



Sustaining the System

by J Mitchell McMahon, May 2008 issue



J Mitchell McMahon examines media's role in a neutral nation and the uneasy alliance of the greenies and the meanies.

After a long quarantine on the blue horizon, the sustainable-business era is at last pulling into port. The dream team of environmental conservation, economic growth and social responsibility might trump good intentions. But this vessel has been called a party boat, a green-painted oil tanker, an optical illusion, a false religion and even the future of civilization. Harbormasters weren't sure if this ship would ever drop anchor. But the shoreline is teeming with global-warming catastrophists, climate-change opportunists and clean-tech speculators. The arrival of sustainability is no longer in doubt.

"A new language of business has finally hit home - that of combining sound economics, social responsibility and ecologic sustainability," says Don Carli, head of the Institute for Sustainable Communication, a nonprofit group that seeks to foster responsible practices throughout the media supply chain. The timing of climate change, energy prices, war and technological readiness has forced industry and government into adopting

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genuine environmental strategies. Even the media is looking in the environmental mirror, weighing its carbon impact and re-evaluating what kind of corporate citizen it could be.

In October 2008, hundreds of media stakeholders and executives will gather at the inaugural SustainCommWorld conference to examine ways to integrate more sustainable practices into their supply chain. Don Carli, who's organizing the conference, says, "The editorial staffs have done a good job of addressing environmental issues, but the magazines and newspapers can be tone-deaf in their operations regarding the supply chain. More often than not, we're ignoring the vast flow of energy and supplies in both digital and print media."

The media is no stranger to scrutiny, but the messenger has either flown beneath the environmentalists' radar, or it's simply not reporting its own impact. Besides its powerful influence on millions of consumers, the media doesn't exactly tread lightly on the environment. As a massive contributor to deforestation, greenhouse gases and fresh water depletion, both print and digital media are blatant climate offenders. A few, like Random House, American Media and Google, have implemented high-priority environmental initiatives, but most comfortably trail the curve.

After the Greenrush

The shift in business strategy runs far deeper than the shameless blitzkrieg of "green" marketing that's bombarding consumers. Wall Street is paying close attention to the titanic risks and opportunities associated with climate change, pressuring clients to take action, and investing in clean tech like it's the new Internet. The federal government, long derided for its lagging, obstructionist stance on legitimate emissions regulation, can no longer afford to hope this thing goes away. Business leaders have also enticed many environmental groups out of the Oregonian redwoods and offered boardroom access from Detroit to Bentonville to Langley.

Add James Woolsey, former director of the CIA, to the legions of mainstreamers promoting sustainability. Quoting his new book, Woolsey recently testified before the House of Representatives about a mythical discussion between Sierra Club founder John Muir and General John S. Patton. In it, soldier and war hawk decide that a renewable energy revolution would fix everything. Should Woolsey need a third, he'd most certainly invite America's most influential economist, Milton Friedman, to the table to promote free markets, earn big profits, and remind everyone that nothing happens in the world without big business.

The industrial steamroller of capitalism has pulled over at the edge of the forest and asked the protesters for directions. These two historically opposed mindsets - neoclassical economic theory and environmental conservation - are having a surprising romance. What emerges from this uneasy dialogue may shape the framework for sustainable business, one that, according to Woolsey, "will treat seriously our nation and indeed civilization itself."

As Woolsey morphs into a post-industrial, post-Cold War, ecofriendly capitalist, he'll likely encounter prominent environmental leaders. Groups like the World Resource Institute, National Resource Defense Council and the Nature Conservancy are speaking in a more collaborative tone with business. Scot Case of TerraChoice Environmental Marketing says, "There's a growing recognition within environmental groups that the most powerful force in the world is capitalism. It does very little good to yell and scream at that force. I've accepted that if you want to green the world, you've got to embrace big business, and show them that they can earn money being truly green."



