

not as serious as we think, or that they can be left for the next generation to solve. Others maintain that pollution is still the price of progress, and that attempting to end it would cause massive economic dislocation, putting millions out of work.

The argument can get personal. Some companies, faced with new regulations, have threatened to shut down — pitting workers against environmentalists. Additional controls would be just too expensive, these companies say, and workers who want to save their jobs had better line up behind their employers.

This is part of a familiar corporate strategy. When the union tried to clean up unsafe conditions in plants or reduce toxic chemical exposures, some companies would threaten us with loss of jobs. Our response has always been that a failure to act will cost us our members' lives. Time and again, these unscrupulous employers have backed down, proving that we must fight for good jobs and a clean environment as mutually reinforcing goals.

Are they right? Do we really have to choose between our jobs and the environment? Is our economy threatened by efforts to stop environmental damage? Or is a damaged environment the real threat to our economic well-being? Can we afford to wait? What kind of world do we want to leave our children?

We believe the greatest threat to our children's future may lie in the destruction of their environment. For that reason alone, environment must be an issue for our union. In addition, we cannot protect Steelworker jobs by ignoring environmental problems. This report summarizes our findings and recommendations, beginning with a basic review of the threat to our environment."

In July, 2005 the International Executive Board reconstituted its Environmental Policy Committee and charged it with reviewing and restating our commitment to the environment. Our committee believes that the words of our original report still ring true today.

But in 2006 much of the doubt that was expressed in 1990 has been removed. In the wake of the most devastating hurricane season in modern times, the destructive danger of doing nothing about global warming looms over the U.S. and world economies. Over 12,000 USW members and retirees were personally affected by the 2005 hurricanes, losing their jobs, homes, and in some cases, their lives. The economic impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita may run as high as

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\$200 billion, an amount that our economies can ill afford to absorb on a regular and escalating basis.

Our original report identified global warming as the single most important environmental issue of our lifetime and warned about the risks of doing nothing. During the last 15 years the U.S. government, in particular, has failed to take meaningful steps and today, global warming has emerged as a significant threat to the stability of steelworker jobs and communities in the coming years. We can no longer be content with simply identifying problems and issuing warnings. A strategic response to environmental challenges like global warming is key to our union's long-term survival. The good jobs of the future will be based on principles of environmental sustainability. Quite simply, this means that the jobs and other human activities that we engage in must be performed in a manner that doesn't destroy the planet we inhabit. Two hundred years ago, we didn't concern ourselves with this issue. Even a hundred years ago, such concerns were minimized. Today, scientists are very clear that escalating human impairment of our environment will rapidly and irretrievably change the ability of human beings to survive on the planet. Thus, we can say with certainty that those jobs that are based on the continued rapid consumption of the earth's resources and atmosphere simply will not last.

Our report will examine each of the areas originally noted in our 1990 report and touch on both the progress made and the threats that are still outstanding. In the concluding section we outline an action plan for our union's broad engagement with the global environmental movement. In many ways, there is no more important policy decision for us to make — a planet populated by 6.5 billion human beings, virtually all of whom share our own aspirations for a better life, cannot imagine a future of peace and growing prosperity without also imagining a global economy that lifts 2 billion people out of poverty in a sustainable fashion. The alternative — an unregulated global economy that increases the gap between rich and poor and ignores sound environmental science — will ultimately destroy the good jobs and healthy environment that are the legacy of the North American trade union movement.

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SECURING OUR CHILDREN'S WORLD
Our Union and the Environment

What We Face

In 1990 we wrote, “Over the last century, the relationship between human beings and the planet that sustains us has undergone a profound change. When the century began, our population and our technology did not have the power to alter our environment irreversibly. Now they do. Yet that power seems out of control, creating enormous conflicts between human activities and the natural world. Some of the problems are local and familiar; others are global, and seem difficult to comprehend. All of them are critical to our survival.”

In many ways the challenges we identified between human technologies and the environment in 1990 have not changed. But in one profound way they have. Today, this challenge is deeply affected by the political refusal of the Bush Administration to accept the overwhelming scientific consensus on the importance of addressing environmental issues.

In 1992 the governments of the world’s nations, including the U.S. and Canada, gathered in Rio de Janeiro for the first global conference on the Environment and Development. This landmark event — for the first time the issues of global economic growth and environmental protection were linked — set the stage for an international effort to deal with global warming. The Rio conference was followed in 1995 by the Kyoto Treaty which committed the nations of the world to reducing greenhouse gases and reversing the trend toward climate change.

Ten years later, in May, 2005, 141 of the world’s governments ratified the Kyoto Treaty and took the first steps toward cutting back on carbon emissions. Notably, the United States stands apart as the only member of the G-8 (the world’s eight largest economies) refusing to sign Kyoto. We must note that this refusal not only poses a grave threat to efforts to reverse global warming; it also represents a grave threat to steelworker jobs in a global economy.

Consider that while the rest of the industrialized world is now moving toward more restrictive standards on everything from automobile fuel efficiency to pollution standards on power plants, the U.S. stands alone, insisting on its right to build cars and industrial plants and equipment that are out of compliance with what the rest of the world wants and needs. How long can our automotive companies and manufacturers compete in a global economy, producing products that nobody else wants? How can we compete with China when Beijing produces cars that are more fuel efficient than Detroit’s? Of course, the main reason that Chinese production is a growing threat to the U.S. automotive industry is the fact that China pays its assembly plant workers less than one-tenth the hourly wage of their unionized U.S. counterparts and intends to sell their cars in North America for

about \$10,000. But we have seen how the lack of fuel efficiency has caused a dramatic drop in the sales of SUV’s, trucks, and other low mileage vehicles in the last year.

The current Bush Administration is the most anti-environmental administration of the last 50 years. According to Congressman Bernie Sanders (VT), the Bush Administration “...has proposed or implemented over 400 rollbacks in environmental protections, from permitting untreated sewage into our waterways to curbing restrictions on toxic mercury in our air and water.”

These actions have consequences far beyond public health and the environment. They have grave economic consequences as well. The U.S. automotive industry still accounts for 3.5 percent of the U.S. economy, employing over 2.5 million



Americans, directly or indirectly. Many of those Americans are members of the USW, employed in the steel, aluminum, tire, glass, plastics and general manufacturing industries. Another 2.2 million others are employed by the economic activities that are generated by a successful automotive industry. The failure of this industry and of the U.S. government to meet internationally acceptable standards for fuel efficiency is resulting in millions of American consumers turning away from GM, Ford, and Chrysler to purchase high quality, fuel efficient imports. The go-it-alone, cowboy-style of the Bush Administration is accelerating the destruction of America’s long-term manufacturing base.

But this destruction is not inevitable. Just as Americans responded to the challenges of World War II by harnessing the ingenuity and productivity of its working people, Americans can retool our current economy and rebuild it on sound environmental principles. Not surprisingly, such an

