The heat is on true believers

by Debra_J_Saunders

A Sunday New York Times story described an expected sea change in international global warming policy. The story noted that President George W. Bush, "pressed by the Senate, rejected" the Kyoto global warming protocol in 2001, but now President Obama is eager to negotiate a robust international global warming treaty to be signed in Copenhagen in December.

Prominently missing from the 1,584-word story was any mention of President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. That's a surprising omission considering that Gore negotiated the treaty for Clinton in 1997, and that Clinton never asked the Senate to ratify the pact, which mandated that the United States reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

Then again, Clinton knew that the Senate would not ratify the pact. Before Gore flew to Kyoto, the Senate had voted 95-0 in favor of a resolution that declared that Washington should not be a signatory to any protocol that exempted developing nations, like India and China.

Wrongly, Gore nonetheless agreed to a pact that set no limits on nations like China and India. And all those geniuses in the â€” all bow â€” international community agreed to a pact that the U.S. Senate had opposed unanimously. They were so dazzled by their good intentions that they botched their entire mission.

After Bush officially disassociated with Kyoto, Our Betters in Europe dedicated themselves to complaining that the Bush administration would not be part of the pact, and that ruined things. Indeed, some leaders were so busy pointing fingers at America that they failed to find the time to make their own countries meet their Kyoto goals.

During the Bush years, politicians found that they could demonstrate their environmental bona fides simply by saying they supported Kyoto.

Even if they were Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., John Kerry, D-Mass., Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., John McCain, R-Ariz., or any of the other 91 senators who voted for Resolution 98. The same applied to European leaders as well, as the Times reported on their quest for tougher laws, but barely their failure to meet Kyoto.

Until Sunday, that is, when (after years of stories about Europe's commitment to fighting global warming, without reporting results) the Times ran a chart that showed that most Kyoto-bound countries are not meeting their Kyoto targets. Only four Western European countries â€” Sweden, Monaco, France and Britain â€” are likely to meet their Kyoto goals. Germany is not on target. Spain, Ireland and Italy are spewing greenhouse gases far in excess of their Kyoto goals.

Now that a Democrat is in the White House, the Times is reporting on how difficult it has been for true believers to meet their Kyoto mandates. The focus of stories used to be on whether politicians said they supported Kyoto â€” and as long as leaders said they believed, they didn't have to curb their emissions. Now the Times is focusing not on beliefs, but on results.

To those of us who are global warming agnostics and to skeptics, the emphasis on belief always undercut the science. After all, if greenhouse gas emissions were the threat that alarmists said they were, you would expect environmentalists to demand changes from China (now the world's largest emitter).

But when I asked U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2007 about why the United States â€” but not China and India â€” should have to curb emissions, Ban answered that America has a "historical responsibility" to cut emissions, while China and India "have their own positions." Like the Kyoto crowd, Ban emitted more political ideology than science.

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