Plugging In

To understand the convergence of ecological sustainability with growth economics, consider the career of Saatchi & Saatchi S. CEO Adam Werbach. At once iconic, controversial and inspirational, Werbach is environmentalism's version of the dot-com genius. He

was elected president of the Sierra Club, among the nation's most effective environmental organizations, in 1996 when he was just 23. He was a bona fide star in the environmental movement until 2004 when he gave a famous, shocking speech to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco. It was called "Is Environmentalism Dead?"

The first line of this must-read speech: "I am here to perform an autopsy." Needless to say, environmentalists were pissed to hear their own eulogy at what they thought was a victory party. Werbach criticized the Greens for not embracing the socioeconomic realities of the times and for lacking an optimistic vision of the future. The environmental movement was most successful identifying and opposing environmentally destructive business activity - DDT, acid rain, deforestation, the Glen Canyon Dam - and opposing it. However, all the movement knew was how to be against something. The outrage that met Werbach's words must have been akin to the crowd booing Dylan when he plugged in. After three decades of this approach, Werbach argued, environmentalism had stalled and conservationists needed to re-evaluate their approach.

Werbach obviously remains opposed to reckless globalization and treating the earth like an infinite garbage can, but he saw the inherent negativity in environmentalism - no matter how noble - as counterproductive. Who really wants to hear about feedlot atrocities and slave wages while chomping their Big Macs? Who wants to hear about the spotted owl when jobs are on the line? And stop a dam from bringing electricity to hard-working Arizonans? Anti-conservationists simply broke out the same line hat warmongers like Bill O'Reilly use today: *Yeah, well, what's your plan? Singing Kumbaya?* And that was that.

"Environmental groups are great at setting the bar high," says Werbach now. "Sure, corporations need to act more exemplary. But it's very difficult to accomplish anything if you're unwilling to work with business. As a sustainability agency, we're interested in helping companies that want to build their brand around sustainability."

After leaving the Sierra Club, Werbach founded Act Now, an environmental consulting and marketing company. His firm took on China's number one client and Michael Moore's favorite piñata, Wal-Mart. Cue the predictable backlash from environmentalists who accuse him of craven hypocrisy and sleeping with the enemy. Carl Pope, the new Sierra Club president, was quoted in the San Francisco Chronicle, accusing Werbach of "rearranging the seats on the Titanic." He had, after all, once lambasted Wal-Mart for the familiar sins, and now the company was paying his bills. However, Wal-Mart has made Wal-Mart-sized environmental strides. It has reportedly invested \$500 million in renewable energy projects, photovoltaics, retrofitting stores and improving supply-chain inefficiencies.

Act Now certainly caught Madison Avenue's attention. The Publicis Groupe purchased Act Now and formed Saatchi & Saatchi S., giving Werbach unprecedented access to many of world's largest retailers, manufacturers and media companies.

Werbach says, "If you're interested in social and environmental good, you have two rational choices. You can wage an outright rebellion against big business, calling for a complete social revolution, or you can try to improve the functionality of the existing system in a way that cares for the environment. The latter is happening right now, and it's a very exciting period."

Don Carli also hopes to see NGOs adopt this sort of approach. "NGOs can be critical without comprehending the practical realities of business. Moral and ethical arguments can only take you so far. In the past, environmental groups have demanded that business adopt idealistic environmental practices that don't work. Business sees this as extortion, so they fight until finally making some concession without addressing their mainstream business model. The new NGO model must be based on constructive engagement with business. That means building a business case using a dynamic triple bottom line that focuses on people, profit and planet."

Stirring the Crock

General Motors vice chairman Bob Lutz recently raised hell on GM's FastLane blog when he wrote, "What a crock," referring to climate change - heresy to an environmentalist. They reacted as though it were an epithet. Suddenly, the GMnext campaign reeked of greenwashing. Rainforest Action Network leaped all over GM. Lutz hit back, reminding consumers his personal opinions don't impact product development. In reality, GM has bet big on the Chevy Volt, and it's racing Toyota to mass-market the first true plug-in, battery-powered electrical car. But, come on ... *What a crock?*

"I've met with executives who don't believe in global warming, but their company is still producing terrific green products," Scot Case of TerraChoice says. "It's interesting to watch this unfold. You've got this global warming denier at GM investing millions in green products because he can make money. As an environmentalist, I don't care what the guy thinks as long as his company produces green products."

