaders in other countries are under no illusions about the fundamental flaws in a system of state-sponsored executions."
- *PAUL EPSTEIN* of Harvard's Center for Health and Global Environment, writes in the Boston Globe that we should use some of the surplus to support energy conservation programs that will prevent future energy crises.
- *THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE* editorial board scrutinizes Commerce Secretary Don Evans' role in managing the Census. As the article states, should Evans reject sampling and adopt "numbers he knows to be flawed, Americans will know that he let ideological blindness or his desire for partisan advantage overcome his duty to accuracy."

### Quote of the Day...

**"They hate admitting they lost."**

- James Love, of the Consumer Project on Technology that works to bring down the price of drugs, commenting on the pharmaceutical industry's reaction to news that Bush was respecting the request of the Progressive Caucus and others who asked him to preserve a key executive order which allows foreign countries to acquire low-cost AIDS drugs (New York Times, 2/22)

# In the News on February 22, 2001

## **BUSH KEEPS CLINTON POLICY ON POOR LANDS' NEED FOR AIDS DRUGS**

New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/22/health/22DRUG.html>

PARIS, Feb. 21 — The office of the United States trade representative said today that the Bush administration would not change the Clinton administration's generous but contentious policy concerning AIDS drugs for impoverished countries.

The Bush administration, a trade official said, will not seek sanctions against poor countries overwhelmed by the AIDS epidemic that try to force down the price of patented anti- AIDS drugs by legalizing the importation or manufacture of generic versions. The administration, the official said, will not try to punish such countries even if American drug makers complain or American patent laws are being broken — as long as the country adheres to the rules agreed under World Trade Organization treaties.

The decision surprised groups fighting to get cheaper AIDS drugs for Africa and other places where \$10,000-a-year anti-retroviral therapy is out of reach of most AIDS sufferers. They had feared that a Republican administration would reverse the Clinton policy, a policy that displeases the multinational pharmaceutical companies. "We're pretty glad about this," said Paul Davis of the Philadelphia chapter of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. "Folks are cautiously optimistic that, instead of the United States throwing up roadblocks, it will facilitate bulk purchases of affordable generic drugs." Mr. Davis said he wanted to see if the policy would apply beyond Africa, in places like Brazil, India, Thailand, Romania and other countries that are poor but have their own drug industries.

The Clinton policy itself was an about-face in late 1999. Until then the administration had aggressively threatened sanctions against countries that wrote laws allowing compulsory licensing — the seizure of patents in certain emergencies — even though United States law allows compulsory licensing in antitrust cases and other circumstances.

Members of the staff of the Bush- appointed United States trade representative, Robert Zoellick, were very cautious today, but one gave an informal statement saying the trade representative "is not considering a change in the present flexible policy."

"Consistent with our overall effort to protect America's investment in intellectual property," the statement said, the United States trade representative "will seek to contribute to administration efforts to work with countries that develop serious programs to prevent and treat this horrible disease."

Shannon Herzfeld, a spokeswoman for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, tried to minimize the announcement, saying it was "not big news" and only meant that Mr. Zoellick would consult with other members of Mr. Bush's cabinet before taking actions that would affect public health.

James Love, who heads the campaign by a Ralph Nader group, the Consumer Project on Technology, to push down the price of drugs and who pressed the trade representative's office for a clear declaration of the new administration's policy, was celebratory, however. He responded to the industry's diminishment of the announcement by saying, "They hate admitting they lost."

In another announcement that could push down the price of AIDS drugs, a second Indian manufacturer of generic drugs said it would start making anti-retroviral drugs. The decision by Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd. of New Dehli, India's third-largest drug company, means there will be competition even between low- cost producers with active export businesses.

## **CHINA NOW TOP CONTRIBUTOR TO U.S. TRADE DEFICIT**

Economic Policy Institute

<http://www.epinet.org/webfeatures/econindicators/tradepict.html>

The U.S. Department of Commerce today reported that the merchandise trade deficit rose 30% in 2000 to its highest level on record. The aggregate U.S. trade deficit in goods hit \$449.5 billion in 2000, \$104 billion larger than in 1999. The deficit's growth reflects China's new status as the largest exporter to the United States, with a U.S. trade deficit of \$83.8 billion that eclipses the U.S. trade deficit with Japan for the first time. Rapid growth in imports from the NAFTA countries—Canada and Mexico—as well as from oil producing countries also contributed to the growing U.S. trade deficit. Domestic trade problems were compounded by a run-up in the U.S. dollar, which has gained 28% in real value since 1995.

