

Green Houses and Noses

By Reg P. Wydeven
May 19, 2007

In many articles, I like to discuss movies. Typical favorites are obviously 'Star Wars', 'Spiderman' or anything starring Sylvester Stallone. While Al Gore's Oscar-winning documentary 'An Inconvenient Truth' has no costumed heroes, car chases or cool special effects, it definitely has a sinister villain and a scary ending – namely, mankind and its abuse of the environment.

According to the film's website, if left unchecked, global warming will result in "a major catastrophe that could send our entire planet into a tail-spin of epic destruction involving extreme weather, floods, droughts, epidemics and killer heat waves beyond anything we have ever experienced."

Gore's gloomy but eye-opening movie has inspired many to become more eco-friendly. Gore contends that global warming is not a political issue, rather, it is a global civilization issue. To a certain extent, however, politics will always play a part.

Last month, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the federal Environmental Protection Agency to reexamine its authority to regulate the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from cars. The lawsuit, which was filed by 12 states and 13 environmental groups in responses to the Bush administration's inaction on global warming, the Court held in a 5-4 decision that the Clean Air Act, which governs air pollutants, encompasses greenhouse gases and should therefore be applied to cars by the EPA.

Many scientists believe that unprecedented emissions of greenhouse gases, of which carbon dioxide is the most prevalent, are leading to a warming of the Earth, rising sea levels and other marked ecological changes, a concept also depicted in 'An Inconvenient Truth'. Carbon dioxide is produced when fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas are burned.

Business leaders are purportedly open to government oversight of the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Congressional intervention will not only protect the environment, but also level the playing field for automakers. The Court's decision is also expected to increase the chances of the EPA approving California's own initiative to limit tailpipe emissions of greenhouse gases.

In an earlier article I wrote about Governor Schwarzenegger's effort to say "hasta la vista" to incandescent light bulbs in favor of fluorescent bulbs. The Governor is now leading the charge in California to drive environmentally friendly cars, like his Hummer that runs on bio-fuel and hydrogen fuel.

Over the last year, Schwarzenegger has signed two laws in California to decrease greenhouse gas emissions – one to curb emissions 25 percent by the year 2020, and the other to cut the carbon content in transportation fuel by 10 percent.

One little known result of global warming is drastic increases in asthma and environmental allergies. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, the number of asthma cases have doubled between 1980 and 2004, while seasonal allergies have experienced similar increases.

Again, the villain of global warming is to blame. Because of increased greenhouse gas emissions, there is more carbon dioxide in the air, which plants thrive on. The resultant flourishing of plants causes more allergy and asthma attacks.

Before I saw 'An Inconvenient Truth', I was never a huge opponent of global warming, especially given the fact of how much I hate shoveling my driveway. But seeing as I hate a runny nose, an itchy throat and watery eyes even worse, I have now 'gone green'.

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