Saatchi & Saatchi S., like other competitors in the growing environmental consulting, marketing and validation space, is not to be confused with NGOs. "We're very much into big return on investment and big profits for our clients," says Werbach. The agency

will help clients develop sustainable business plans, re-engineer supply chains and market true green initiatives. "We're interested in companies that want to build their business around sustainability. The reality is not every company can be green. We're not trying to put lipstick on a pig."

Werbach has written a sequel to his 2004 speech. In it, he outlines the framework for "a consumer revolution ... one very different from the one that's brought us to this point. It'll be based on meaningful products and services, and it will strive to be deeply fulfilling and environmentally sustainable."

He doesn't stop there. "Let's face it," Werbach adds, "For far too long, advertisers have tried to sell consumers products they don't want, don't need, don't make them happy and are environmentally destructive. Americans today are struggling. For the most part, they have extra money in their pockets a few days a month. I think people are ready for a revolution in the way they consume. We're striving for the dematerialization of the consumption cycle. People are looking for identity idealism while consuming less and enjoying better products that bring value into their lives."

According to Max Christian, an energy and climate change consultant from the University of Maryland who has worked with the Ecuadorian Energy Ministry, the inherent problem facing the environment is one of unlimited economic growth. "It's tough to square the circle under capitalism because it's essentially predicated on growth. There is an almost perfect correlation between cheap, abundant energy and economic growth. So if Wal-Mart installs CFLs - great - but the energy efficiency gains are only a one-time gift. Wal-Mart's investors want a return on their investment every quarter, so Wal-Mart is going to have to expand, open more stores and sell more goods, which requires more energy."

The Least Baddest of the Bad

Don Carli likes to say that there are no black-and-white solutions to sustainability, and looking at the digital world, the issue only becomes more complex. Carli says the paper manufacturing industry burned 75 billion kilowatt hours of electricity, and much of that comes from burning wood that can't be used to produce paper (wood = biofuel = no CO2 emissions). U.S. data centers burned 59 billion kilowatts of electricity, more than half of which comes from coal. Breaking these figures down is another matter. Carli asks, "What's the carbon footprint of a banner ad? I can guarantee you it is something."

Consider the last Google search run on your coal-burning electrical computer. After reading data piped in from one of Google's 70-plus centers, which collectively consume enough electricity to power a budding metropolis, you click on your destination, say espn.com, for your daily Yankee fix. As you watch A-Rod clobber early season pitching, ESPN's data servers grind away on your behalf, heating up and burning coal that was excavated from what used to be the top of a mountain in the Appalachians. As those servers overheat, they require air conditioning. Due to increased traffic, ESPN needs bigger servers, which arrive in Bristol, Conn., via a fossil-fuel powered Maersk Line container ship from Japan. The old servers get shipped off to a third-world country as waste and are dumped in a landfill where their toxins can seep into the soil for the next 500 years. Suddenly, a glossy magazine sounds pretty green.

The Gartner Group, a leading technology research firm, recently estimated that the global information and communications technology industry contributes the same amount of CO2 emissions as the aviation industry. That study included all in-use PCs, servers, data centers, chip foundry concerns, and encompassed production, manufacturing and distribution. Simon Mingay, research vice president writes, "In the next five years, increasing financial, environmental, legislative and risk-related pressures will force it organizations to get 'greener.' Being less bad will no longer be anywhere near acceptable."

Google's interest in being less bad is very good news for the environment. Google, long suspected of leaving tech's biggest carbon footprint, remains famously tight-lipped about the size of that footprint. Unlike Intel and IBM, Google didn't participate in the Carbon Disclosure Project 5. The CDP5 is a voluntary CO2 emissions reporting project undertaken on behalf of 315 institutional investors with \$41 trillion under management. The report looks at how the world's largest companies are responding to climate change. A Techworld report estimated that 3 million tons of CO2 emissions would make Google "possibly the it world's largest indirect contributor to global warming."