U.S. imports declined by 1.5% between September and December 2000, reflecting slow GDP growth and suggesting a continued slowdown for early 2001. Exports declined by 3.0% in the same period, reflecting slow growth abroad and also a decline in future production of goods for re-export to the United States.

The broader goods and services deficit also increased in 2000 by 39.5%, to \$369.7 billion, another record high. U.S. goods and services imports jumped 18%, while exports increased by 12%. U.S. imports grew nearly four times as rapidly as real GDP in 2000, as exporters from around the world targeted the U.S. domestic markets.

The U.S. deficits with China and Japan increased 22.0% and 10.8%, respectively, in 2000. These two countries were responsible for 37% of the total U.S. trade deficit in 2000. The U.S. trade deficit with China reached a six-to-one ratio of imports to exports—the most unbalanced relationship in the history of U.S. trade. The most rapidly growing imports from China were (in order of importance) computers and other office equipment; telecommunication equipment; miscellaneous manufactured goods; electrical machinery; and furniture and bedding. (Note that low technology products such as furniture are at the bottom of this list.)

U.S. trade deficits with the NAFTA countries increased 35.9% in 2000, and reached record levels with both Canada and Mexico. Imports from Canada, which were led by petroleum, natural gas, telecommunication equipment, and electricity, increased by \$31 billion in 2000 alone. U.S. imports from Mexico, which increased by \$26 billion in 2000, included motor vehicles and parts (an increase of \$6 billion); petroleum; and telecommunication equipment (primarily assembled in the Maquiladora export-processing zones).

Higher oil and natural gas prices explain a significant share of the growth in U.S. imports. Petroleum imports alone increased \$39 billion in 2000, representing 38% of the growth in the U.S. deficit. Imports from Western Europe and South and Central America also grew rapidly last year.

The manufacturing sector lost 182,000 jobs in 2000, and 638,000 manufacturing jobs have been eliminated since June 1998. Job losses deepened in 2000 because of the rapid growth of imports that competed with goods produced by manufacturing industries. Among industrial products, the imports that expanded the most rapidly in 2000 included motor vehicles (\$17 billion), other goods (\$5.4 billion), and foods, feeds, and beverages (\$2.4 billion). Problems in food and agricultural products reflect a continuing decline in U.S. competitiveness. The largest export increases were in capital goods, including semiconductors and other computer parts, industrial machinery and other electronics parts, and equipment. The growth in such exports reflects the continuing globalization of U.S. goods production.

## **STUDENTS MAY BE SHUT OUT OF COLLEGE**

Associated Press

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/national/AP-College-Costs.html>

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Low-income students who are otherwise qualified academically to get into college may soon be shut out of the hallowed halls anyway because of a financial aid system that favors middle class students, according to a panel authorized by Congress to oversee financial aid.

The issue starts with a rising number of low-income students qualifying for college.

“We’ve all heard about the baby boom, but now we have a baby boom echo, which rivals the baby boom in size,” said Juliet V. Garcia, president of the University of Texas at Brownsville and a member of the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance.

Combine the boom with escalating costs, inadequate grants and a shift by colleges away from need-based aid programs that generally help students lacking financial resources, and the result could be a barrier keeping qualified students out of college, the committee said Wednesday.

According to the report, many of the nation's poorest students kept pace with their peers in preparing for college. From 1987 to 1999, completion rates on college preparatory courses grew more than 20 percent for the poorest students, while middle class students' completion rates grew about 21 percent.

Given current demographic projections, by 2015, an ethnically and economically diverse group of students -- 80 percent of them not white -- will apply for college.

More than 45 percent of minority students will be from families that can contribute only a minimum amount and must rely on generous financial aid. But since 1993, the report said, state-funded, merit-based financial aid programs, which favor middle-class students, have increased 336 percent in real dollars. Meanwhile, funding for need-based financial aid programs, which favor poorer students, has risen 88 percent.

