

B2-- A MORAL CALL ON GLOBAL WARMING & FUTURE GENERATIONS, 1998

The following “Moral Call on Global Warming and Future Generations” was signed by President Jimmy Carter, Nobel Laureates Elie Wiesel and Edmond Fischer, Bishop H. George Anderson (Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutherans), Bishop George Bashore (President-elect, the United Methodist Council of Bishops), The Reverend John Buehrens, (President, the Unitarian Universalist Assoc. of Congregations), The Reverend Edmond Browning (Past Presiding Bishop, Episcopalian Church) Dr. Joan Brown Campbell (General Secretary, National Council of Churches), Rabbi Joseph Epstein, (CEO, The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism), (The Reverend Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, (Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA), Norman Lear (TV Producer), Bishops Raymond Lucker and Walter Sullivan (Presiding Bishops, the New Ulm and Richmond Catholic Dioceses), Peter Mathiessen (author), Dean James Parks Morton (The Interfaith Council of New York), The Reverend Paul Sherry (President, United Church of Christ), and Ambassador Andrew Young, in addition to many others (full list attached.)

The original draft was authored by Fred Branfman, who circulated it for signature while working with the “Protecting Future Generations” project of the Pace University Law School Energy Project. Dean Richard Ottinger was Dean of the Law School, and Ed Smeloff directed the Energy Project.

A MORAL CALL ON "GLOBAL WARMING AND FUTURE GENERATIONS"

"When the century began, neither human numbers nor technology had the power radically to alter planetary systems. As the century closes (they) do ... We borrow environmental capital from future generations because we can get away with it: future generations do not vote; they cannot challenge our decisions."

-- Our Common Future, The U.N. Brundtland Commission

Dear Members of the Senate,

Our newfound power to "radically alter" the earth's environmental systems increases our responsibility to serve as trustees for future generations. It means that long-term moral concerns are critical to the debate over the historic global warming Protocol negotiated at Kyoto.

We urge you to follow through on these concerns with concrete action, by seeking real reductions in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. We have not met the aim we expressed at Rio to reduce to 1990 levels by 2000. Instead we have allowed carbon dioxide emissions to rise 8% since then.

It is unconscionable to continue risking the wellbeing of posterity.

We are the first generation in human history to have such tremendous power to impair the biosphere--to put at risk the most vital legacy we bequeath to posterity. Let us now also be the first to establish a precedent saying we hold this planet in trust for our children, grandchildren, and the rest of life with which we share this planet. For they have neither voice nor vote, and are at the mercy of our wisdom and conscience.

Your decision on global warming is one of the few that will directly affect your children's grandchildren and their descendants. And it is they whose verdict will determine whether our lives have had a positive meaning that transcends our deaths, i.e. whether we will be

remembered as wise ancestors, as we fondly remember the founders of our nation.

In acting for our descendants we thus act for ourselves. Our own society cannot remain whole today if we lose our concern, caring and love for those who will come tomorrow. There is a national consensus that we need to teach personal responsibility and reduce the budget deficits we leave our children. But to do so we must take personal responsibility for the air, water and climate we leave them. And we must stop bequeathing them environmental debts in the form of the monumental costs that will be needed to clean up and repair the damage we are doing to the biosphere.

Global Warming As Substance of Intergenerational Responsibility

The more than 2,000 scientists who have participated in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Control (the IPCC) are part of the largest and most thorough process for reaching a scientific understanding in human history. It is truly remarkable that they have reached a consensus that climate change poses many threats that, in our judgment, may affect human wellbeing for centuries to come - e.g., by shifting agricultural patterns, raising sea-levels, and potentially causing devastating storms.

We recognize that economic grounds will be important in your decision. We are thus pleased to note that an Executive Branch interagency economic team has reported that reducing 2010 levels to those of 1990 will cause short-term economic losses that are "relatively small and transient", and that more than 2,000 leading economists have reported that "there are many potential policies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions for which the total benefits outweigh the total costs."

But though it is clear that you can set far-reaching carbon dioxide emission limits without seriously disrupting our economy, we do not believe this is solely an economic decision. It is a matter of fundamental morality that we move decisively to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Global Warming As Symbol of Intergenerational Responsibility

Global warming is only the most prominent of a series of environmental threats. Forests are being stripped, stressed and burned. Deserts are advancing. The oceans are being loaded with pollutants and swept of marine life. Endocrine disrupters may threaten our reproductive abilities. And we are sullyng the polar regions and eradicating species.

The technological power to affect future generations so broadly has come upon us suddenly, but our policies do not yet adequately this new reality. We need laws and institutions that better reflect our responsibilities to posterity and nature, an economics that fully accounts for the benefits of our environment and the costs of its degradation, and a politics capable of acting for the long-term.