Google is, however, hard at work. It's established a renewable energy research and development group RE-C. Google committed to carbon neutrality by the end of 2007, but without knowing what its CO2 emissions actually are, it's anyone's guess what that means. It announced that through its philanthropic arm, Google.org, it has offset its impact with sizable investment in scalable renewables, "helping spark a green electric revolution that will deliver breakthrough technologies priced lower than coal." In building a 34,000-square-foot server farm in Oregon, its energy requirements are sure to expand. Google has also bought 1,185 acres in Iowa for a data center. As a public company and an enormous energy user, Google is certain to be under intense pressure from shareholders. Given the looming carbon legislation, clean, cheap energy from wind, geothermal and photovoltaics must be a top priority.

"Our goal is to produce one gigawatt [enough to power a city the size of San Francisco for about a year] of renewable energy capacity that is cheaper than coal," said Larry Page, Google's cofounder, in a press release. "We're optimistic this can be done in years, not decades."



Pulp Faction

The Magazine Paper Project encourages magazine executives to publish in an environmentally responsible way, typically by committing to using Forest Stewardship Council certified fiber or some percentage of post-consumer recycled (PCR)

fiber. Frank Locantore, director of the project, says that of the 18,000 magazine titles in the United States, less than 1 percent intentionally use any recycled paper (all mills include some negligible amount of recycled pulp). Of the 12 billion magazines published annually, less than 5 percent use any PCR. Only 41 percent of magazines get recycled, compared to 88 percent of newspapers.

American Media's *Shape* and *Natural Health* magazines have adopted fiber standards that align its publications with its editorial content. *Backpacker* magazine ran an internal assessment of its carbon footprint and vowed to slash its footprint by 12 percent. The study found that each copy of the magazine results in about a pound of greenhouse gases. What *Backpacker* cannot slash it will offset through investments in renewable energy projects.

Locantore has been less successful garnering change among larger magazine publishers, such as Condé Nast and Hachette Filipacchi. "Condé Nast has been downright obstructionist. I can only speculate as to the reasons why."

Condé Nast's *Portfolio* recently listed the top 10 environmentally harmful companies of 2007 - with a glaring omission. Locantore said, "They seem to have forgotten one company on that list: Condé Nast. For all the 'Green Issues' *Vanity Fair* runs, they've yet to begin using recycled paper, haven't reduced paper use, and they contribute to a paper production system that has an enormous impact on the environment. The amount of greenhouse gas emissions created in the production of paper has been estimated as second only to the power utility industry."

Using the Environmental Defense Paper Calculator, Locantore crunched some annual environmental impact numbers for *Vanity Fair*, which he says uses no PCR. The difference between not using any PCR and 30 percent PCR would mean 4,500 trees, a half-million pounds of GHGs, the emissions equivalent of 46 cars per year. Locantore says that a publication like the largely black-and-white, text-centric *New Yorker* could very easily transition to a high level of PCR.

Though Condé Nast refused to comment for this article, Don Carli says that finger-pointing isn't helpful: "The reality is that there are no perfectly sustainable solutions. Paper usage is extremely complex, and to attack publishers without regard to the complexities is almost disingenuous. Forest Ethics, for example, has run several negative campaigns against publishers. A private company like Condé Nast resents this approach and if the business case isn't very strong, they won't act."

It is hard to find sympathy for Condé Nast in the environmental space in light of contradictions between its editorial content, reader demographics and paper consumption. What's disingenuous is running a meek list of 10 "bad" companies on virgin paper in a magazine promoting material excess the way *Portfolio* does. It seems disingenuous to produce millions of pounds of waste if alternatives exist, and use the "green" tagline while doing so. That type of editorial greenwashing undermines legitimate attempts of magazines that are truly committed to sustainability. In a carbon-policed world, where everyone lives in glass houses, this grim shade of greenwashing will be increasingly less tolerated.