The report said rising college costs also are hitting poor families harder, with more of their income eaten up by college expenses. Last year, the cost of college as a percentage of real family income was 62 percent for low-income families, 16 percent for middle class families, and 7 percent for the wealthiest.

Even after they get to college, the report said, low-income students end up footing a larger proportion of the bill than other students. After subtracting grants, loans and personal outlays, low-income students in a four-year public college typically face \$3,800 in college-related debt per year. Middle class students typically face \$2,250 in annual unmet need, while upper-income students face \$400 in new annual debt.

At the same time, the report said, the maximum federal Pell grant has failed to keep pace with college costs. In 1975, a student could cover 84 percent of costs at a public four-year college with such grants. By last year, he or she could only cover 39 percent. As a result, many low-income students are forced to work full- or part-time, cut back on coursework or simply drop out.

The committee said federal and state governments must shift to awarding financial aid more on the basis of need.

Education Secretary Rod Paige on Tuesday said President Bush wants to increase the maximum Pell grant by more than 50 percent, to \$5,100, for first-year students. Currently, the maximum is \$3,300.

Garcia applauded the proposal, saying the committee wants to go further -- she urged Bush to double the maximum Pell grant to \$6,600.

Jeff Stoltman, who oversees financial aid at Wayne State University in Detroit, said doubling Pell grants is a strictly short-term solution.

“It’s a big Band-Aid, but it’s a Band-Aid,” he said.

Stoltman said one recommendation of the report is right on target: Colleges, states and the federal government must work together to help keep low-income students afloat.

## **BUSH MULLS LARGE BUDGET CUTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS**

Wall Street Journal

<http://interactive.wsj.com/articles/SB982799002777158785.htm>

WASHINGTON -- President Bush is considering significant budget cuts for some environmental programs, including several that became lightning rods for criticism in the Clinton administration.

Coming as Mr. Bush works to fit his big tax breaks and defense- and education-spending increases into a budget blueprint, the cuts in environmental programs could represent a political risk for the new administration. Some environmentalists were already preparing to mount a political offensive in anticipation of next week’s budget release.

"Essentially one segment of the government is going to pay for fattening the other segment," said Sue Gunn, who monitors federal budgets for the Wilderness Society. "It’s not looking too good for the environment."

But Mr. Bush’s efforts also come in the wake of extraordinary budget increases last year at several environmental agencies. Those increases could help bolster the administration’s arguments that the reductions are justified and won’t sacrifice environmental quality. The Interior Department budget alone went up by about 20%, to \$10.2 billion in fiscal 2001 from fiscal 2000.

Mr. Bush is also expected to live up to campaign pledges by proposing big funding increases for such things as improvements in federal parks and for protection of park land and open spaces.

Still, some of the cuts being discussed for fiscal 2002 are eye-popping in size, according to congressional aides. The Interior Department, the agency targeted for the biggest dollar reduction, would receive a cut of as much as 5% to 7%, according to several congressional aides. Those preliminary numbers remain subject to change, however.

The agency’s Bureau of Land Management, a lightning rod for recent criticism over its restrictive policies on grazing and mining rights, would see a reduction of 15% to 20% from its current budget of about \$2.1 billion. Environmentalists are worried that the cuts could hit programs that the Clinton administration put in place to oversee the new national monuments it established in its effort to tighten restrictions on commercial use of federal lands.

In addition, a \$400 million program that reclaims old coal mines and helps regulate new ones could be cut by as much as 20%, according to one congressional aide. The U.S. Geological Survey would be sliced by more than 20% from its current \$885 million.

For a time, the administration was looking for major cuts, of as much as \$400 million, in Energy Department funds for nuclear-waste cleanup around the country, particularly at the department’s Hanford Reserve in Washington state. Sen. Patty Murray (D., Wash.) said

that when she protested to budget director Mitchell Daniels, he assured her adequate cleanup money would be provided.

In addition, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in charge of many flood-control projects, would receive an 11% cut, to about \$4.1 billion from its current \$4.6 billion, according to one aide.

Environmental programs have been targeted for cuts before and some lobbyists brushed aside the current threat. "Typically it hasn't mattered what the administration puts in" the budget, said one. "The Congress has always kicked it up to where it's been in the past."

