

Covering both sides of the fence, conservative and liberal

This weekly column will run through until the end of the semester. It features a conservative column and a liberal column on one topic. The conservative column comes from a member of the College Republicans. The liberal column will feature writers from College Democrats. The opinions expressed do not represent those of The Pendulum staff.

Kyoto Treaty would have hurt economy

Luke Wake
Columnist

The Kyoto Global Treaty was aimed at reducing global warming by regulating carbon dioxide emissions of developed nations and the left has heckled the Bush administration for their choice not to sign into this international treaty, which would have had painful repercussions for the American economy. The Bush administration was wisely concerned with the failures of the treaty, which would not only burden all Americans with higher energy costs but would also be ineffective in its aim to reduce global warming. After all the Bush administration certainly does want a healthy environment and a green earth but the Kyoto Treaty would not have been an effective tool for bringing about a more healthy earth because the world's most powerful, and pollutant, economies would not be held accountable to this international treaty.



Luke Wake

We cannot really refer to the Kyoto treaty as a "global" treaty because it was never meant to be a "global" treaty but rather a regulation on business in the industrialized world. The question is then, "what is the industrialized world?" Surely we can agree that Ethiopia and El Salvador are far from developed nations but surely we cannot refer to a nation with a powerhouse economy as undeveloped; yet, the Kyoto Treaty leaves China, the largest industrialized nation in the world, exempt from the same regulatory controls that would be imposed upon the United States and other signing nations. Brazil and India, two other powerhouse economies, with the world's fifth and second largest populace respectively, would be unrestricted by Kyoto. China alone emits nearly nine billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and without having such pollutant economically powerful nations sign on to the treaty it would have no net effect toward improving the atmosphere. These nations would then be allowed to continue at the same pace of pollution, while Americans pay a higher energy cost.

As we all know, energy costs have already grown exceedingly high. It is difficult for working class families to heat their homes during the winter as the cost of oil is tremendous and even the cost of gasoline has risen steady-

ly. Enacting the Kyoto Treaty would have been devastating to working class families who would have seen their cost of living climb as energy costs rise.

The United States would have spent an additional \$400 billion per year for energy according to a 1998 US Energy Information Administration report. Americans would have seen the cost of electricity rise by 86 percent and oil 76 percent if we had signed into Kyoto. We would have also seen a gasoline tax of 66 cents per gallon, which would have made commuting more costly for all of us. This would hurt the American working class the most, as the average household would spend an additional \$1,740 in a year.

Recalling the mini-recession our nation was beginning to slip into, as Clinton was finishing his last term, it is a blessing that Al Gore was not in office when Kyoto was being pushed upon the United States. Clinton and Gore endorsed the Kyoto treaty and had Gore signed this bill into effect the recession would have been significantly worse. The energy costs would have led to loss of American jobs and we would not have seen the same growth, economically, as we have seen under Bush and his strong economic recovery.

Certainly the Bush administration has done much for the environment during his first term and the environment is a top concern for all Americans. Yet we cannot subjugate ourselves to economically crippling international protocols, of which other nations will not join with us. It would simply not be fair for Americans to be forced to pay more for their energy, and for American industries to be hurt while unregulated Brazilian, Indian and Chinese industries continue to emit excessive pollution into the environment. Without the agreement of all large and economically powerful nations into such an agreement it would do nothing to improve the environment.

Lastly it has not been proven that global warming is occurring at all, or that it is a problem. Some scientists contend that the earth naturally goes through cycles and that, since 17th century, the world has been naturally warming. It is not for me to say that global warming is or is not a problem, but we should consider the possibility that the left has led a green-scare.

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America, powerful and influential

Brendan Gleason
Columnist

The Kyoto accord in 1997 was an attempt to unify the world to combat something other than terrorism, something that some believe to be possibly the greatest killer of them all, global warming. It is the single greatest step the world has taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; gases such as carbon dioxide that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere causing the world's average temperature to slightly increase. Over 140 nations have signed the treaty and ratified it in attempt to save the only planet we currently have at the moment. The United States is the largest emitter of these gases, and of course the treaty calls for the United States to have the greatest amount of reduction, or it has the option to pay developing nations for their emission credits.



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It is no secret that we have decided not to sign the Kyoto Treaty; in fact, most people agree that we should sign the treaty. It is the environment, who cares about the environment? We should be able to create and build anything that we (the United States) are capable of inventing. It is ludicrous that we should have to reduce the amount of pollution to save the planet, especially if it is going to cost us money, and hurt the economy. I can turn on my lights all night long in rooms I never walk in and turn up my thermostat as high as I want to. Companies should not be required to reduce emission if it is going to cost them more money, are you crazy? It could cripple our economy, the wealthiest and biggest economy in the world. It does not matter to me if the world has a problem; I am just looking out for myself.

Sounds pretty dumb and selfish right? Well that is exactly the attitude that we have taken when it comes to helping the environment, if it's going to cost us more money, let someone else deal with it. It's the same approach that polluters take when it comes to the environment. The sad part about it is the majority of people really do not care about what happens to the environment. Why? Because the effects are so long term that most people will not even be around to see even the smallest of impacts. Everyone says that they care for the environment and that they support the environment, but does anyone truly care?

There are some flaws with the Kyoto Treaty obviously; every treaty is going to have something that everyone disagrees with. The current treaty distinguish between developed nations and undeveloped nations, requiring that developed nations reduce emissions more than undeveloped nations. No surprise, other than the fact that the United States does not think it is fair because countries such as India and China are considered undeveloped countries. The United States has said that it would not sign as long as countries such as India and China where considered developed nations. Of course India and China fired back saying that the United States was protecting itself, and suppressing other economies so they could never become as powerful as the mighty United States. The United States is not alone in developed countries who have not signed the treaty. Australia for example has not ratified the treaty for the simple fact that if the United States, the single greatest national polluter in the world is not going to sign it, what good is it going to do anyways?

Before I make the argument that it is completely self-serving and arrogant that we have not signed the treaty, there are things that need to be changed in the treaty. The most significant change would be difference in treatment between economies that have maintained stable economies and the nations in which economies are growing exponentially, especially in countries where there are few labor laws.

Other than that, typical American arrogance is why we have not signed this treaty. We have this idea that we are the greatest nation to ever walk on Earth, that we are one of the greatest societies of all time. And while I share in those thoughts, I recognize that we are not the only nation in the world or of all time. If we are truly the greatest society as we claim to be so often, then we better start acting like it, because recently we have been acting like a 4-year old spoiled brat who didn't get what he/she wanted. We need to grow up and realize our potential. We should not be arguing for the least common denominator requirements, we should be raising the bar, pushing the limits, and acting like we are the leaders of the world. We all know that life is not fair; but it is about time we started echoing a new theme throughout the world, responsibility. If we created the mess, we better clean it up.

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