Should Condé Nast need a role model, they could look to Random House, whose Environmental Paper Initiative is part of an ambitious environmental program stemming from a CEO-chaired Green Committee in 2006. Highlights of the program include an initiative toward using 30 percent PCR by 2010, running a carbon audit for 2006, relying on 15 percent wind power at their New York headquarters and being the first publisher to join the EPA Climate's leaders program. Andrew Van Der Laan, who presented Random House's initiatives at Book Expo America, says, "Our CEO, Peter Olson, very quickly directed our thinking from 'How can we afford to do this?' to 'How can we afford not to

do this? Having that top-down support certainly limited the obstacles we faced, but we've also seen significant employee support. Our environmental initiatives have been the best-received corporate initiatives, generating even more positive feedback than our employee sabbatical program. And our vendor relationships have been tremendously useful in achieving our paper goals."

Random House has maintained the same paper mills and merchant relationships, all of whom have adapted to its PCR demands. Van Der Laan says, "A number of book projects have come to us expressly because their authors, knowing of our eco-commitment, want to be published by a Random House, Inc. imprint. Our editors are constantly keeping agents informed about our paper-content progress, because many of them care personally, and many of their author clients care just as deeply. Booksellers are also keenly interested in what we are doing, both for their own devotion to a greener world and because their customers often ask them about the recyclable content in the books they are selling."

The Color of Money

If an environmentally driven business revolution seems far-fetched, consider how the money is flowing. Wall Street investors are sinking big money into renewable energy companies and into energy-efficiency leaders like GE. Venture capital firms including Kleiner Perkins Caulfield & Byers are pouring billions into renewable energy and energy-efficiency sectors. Boone Pickens, legendary oilman, vowed to invest \$10 billion into the world's largest wind farm in northeast Texas.

Investors may be more concerned in the short-term with divesting themselves from companies that will be hardest hit by pending climate-related regulatory changes. They would do well to join up with Ceres, another obscure NGO you won't see on Anderson Cooper's show. Ceres founded the Investor Network on Climate Risk, a group of more than 60 institutional investors, managing more than \$5 trillion in assets. Its mission of integrating sustainability into capital markets would have been laughed off the trading floor 20 years ago. Not so today, where it is sound risk management.

Mindy Lubber, president of Ceres, says, "Many U.S. companies are confronting the risks and opportunities that come from climate change, but others aren't responding adequately and they may be compromising their long-term competitiveness as a result."

Jack Ehnes, CEO of the California State Teachers' Retirement System, the nation's second-largest public pension fund, told Reuters, "Scientific consensus of the potentially destructive impacts of climate change on the global economy is clearer than ever. Companies in every industry should be acting now to assess and mitigate climate-change risks."

Big business is listening - and most sectors are taking action. This March, 54 leading U.S. investors filed climate-related shareholder proposals with companies such as us Airways, Exxon Mobil, Best Buy, and Bank of America. Most shareholder proposals called for open disclosure about assessments of the impact of climate change on their business. Can media afford to lag behind?

Harley-Davidson shareholders filed a resolution demanding the rationale for the company's not cooperating with prominent reporting mechanisms like the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). (The shareholder proposal was withdrawn after Harley-Davidson

agreed to comply.) In 2007, 77 percent of FT500 companies submitted reports, up from 47 percent a couple years back. The CDP5 concluded that the gap between climate awareness and action is slowly narrowing: 95 percent of responding companies that consider climate change a commercial risk have, at least, plans for a GHG reduction program. But only 76 percent have actually implemented a GHG emissions-reduction program.

Energy consultant Max Christian feels this is a big mistake. Within the next few years there will very likely be a carbon tax in the United States, he says. "Investors see the writing on the wall; even companies run by wingtips instead of Birkenstocks are examining their carbon footprints. In a few years, there won't be a company who can't quote its carbon footprint."

The United States Climate Action Partnership brings together leading business and conservation groups with a common goal of reducing CO2 emissions. It includes companies with questionable green credentials, as well as companies with awful environmental reputations. With a roster including Deere & Co., Alcoa, Chrysler, General Motors and Johnson & Johnson, USCAP raises eyebrows. When you see powerhouse conservation groups like the World Resources Institute, The Nature Conservancy and the National Resource Defense Council signing off the same documents as these corporations, the USCAP seems an unlikely alliance.