The Nation

## **RIGHT WITH BUSH**

The Nation

<http://www.thenation.com>

Every conservative is now a compassionate conservative. Well, most were at the recent annual Conservative Political Action Conference, which drew more than 3,000 right-wing activists and leaders to a hotel outside Washington. A year ago George W. Bush was viewed with suspicion by many conservative honchos who worried that ideological wimpiness ran in the family and that Bush's Compassionate Conservatism was a retreat from traditional conservatism. What a difference a butterfly ballot can make. At the confab Bush was embraced by this flock as one of their own, a politician who waged a masterful, conservative campaign and who even better-has adopted as his role model not his pop but Ronald Reagan. Marc Holtzman, the Colorado secretary of technology, proclaimed that a "conservative revolution is shaping America today."

Had a county elections officer in Palm Beach not designed a confusing ballot, these cons probably would be whining about Bush and the wishy-washiness of compassionate conservatism. But winning-even by Supreme Court fiat-changes everything. And the attendees were delighted to grant Bush slack. They did not snipe at his tax-cut plan (too small and unrevolutionary for most of them), his education plan (which bolsters the Education Department rather than demolishes it and nudges school choice toward the back of the bus) or his military-spending plan (which includes a Pentagon raise but does not immediately shower the military with extra tens of billions of dollars). They're willing to wait for Bush to score legislative wins before pressing Social Security privatization, and they're content with an incremental approach to restricting abortion rights.

This usually cantankerous lot is saluting and following. Commentator Ann Coulter noted that Bush "could teach us a few things. He discovered all you had to do was go around calling yourself nice. Many of us took umbrage at that." But it worked. Not everyone absorbed the lesson. Leftist-turned-rightist author David Horowitz urged Republicans to "stop being so polite." Call the liberals what they truly are, he advised: "totalitarians."

Still, the bitterness quotient at this CPAC was much lower than in previous years. No more Where's Lee Harvey Oswald When You Need Him? bumper stickers. (Instead, one could buy Dixie Forever stickers-as speakers urged conservatives to reach out to blacks and Latinos.) Bill and Hillary Clinton received fewer jabs than expected. A group called America's Survival did hand out a report on "Hillary Clinton's Secret United Nations Agenda." (Implement "world government that will destroy American sovereignty and traditional families.") Oliver North blasted the ex-President for pardoning Marc Rich, because Rich traded with hostage-holding Iran. (Did North forget he sent missiles to hostage-holding Iran?) Senator James Inhofe griped, "We have had a President who has given away or covered up [the illegal transfer of] virtually every secret in our nuclear arsenal." Nevertheless, many CPACers appeared to believe it was time to move on.

But even as rightists control the White House and Congress, cons still claim they are besieged. Terry Jeffrey, the editor of Human Events, asserted that "the iron law of American journalism" still stands: "The most conservative candidate in any campaign will be demonized by the establishment press." (Perhaps he ought to ask Al Gore about this.) Coulter, in all seriousness, said that Republicans and conservatives-in battling Democrats and liberals-"are always at a disadvantage because we won't lie." One activist complained that Democrats "with their talking points run circles around Republicans." Another fretted that the GOP, up against a Democratic Party backed by organized labor, was "losing the ground campaign." An NRA official had to remind him that the gun lobby runs its own ground campaign pretty darn well. Perhaps it's tough to be in power when you're accustomed to viewing yourself as a victim of persecution.

Of course, enemies abound. The National Right to Work Foundation's Stefan Gleason reported that the AFL-CIO "has now embraced communist influences." Senator Mitch McConnell noted that campaign finance reform is a plot mounted by Hollywood, academia and the media to "quiet your vote[so] they'll have more power." The NRA's Wayne LaPierre warned that the organizers of a UN conference on gun control "want the marvelous millennial youth [of the United States] not to be American citizens but global citizens. I say never!" Andrea Sheldon Lafferty of the Traditional Values Coalition accused Planned Parenthood of defending abortion rights so it can make money selling fetal remains.

Fear and loathing continue, but Bush has tamed this fierce crowd. "The ideologically motivated in politics are often disappointed," said David Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union. "But most conservatives are surprised they like Bush so much." Marc Rotterman, a senior fellow at the John Locke Foundation, reflected the spirit of CPAC when he remarked, "We on the right need to give Bush a chance to develop a broad-based agenda. After 1994 we expected things to go too fast." Now they watch Bush with

hope, and they dare to believe.

