

The Hague Climate Conference

Impressions of the North American Press Coverage

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For those who did not stay until the very end, the picture emerging from the Western press coverage of the final two days at the recent climate change conference is intriguing, in every sense of the word. And it is not the European reporting which delivered the element of surprise. Indeed, the European scene was rather all-too predictable: British tabloids bashing the French, French broad-sheets being indignant, German papers environmentally outraged, and almost all of them blaming the Americans. No, from the point of view of this European observer, the surprise was to be found across the Atlantic.

So what exactly happened in the ‘closed-door talks held in sterile, fluorescent-lighted cubicles used by delegates as offices’^{[3:26]**} in these last days and hours before the suspension of the Conference? Nobody will ever know the whole picture, so let me just try to piece together the story as told in two of America’s biggest metropolitan dailies, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Washington Post*.

‘The crunch came Saturday because of the varying interpretations by the Americans and some Western Europeans of the Kyoto Protocol. The United States insists that it and other nations should be able to earn credits toward emission-reduction targets because of existing or future forests and farmland, which soak up carbon dioxide and offset some emissions from factory smokestacks, cars and other sources. Many Europeans see that as rewarding a country for doing nothing and insist on deep reductions in the burning of fossil fuels.

U.S. representatives originally wanted to credit America’s woodlands with sponging up 310 million tons of carbon yearly. Faced with international and environmental opposition, they slashed that figure to 125 million tons.’^[3:26]

‘With the conference lurching toward disaster, Britain’s deputy prime minister, John Prescott, stepped forward late Friday with a compromise plan that called on the United States to restrict its use of the emissions-trading scheme and carbon sinks formula. U.S. and British sources said the proposal had been hatched in a lengthy telephone discussion between President Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

After huddling all night, a small group of U.S. and European delegates reached a tentative deal. The United States agreed to make a bigger effort in domestic reductions and to reduce carbon credits from its forests and farmlands that could be subtracted from its emissions quota to no more than 75 million tons, about one-fourth the level it was originally seeking. The negotiators also agreed on a tough compliance regime that would assess penalties requiring steeper emissions cuts if a country failed to meet its Kyoto goals.’^[4:26]

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** The first number in the referencing adopted here refers to the list of newspapers in Box 1, the second one to the date (in November 2000, if not otherwise indicated). Hence [3:26] = *Los Angeles Times* of 26 November 2000.

Box 1: List and Reference Numbers of Newspapers Covered

0	The Star (Toronto)	14	Boston Globe
1	The Globe and Mail (Toronto)	15	Chicago Tribune
2	The National Post (Toronto)	16	Phoenix Arizona Republic
3	Los Angeles Times	17	Detroit Free Press
4	Washington Post	18	San Francisco Chronicle
5	New York Times	19	Baltimore Sun
6	USA Today	20	Charlotte Observer
7	Miami Herald	21	Tampa Tribune*
8	New York Daily News	22	Chicago Sun-Times
9	New York Post*	23	Cleveland Plain Dealer
10	Atlanta Journal-Constitution	24	Indianapolis Star*
11	Dallas Morning News	25	Denver Post
12	Philadelphia Inquirer	26	Houston Chronicle**
13	Washington Times	27	Orlando Sentinel

* = No mention of COP6 between 20 and 30 November 2000. ** = n/a.

3–27 = 25 ‘most-linked-to’ news sites in U.S. according to *American Journalism Review*:
<http://ajr.newslink.org/tootypes.html>

‘But when the compromise was presented to the 15 EU countries for final approval, Germany and Denmark said the agreement was intolerable. Juergen Trittin, Germany’s environment minister and a member of the radical wing of the Green party, rebuffed repeated overtures to recognize that a diluted deal was better than no deal at all, EU sources said.’^[4:26]

A final offer by the head of the US delegation, Frank Loy, ‘reportedly went even lower, to 40 million.’^[3:26]

‘A baggy- and bleary-eyed’^[3:26] Prescott then stormed out of the conference hall, complaining bitterly about the “lack of coordination” within the European Union. “I’m gutted,” he said, using a British idiom akin to being crushed or devastated.’^[4:26]

“I don’t understand how the EU works, other than to say it doesn’t seem to work very well,” one weary senior U.S. official said.’^[3:26]

The story, it thus seems, is of Frank Loy’s bending over backwards in trying to compromise, Jürgen Trittin’s intransigent Green ideology, and the good services of John Prescott. Yet this is by no means where North American press coverage ends. Let me begin with a look at North America’s junior partner in the informal negotiating alliance known as ‘Umbrella Group’ – USA, Japan, Canada, Australia.