We owe no less to ourselves and our distant descendants. For though we will never see their faces nor hear their voices, it is they who will bear witness that what we did in this time and this place had meaning.

Sincerely,

SIGNATORIES TO "A MORAL CALL ON GLOBAL WARMING AND FUTURE GENERATIONS"

Bishop H. George Anderson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church

Bishop George Bashore, President-elect, United Methodist Bishops

Thomas Berry, The Dream of the Earth

Bruce Birchard, Friends National Conference

Noel Brown, Friends of the U.N.

Peter G. Brown, University of Maryland

Rev. Edmond Browning, Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church

Rev. John Buehrens, President, The Unitarian Universalist Assn.

Carnegie Calian, President, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Joan Brown Campbell, Gen'l Sect., Nat'l Council of Churches

Arthur Caplan, Center for Bioethics, U. of Pennsylvania

Bishop Kenneth Carder, Resident UMC Bishop, Memphis

President Jimmy Carter

John Cobb, For The Common Good

Michael Cook, Gonzaga University
Christopher Cokinos, Kansas State University
Mary C. Derr, Oregon State University
Calvin DeWitt, Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies
Elizabeth Dodd, Kansas State University
Strachan Donnelley, The Hastings Center
Rabbi Jerome Epstein, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Richard Falk, Princeton University
Jonathan Fanton, President, New School for Social Research
Edmond H. Fischer, Nobel Laureate, Physiology, 1992
Dean Arthur Frakt, Widener University School of Law
Dean Dale Goble, University of Idaho College of Law
Bishop William Boyd Grove, UMC Bishop (Ret.)
David Hallman, World Council of Churches
Hazel Henderson, author
Jaydee Hanson, United Methodist Bd of Church & Society
Dieter Hessel, Theological Ed. To Meet The Env. Challenge (TEMEC)
Reverend Kenneth Himes, Washington Theological Union
Dean Joseph Hough, Vanderbilt Divinity School
Tom Hurley, Institute of Noetic Sciences
Dale Jamieson, Carleton College
Bishop Alfred Johnson, Resident UMC Bishop, New Jersey
Dean William S. Jordan, III, University of Akron School of Law
Friar Illia Katre, Vicar General, Albanian Orthodox Diocese
Catherine Keller, Drew University
Robert Kennedy, Jr., Pace University
Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)
J. Theodora Klein, Swedenborg School of Religion
Norman and Lynn Lear, The Business Enterprise Trust
Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, Exec. Dir., Jewish Reconstructionist Fed.
Dean David Link, Notre Dame School of Law
Jane Lubchenco, Oregon State University
Bishop Raymond Lucker, Catholic Diocese, New Ulm
Peter Matthiessen, author
Corinne McGlaughlin, The Center for Visionary Leadership
Bishop Marshall Meadors, Resident UMC Bishop, Mississippi
Ved Mehta, Stanford University
Bishop Robert Morgan, Resident UMC Bishop, Kentucky
Dean Grant Morris, University of San Diego School of Law
Bishop Susan Morrison, Resident UMC Bishop, Troy

Dean James Parks Morton, The Interfaith Center of New York
James Nash, Churches' Center For Theology & Public Policy
Reverend Owen Owens, American Baptist Churches
Ernest Partridge, Responsibilities To Future Generations
Robert Pastor, The Carter Center
Reverend Serhij Pastukhiv, Archpresbyter UOAC, West Babylon
Dean Donald J. Polden, University of Memphis School of Law
Catha Pollitt, Author
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Carol S. Robb, San Francisco Theological Seminary
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Irma Russell, University of Memphis School of Law
Steven Rockefeller, Middlebury College
Reverend Paul Schradung, United Methodist Church
Reverend Paul Sherry, President, United Church of Christ
Larry Shinn, President, Berea College
Harry E. Smith, President Emeritus, Austin College
M.E.P. Tom Spencer, Chair, GLOBAL International
Christopher Stone, University of Southern California
Robert Stone, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Bishop Walter Sullivan, Catholic Diocese, Richmond
Bishop Melvin Talbert, Resident UMC Bishop, California-Nevada
Rabbi David Teutsch, Reconstructivist Rabbinical College
Dean Joseph Tomain, University of Cincinnati School of Law
Mary Evelyn Tucker, Bucknell University
David F. Wallace, Illinois State University
Edith Brown Weiss, Georgetown School of Law
Elie Wiesel, Nobel Laureate, Peace, 1986
Bishop Woodie White, Resident UMC Bishop, Indiana
Barbara Williams, Actress
Jack Winder, Co-Chair, Episcopal Env. Coalition
Naomi Wolf, author
Ambassador Andrew Young, GoodWorks International
Dean Stephen Zamora, University of Houston School of Law
(Organizations listed for identification only)