## On the Editorial Pages on February 22, 2001

### **RIISING TIDES**

By Bob Herbert  
New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/22/opinion/22HERB.html>

The easiest approach for the time being is to pretend it's not happening. It's better for the nerves in the short run to remain riveted by the Clinton follies or the latest shenanigans on "Temptation Island" than to acknowledge that the majestic ice cap atop Mount Kilimanjaro, which seemed for so long to be an almost permanent feature of the planet, will vanish in less than 15 years.

It's February and it's cold in New York, which can help us maintain the fiction that the planet is not warming at a scary rate. But the snows are disappearing from Kilimanjaro, and a few years ago scientists were astonished when a mammoth fragment of the Larsen Ice Shelf at the edge of the Antarctic Peninsula collapsed like a window shattered by a rock. The fragment had measured 48 miles by 22 miles and was hundreds of feet thick. It eventually disappeared.

Many strange things are happening. The seasons are changing, rainstorms are becoming more intense, sea levels are rising, mighty glaciers are receding, the permafrost (by definition, the permanently frozen subsoil in the polar regions) is thawing, trees are flowering earlier, insects are emerging sooner, and so on.

Global warming is not coming, it's here.

There are likely to be some beneficial results in some areas from the warming, such as longer growing seasons and increased crop yields in certain mid-latitude regions, and a decline in deaths related to extreme cold. But over all, the effects of this sharp and accelerating and largely artificial warming of the planet — including the consequences of such extreme events as droughts, floods, heat waves, avalanches and tropical storms — are potentially catastrophic.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in a report released Tuesday in Geneva, said, "More people are projected to be harmed than benefited by climate change, even for global mean temperature increases of less than a few degrees centigrade."

The report also discussed an issue that has profound policy and ethical implications. The worst effects of global warming will probably not be felt by those most responsible for the pollution of the atmosphere by heat-trapping greenhouse gases. The great industrial societies, which have benefited so long from the rapacious devouring of resources and the indiscriminate release of pollutants, are also the societies best positioned to cope with the treacherous forces of global warming.

As the panel noted in its report, "The ability of human systems to adapt to and cope with climate change depends on such factors as wealth, technology, education, information, skills, infrastructure, access to resources, and management capabilities."

Developing countries, deficient in those areas, are doomed to suffer disproportionately from the warming of the planet. "The effects of climate change," the panel said, "are expected to be greatest in developing countries in terms of loss of life and relative effects on investment and the economy."

Despite the powerful and increasing evidence of the role of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the warming of the earth, the concentrations of those gases in the atmosphere are expected to increase, not decrease, over the next several decades. Government leaders are not responding to the problem with the sense of urgency that is called for.

Carbon dioxide doesn't just float away in a day or two. It remains in the atmosphere for more than 100 years. The consequences of our failure to act will last for centuries.

Americans have a special responsibility here. The United States is the mightiest nation on the planet and the greatest contributor to the industrial component of global warming. The nation is wealthy and at peace. A mature approach would require certain sacrifices designed to provide a better environment for future generations of Americans and a more equitable relationship with neighbors around the world.

But that's only one approach. Another is to just ignore the problem and continue to feast like gluttons at the table of the world's resources. That will work for awhile. Why not? All you have to do is convince yourself that damaging the planet is somebody else's problem.

# EXECUTION IS CAPITAL OFFENSE

By John Nichols

Madison Capital Times

<http://www.commondreams.org/views01/0222-01.htm>

Oklahoma City bomber Tim McVeigh's decision to ask the federal government to help him commit suicide as a way out of a life sentence promises to make 2001 the year of capital punishment in the United States. And the rest of the world will be reminded once more of just how backward, brutal and politically motivated this country's approach to matters of crime and punishment remains.

By all accounts, McVeigh prefers lethal injection to a lifetime in prison. Thus, in order to "punish" the man whose 1995 crime left 168 people dead, the feds plan to comply with his wish.

Absurd? Absolutely. Even more absurd, and horrifying, is the fact that, if McVeigh is executed, tax dollars from Wisconsin -- a state that has banned capital punishment for 150 years -- will be used to kill an imprisoned human being for the first time since 1963.