USCAP wouldn't comment for this article, but Christian says its members' motive is fairly transparent: Carbon regulation is coming. "Naturally both the industry players and the environmental groups hope to influence any legislation in their favor. And of course, industry is calling for big incentives to reward their early investment in clean technology. There's an old adage in Washington that goes, if you don't have a seat at the table, you're likely to be on the menu."

USCAP is committed to curbing CO2 emissions, but its Web site language remains surprisingly open to coal-powered energy. Coal generates 50 percent of our nation's energy, and a similar portion of our nation's CO2 emissions, roughly over 2,134 million metric tons: "We believe new plants should occur in a manner that will allow them to capture and store CO2."

Coal is to environmentalists what leaving Iraq is to John McCain. It's off the table barring unseen miracles, like Carbon Capture Sequestering (CCS), the process of literally catching the CO2 emissions and jamming those billions of tons of CO2 into the earth. It's only been lab tested. Max Christian explains: "In 2001 President Bush promised CCS would be viable in the 'next generation.' Unfortunately, the DOE has scrapped plans for the Future-Gen demonstration plant. People in coal country like to say there's nothing clean about coal: From mountain-top removal to acid rain, coal is the scourge of posterity."

No doubt, this sort of scuffling between business and conservation will continue, but field combat continues to recede into useful boardroom collaborations. They need one another to tame and manage a climate challenge that's here to stay. Of the 77 percent of FT500 companies who responded to the CDP, 82 percent believe climate change presents commercial opportunities. At the same time, 79 percent saw considerable commercial risk in not reacting.

UFOs, Bigfoot, Climate Change

Sustainability will transform goods and services on the

environment's behalf, but capitalism will always push volume. Our monetary system would collapse without growth. "More" might well be the final words of the last banker, the last sales manager and the last politician. At 1 percent growth, quotas don't get met, people get fired, mortgages don't get paid and banks won't lend money. So the GDP will remain America's Rapture Index rather than the Gross National Happiness Index. Yet, things must change. Whatever happened in the last 100 years cannot and will not repeat itself.

That being said, Madison Avenue, the proverbial mouthpiece of business, should consider itself on the frontline of the brewing consumer revolution. Any sort of meaningful change in consumption patterns is unlikely to unfold without them. The FTC in January reviewed environmental marketing standards, which, like CO2 emissions, are voluntarily adopted in the United States by the industry. There's nothing but the mirror in the morning preventing Exxon from claiming to be green while pumping billions of gallons of oil, or stopping Poland Spring Water from bragging about an eco-shaped bottle (whatever that is) as it peddles the world's dwindling fresh water.

Greenwashing spin cycles pacify consumers into familiar buying patterns. An effective greenwashing campaign undercuts your competitor's legitimate green- and cause-related marketing campaigns. It turns consumers into cynics; products into politicians. The list of possible offenders is interminable: Virgin Airways is bragging about a biofuel plane with a zero-emissions flight. Emeril Lagasse supposedly has a green TV show. A dubious green sash is standard fare for oil and gas companies, as are SUVs bringing you closer to nature. A different kind of product, presidential candidate Mike Huckabee, disingenuously and ridiculously promised energy independence in 10 years, yet was largely unchallenged by the mainstream media. And for all of the hype and alarm about climate change, of the nearly 3,000 questions during the debates, there were half as many questions mentioning UFOs (three) as there were about climate change (six). (None, however, for Bigfoot this time around.)

TerraChoice Environmental Marketing manages EcoLogo, North America's largest environmental validation standard. Unlike Energy Star, EcoLogo is independently verified, so manufacturers cannot simply slap it on their products. TerraChoice identified six "Sins of Greenwashing," and then studied 1,018 product claims. They found all but one guilty of inaccuracy, irrelevance, vagueness or outright fraud.

The uncomfortable question is whether consumers really care, or if "eco-shopping" is a luxury for the well-read and the well-off. Scot Case of TerraChoice believes consumers want to do the right thing. "When consumers believe the information is accurate, they buy the environmentally superior product. They aren't apathetic; they're confused. There is also deliberate confusion on the part of manufacturers and marketers."

