

## The White House's 'clean air' plan . . . stinks

by Nicholas F. Benton

President Bush unveiled his death sentence for U.S. industry in Washington June 12 with the announcement of his comprehensive Clean Air Plan. While most analysts are predicting the package of draconian measures aimed at "cleaning up the environment" will mainly hit consumer pocketbooks, it is U.S. basic industry, which is most heavily reliant on coal-generated electrical power, which is most seriously threatened.

First of all, there should be no illusions about the efficiency of the Bush plan for dealing with the problem it purports to address—air pollution.

For one, leading scientists challenge the assumptions of the plan, that industrial and auto emissions are the primary cause of pollutants in the air. Studies done at Michigan State University in 1980 showed that there was as much ozone in the atmosphere in the 1870s, for example, caused by natural conditions before there were any automobiles at all, as in the 1980s.

For another, the administration had a choice of two pathways toward affecting industry and the environment with such a plan. One would be to provide economic incentives, through massive new infusions of low-interest credit and new resources targeted at bringing the technologies of the future—such as nuclear fusion and high-temperature magnetohydrodynamics—into play. The other would be to burden an increasingly uncompetitive U.S. industry with additional government costs and police-state oversight.

The Bush administration chose the latter course, the road to certain ruin for U.S. industry.

The only reason the hue and cry from U.S. industry has not been greater is because they are fearful that Congress will make the Bush package even stiffer. In this climate of "environmental terror," U.S. industry has been limited to muted warnings of possible increases in costs to the American consumer of the plan.

The fact remains, however, that the U.S. steel, auto, and energy-generating industries are already on the brink of ruin as a result of a decade of assaults from the government since the original Clean Air Act was passed in 1970. Environmentally-created nuclear plant "cost overruns" and the more than \$100 billion spent on pollution controls at coal plants were compounded by state regulatory rulings prohibiting power companies from recovering costs for plants not put into production.

The Bush plan would break the camel's back for many industries that have barely remained on their feet through this era of assault, adding costs estimated at \$14 to \$18 billion a year to the estimated \$150 billion a year already being spent by industry solely on pollution reduction. While a total of 107 coal-burning electric power plants in 18 states are targeted for major reductions in sulfur dioxide emissions, the Bush plan also mandates the U.S. automobile industry to sell 500,000 vehicles in 1995 capable of running on "clean" alternatives to gasoline—substances such as methanol, ethanol, or natural gas. That figure will rise, according to the Bush plan, to 750,000 auto sales in 1996 and to 1 million in 1997, to remain at 1 million sales of such vehicles a year for the indefinite future.

Today, roughly 12 million cars are sold annually in the United States, meaning that producers will have to find enormous incentives to persuade such high sales of "alternative fuel" vehicles over the next few years, especially since methanol—the fuel most readily available as an alternative—costs more than gasoline at the pump, and takes a car about half as far on a tankful.

### Why not go nuclear?

Why didn't President Bush go the route of new technologies, initiating policies, for example, to make it easier for nuclear power to substitute for coal as a cleaner source of

electrical power?

*EIR* put this question to Adm. James Watkins, the Secretary of Energy, when he and William Reilly, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, unveiled the new plan at the White House press room June 12. "What about the increased use of nuclear energy as an alternative to coal?" Watkins was asked.

He responded, "Well, I think one of the reasons that you see me up here at all on a clean air bill is the fact that the President recognizes the relationship between energy and environment here in a new way, and he has tasked me to prepare a national energy strategy which will include all of the Clean Air Bill provisions, as well as those which might come out of a follow-on global warming workshop, international discussions, as well as the mix of sensible energy sources that we need for the nation for the future."

In other words, Watkins conceded that President Bush has subsumed the nation's energy needs in a "new way" to the priority of environmental concerns, which will take into account the assertions of "global warming" hoaxsters and "international discussions."

Watkins tipped off the most sinister component of all contained in the plan—that it fits with the moves of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov and the leaders of the Group of Seven major Western industrial nations toward making a global "environmental" agenda the basis for new international law and a policing apparatus, at the expense of the sovereignty of individual nations.

Such a move, which puts the United States and other free nations of the world under the same law as a totalitarian dictatorship like the Soviet Union, is seen by experts as the fastest track toward imposing the one-world federalist scenario that freedom-loving peoples have been fearing for the last century.

Seen in such a light, the Bush environmental agenda is part and parcel of his so-called savings and loan bailout package, which will force American taxpayers to guarantee up to \$300 billion in credits to underwrite the takeover of the nation's S&L industry by a handful of financial giants based in Wall Street. By self-righteously insisting on a high capital standard, the administration is ensuring that most all the S&Ls will be forced to sell out to one or another of the handful of giant banks or newly formed conglomerates set up to pick them up at bargain prices, complete with their taxpayer-backed guarantees.

### **Environmental shock-troops run amok**

Even more than their fears that Congress might impose even more severe restraints, it is the fear of American industry to expose the magnitude of the crime being plotted against the principles of America's constitutional democracy, which has rendered them mute in the face of the escalating onslaught.

The shock-troops of the environmentalist movement, on the other hand, are having a field day. President Bush is the

best friend the environmentalists have ever had in Washington, according to Frederick Krupp, executive director of the Environmental Defense Fund, speaking to a Capitol Hill audience gathered by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government June 13.

Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.), whose wife is a leading member of the "Peace Links" organization that cavorts with the Soviets, called for a 50¢ tax on each gallon of gasoline. Noting that a one-cent tax increase per gallon would cost consumers \$1 billion, he said a 50¢ increase is warranted because of the need to redress the "the ominous consequences of the Greenhouse Effect."

While statements like that from U.S. Congressmen cause industrialists to cringe, the economic impact of the Bush plan, even as presented, will be far worse than most are now willing to publicly admit. For example, adding the "scrubbers" required to lower the level of sulfur oxide emissions from the 107 coal plants targeted by the administration could cost as much as \$500 million per plant.

A. Joseph Dowd, senior vice-president and general counsel for the American Electric Power Service Corporation, which primarily serves the industrial heartland state of Ohio, commented, in a classic understatement, that "the clean-air proposals will have a substantial effect on rates."

In the case of alternative fuels in automobiles, not only are these fuels more expensive and require refueling twice as often, but billions will have to be spent on new pipelines, tanker trucks, storage tanks, service pumps, and refineries to produce and deliver these cleaner-burning alternative fuels in large volumes.

And, according to experts, unless the administration adds some lucrative incentives for domestic production of these fuels, the impact of increased use of methanol, for example, will wreak havoc with the trade deficit, since the world's cheapest methanol now comes from the Mideast. Building one new methanol plant in the United States now will cost at least \$1 billion and take two years, experts predict. Today, the United States produces only 1.5 billion gallons of methanol annually, compared to about 110 billion gallons of gasoline.

But the clincher comes from the Michigan State University study, which demonstrated levels of ozone in the 1870s far in excess of current government standards, with all of it being created by emissions from plants and soils—that is, by the natural environment. Not only that, researchers found in 1845 that ozone was a beneficial germicidal agent for man.

In fact, according to Dr. Hugh Ellsaesser of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories in California, no study has ever been done to prove that concentrations of ozone found in the worst-polluted areas of the United States, such as Los Angeles, have ever posed a health hazard to anyone. Even sulfur dioxide, he claims, is "quite insignificant when compared to the natural 'background' pollution, which is essential to the survival of plant species, since 'natural pollution' is the only way most plants are naturally fertilized."