While U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., and others -- including the families of some Oklahoma City bombing victims -- have been courageously seeking to prevent the renewal of federal executions, the bloodlust of President George W. Bush and equally wrong-minded politicians is such that they are unlikely to prevent the renewal of federally funded murder.

The execution industry in this country requires a steady flow of blood in order to keep the machinery of death in operation. Bush, Bill Clinton and other "leaders" who have used capital punishment as a political tool cannot allow common sense or sound criminal justice policy to prevail -- since a halt to executions would prove the point of capital punishment foes who argue that the economically and emotionally costly gambit actually makes the streets less safe by fostering a culture of violence.

If most American politicians and jurists lack the courage and the intellectual honesty to oppose capital punishment, leaders in other countries are under no illusions about the fundamental flaws in a system of state-sponsored executions. Last week, the Supreme Court of Canada voted 9-0 to bar the extradition to the United States of two men accused of murder in Washington state unless Canadian authorities receive guarantees that the men will not face execution.

The jurists went far beyond the procedural blocking the extradition of the two men, however. The high court of Canada -- a nation that has barred capital punishment since 1976 -- condemned the death penalty as the flawed, unjust and irrevocable travesty that it is. Citing the frequency of reports of wrongful murder convictions in the United States, the court said the public record "provides tragic testimony to the fallibility of the legal system -- despite its elaborate safeguards for the protection of the innocent."

Even if safeguards did exist, however, the Canadian jurists argue that the practice would be unacceptable. "It is final. It is irreversible. Its imposition has been described as arbitrary," the judges said of capital punishment. "Its deterrent value has been doubted. Its implementation necessarily causes psychological and physical suffering."

The ruling by the Canadian court marks a dramatic shift in direction by that country's judiciary. Until recently, Canadian courts had held that even if their country's laws barred executions, that did not constitute sufficient grounds for denying a request for extradition to the United States.

No more. Citing the growing international consensus that capital punishment is not merely unjust but, in fact, immoral, Canada's jurists now say they can no longer cooperate with U.S. authorities who seek to execute human beings. To do so, the justices explain, would "violate our sense of fundamental justice."

Can there be any doubt left that Americans -- be they judges, senators or citizens -- ought to be saying the same thing?

## WILL WE BREAK OUR DIRTY HABITS?

By Paul R. Epstein

Boston Globe

[http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/053/oped/Will\\_we\\_break\\_our\\_dirty\\_habits\\_.shtml](http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/053/oped/Will_we_break_our_dirty_habits_.shtml)

TAX CUT. It has a good ring to it. But why not do something really smart and deal with the energy crisis too? Tax incentives for energy conservation and clean energy technologies could help wean us from our unhealthy addiction to fossil fuels.

Tax incentives, subsidies, and funds to redirect markets and boost economic growth would not be new. At the end of World War II the GI Bill sparked new housing, colleges, and jobs. Throughout the 20th century, public funds for highways and airports subsidized the automobile and airline industries. The Marshall Plan breathed new life into devastated European economies.

Today we face a new challenge: how to develop cleanly.

The shock waves from the energy crisis in California have cracked open a Pandora's box, exposing the multiple destructive

compartments left by the life cycle impacts of coal, oil, and gas.

The recent oil spill in the Galapagos Islands presents a vivid reminder of the numerous accidents and leaks that harm wildlife, fisheries, shorelines, and tourism. In other pockets we uncover coal mining and black lung disease, oil refining and toxic benzene, and lethal gas line explosions. In the deepest recesses, we discover pollution in the Niger River delta and the Ecuadorian headwaters of the Amazon from exploration and extraction.

As for combustion, we know that acid precipitation damages forests and lakes and that the particles and chemicals are bad for our hearts and lungs. Now science and the evolving reality make it ever more certain that the aggregate wastes from burning fossil fuels is disrupting the climate system, altering weather patterns across the globe.

What will it take to break us of this dirty habit? In just the past few years, weather-related disasters have had long-lasting impacts on the development of many nations. The list includes: Honduras, Venezuela, Bolivia, Mozambique, Kenya, India, China, North Korea, Mongolia, and Afghanistan. For frigid regions of Russia, northern China, Mongolia, and North Korea this year's energy crisis has proved deadly.