TerraChoice has had to be selective with clients. "Companies will say, 'We've got this product, and we need to sell it green!' It doesn't work that way. You have to make a green product first," Case says.

When companies promote their "carbon neutrality," they most likely mean they've invested money with a carbon offsetter. The standard carbon offsetter is an NGO that invests real money into a legitimate renewable energy project such as wind farms or reforestation initiatives. Should *Portfolio* wish to slap "Carbon

Neutral" next to Harry Hurt's next "Bad Company" list, it would be pretty easy. For a small fee, a carbon offsetter would gladly issue it an unregulated renewable energy certificate and reinvest its money in a project of its choice.

Frank Locantore has estimated *Vanity Fair's* CO2 emissions to be just over 4 million pounds - roughly 1,800 metric tons. The going rate to offset a metric ton of CO2 runs from \$12-30, depending on the type of project. Once you calculate your footprint, it's a simple matter of cutting a check and shooting off the PR burst to the media. Just like that, and bam - you're a greenie just like Emeril.

"Abandon All Hope"

A serious cynic of the sustainable business era shouldn't read Adam Werbach's speech, but rather the U.S. Energy Information Agency's annual outlook and forecast. One oil company used these disheartening figures in an ad, as if to say, *The icebergs will melt. Polar bears will drown en masse. Optimism is futile.*

In light of the dire warnings about the gravity of climate change - from the confidence men in green, serial entrepreneurs with their promises of hydrogen cars, carbon-sequestering presentations, ex-presidential candidates aping dot-com venture capitalists - the EIA's report is both baffling and disturbing. The EIA predicts a rise in CO2 emissions of 16 percent by 2030, an increase of nearly 1 million metric tons. (It's not uncommon to hear politicians discuss 80 percent reductions of emissions.) Energy consumption from renewable resources will increase 3 percent annually, remaining below 5 percent of total energy consumed in 2030. Oil imports will increase (Huckabee, help!), but decrease as a percentage of total energy usage due to, yep, more coal usage.

When asked how to reconcile this forecast with investors demanding 90 percent reductions in CO2 emissions, John Conti, director of integrated analysis and forecasting for the EIA, fell silent for a moment. "That isn't realistic under any scenario. But still, forecasts make a number of assumptions. They are based on the current legislation, where there is no significant greenhouse regulation or carbon cap. It's based on current technology. When you consider potential changes in personal lifestyles and manufacturing process, a lot could change."

A lot will change, whether business embraces this historic opportunity or not. The EIA forecast, for one, predicts the price of a barrel of oil will decrease to \$70 in the next 10 years. One problem, though, is the price closed as high as \$109 this January. Max Christian says, "Throughout the history of the world, there is an uncanny correlation between cheap, abundant energy and a thriving economy."

Now, the good news. Or, as Roger Bezdek, author, energy expert and president of Management Information Services, wrote in his report on the future of green-collar jobs: "It is all good news."

Mr. Bezdek says renewable energy and energy efficiency can drive the economy: In 2006 they created 8.5 million green-collar jobs and \$970 billion in revenue. He adds that, "in a crash effort we could generate up to \$4.5 trillion in revenue in the United States and create 40 million new jobs by the year 2030. These 40 million jobs would represent nearly one out of every four jobs in 2030, and many would be jobs that could not easily be outsourced."

What exactly is a green-collar job? Sierra Club's Carl Pope told *The*

New York Times it's basically a job that does someone good and doesn't hurt the environment (so much for green assault weapons). But then anyone installing Wal-Mart's photovoltaics is considered green-collar. Adam Werbach is another. So, too, would GM be, if it got really serious. GE is partly green-collar already.

Bezdek's report could be telling. After all, employees like to shop where they work. Philip Morris executives once smoked cigarettes in the boardroom. Bartenders are surely more likely to imbibe whisky and beer than fruit punch. Munitions makers vote for war. You can wager Random House has a pretty well-read staff. Perhaps along these same general lines, 40 million green-collar workers will drink legitimate green Kool-Aid.

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