Now cooling in the North Atlantic Ocean - perhaps from melting of North Polar and Greenland ice - is driving storms in England, France, Sweden, and the United States. Populations throughout the world are feeling the wrath of extreme rains, extreme droughts, extreme winds, or extreme cold.

The costs from extreme weather events are also mounting. During the 1980s the reinsurance industry disbursed \$5.5 billion annually for weather-related disasters. The damages climbed to \$90 billion in 1998. During the 1990s US Federal Emergency Management Administration payments quadrupled, with foreign relief bills in tow. Now the Munich Reinsurance Company projects that damages to infrastructure, crops, and the energy, banking, and finance sectors from extreme weather could reach \$300 billion a year by 2050.

Can we insure our future?

The US energy crisis is the tip of a melting iceberg - as we hurl headlong into a world with warmer oceans, melting ice, and rising water vapor in the atmosphere. We are returning long-buried carbon dioxide back into the air in amounts - and at rates - not seen in the 420,000 years of ice core records. One proposed solution - planting trees and halting deforestation is insufficient: Trees can only absorb 15 to 20 percent of the accumulating atmospheric carbon.

Oil companies are aware of the energy and environmental problems. Some are poised to diversify and become energy industries. But incentives will be needed to stimulate significant production of alternative fuel technologies and tax breaks can give consumers the necessary capital to install them.

During the 20th century, cars, planes, and computers helped drive development. This century technologies for energy conservation and clean energy generation can become the engine of growth. New products for green buildings, solar, wind, hybrid cars, and fuel cells are all waiting to be launched en masse. The proper financial "carrots" could jump-start a self-sustaining conversion as the global demand and production of such technologies grow.

We have inherited a budget surplus from the speculative boom of the '90s, and we face an energy problem of national and global proportions. We can repeat the mistakes of the past, hoping the outcomes will be different. Or we can use the surfeit to launch smart growth and clean development.

We are berthed on an arcane icebreaker, spewing wastes as we lunge ahead at full throttle, set on a foreseeable, destructive course. Will we take the bold steps necessary to redirect our path?

## **COUNTING DOWN: SECRETARY'S DUTY IS TO CENSUS ACCURACY, NOT POLITICAL PARTY**

Houston Chronicle

<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/story.hts/editorial/829780>

Commerce Secretary Don Evans says that he, rather than the U.S. Census Bureau's career statisticians, will decide which population numbers the government will adopt. As President Bush's appointee responsible for the U.S. Census, Evans is asserting proper authority, but Americans have reason to fear his motive.

Some conservatives, including President Bush, maintain that a simple head count is the most accurate way to conduct the U.S. Census, which consistently fails to count millions of Americans, particularly children, resident aliens and members of racial and ethnic minorities. Some ideologues oppose correcting the numbers even if Census officials detect gross errors during recounts of some population areas.

The opponents of statistical analysis are mistaken, of course. The usefulness of statistical sampling can be seen every day in the way Americans conduct commerce. Developers and builders and manufacturers and marketers use the Census Bureau's adjusted numbers, because they know those numbers are more accurate than the flawed numbers of the initial head count.

Ranch and wildlife managers obtain accurate inventories of animals on the range and in wilderness rivers using the same sampling techniques Census statisticians use.

Those who oppose adjustments in the Census numbers either do not understand arithmetic, or they understand it all too well. Some Republicans fear that accurate Census data, used by states to draw congressional and legislative district lines, would damage GOP strength in state houses and the U.S. House of Representatives. They know accurate numbers would mean more federal aid for Houston and other fast-growing but undercounted locales, but they would rather see those tax dollars go elsewhere than tolerate Census accuracy.

Several Commerce Department employees declined to vouch for Secretary Evans' understanding of probability and statistics, but his press secretary said Evans' degrees in engineering and business provide him ample expertise in the subject. That is reassuring.

Solid understanding of statistical methods will lead Evans to choose the most accurate numbers for the U.S. Census -- the statistically adjusted numbers that reflect errors found and corrected. Should Evans insist on adopting numbers he knows to be flawed, Americans will know that he let ideological blindness or his desire for partisan advantage overcome his duty to accuracy.