Canadian Impressions

Among the three leading national Canadian dailies covered in this survey, it was the smallest one (the *National Post*) which least challenged my expectations by indulging in the all too familiar climate change denial and UN vilification.*

* *How UN agenda drives The Hague: Despite uncertain science, the politics of climate change guarantees developed nations will pay a big price for global warming*^[2:23] by David E. Wojick, who also happens to be the science advisor of the *Greening Earth Society*, which – created by the Western Fuels association – ‘believes that humankind’s industrial evolution is good, and using fossil fuels to enable our economic activity is as natural as breathing.’[<http://www.greeningearthsociety.org/about.htm>]. Latest website publication of GES, of course: IT’S GOOD NEWS WEEK: INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE TALKS COLLAPSE.

Naturally, I did not expect all Canadian reporting to be in this vein. But I equally did not expect what I actually did come across.

Not only did Canada's largest daily, the *Toronto Star*, carry almost 30 articles on The Hague, but their content was unexpectedly self-critical: In *No easy way out for polluters like Canada*, for example, *The Star's* economics editor told his readers not merely that 'there was widespread agreement that the United States and Canada were going too far ... in an effort to avoid doing anything significant at home to become more energy efficient and adopt new forms of energy production,' and that 'Canada, between now and next May, has a lot of work to do to improve its action plan to achieve our Kyoto commitments in a more responsible way.'^[0:28]

But the same soul-searching attitude prevailed in the Toronto based *Globe and Mail*. The commentaries continued many days after the suspension of the Conference and their substance was also at complete variance with the reporting of the *Post*. For one, the *Globe and Mail* readers were unequivocally reminded that 'the Canadian climate has already begun changing because of greenhouse gases'^[1:24] and that 'it is worth remembering that The Hague was a failure of diplomacy, not science.'^[1:28] Moreover, Canada is referred to as being 'shamed,'^[1:24] as 'balking on reducing greenhouse gasses,'^[1:25] and – in an article entitled *Environmentally, Canada's going the way of the dinosaur* – as playing a 'leading role in making sure that the climate summit in The Hague was a complete disaster'^[1:29]

Finally, far from being blamed for ideological intransigence, the European Union is generally portrayed as guarantor of environmental integrity vis-à-vis North American loophole-seekers.*

The Great American Divide: Public versus Congressional Opinion

Turning my attention to the senior partner at the Umbrella Group, I was even more perplexed to find that almost all of the top 25 metropolitan dailies in the US (Box 1) had actually reported from The Hague (the exceptions being *New York Post*, *Tampa Tribune*, and the *Indianapolis Star*). When I started reading the coverage, I almost reassuringly stumbled across an old faithful, *The Washington Times*,** for I was perplexed by the language I came across in the other papers. A widely syndicated *New York Times* article, for example, began with the words:

'High-stakes negotiations aimed at finishing a treaty to curb global warming broke down after a tense, all-night bargaining session that foundered on last-minute disputes between European and U.S. negotiators.'^[5:26, 10:26, 16:26, 18:26, 28:27]

The United States – alternatively referred to as 'generator of a quarter of the planet's greenhouse gases ... more than any other country,'^[22:24] 'by far the

* 'So Canada and the United States wanted their forests counted as a credit so that they could emit more greenhouse gasses than other countries'^[1:28] 'The EU is also pushing for industrialized countries to reduce emissions at home rather than get credit for emissions it prevents in developing countries.'^[1:25]

** *Global Warming Bogeyman*^[13:24] *The Kyoto Myth*:^[13:22] According to *Hoover's Online* (<http://www.hoovers.com/>), the *Washington Times* is published by News World Communications 'an affiliated business of the Unification Church and its leader, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. Moon founded the company's flagship publication, The Washington Times. ... Reverend Moon claims to have invested around \$1 billion in The Washington Times, known for its conservative leanings, since he founded it in 1982.'

world's largest producer of greenhouse gases,'^[5:26, 10:26, 16:26, 18:26, 28:27] and 'the world's leading polluter'^[19:25] – was accused, along with Canada, Japan and Australia, of not wanting 'any limitations on creative ways to achieve compliance... Opponents say such programs give credit for doing nothing and would mean that countries could pollute more than they otherwise would have been allowed to.'^[19:25]

It was also said to desire 'a limitless ability to buy so-called carbon credits from countries that will easily meet their own targets and have some pollution allowance to spare. The Europeans want a cap on the trading of credits'^[20:21] 'In effect, Americans would then be buying from Belgians or Botswanans the right to pollute'^[22:24]

'Many environmental groups, which have set up offices inside the conference center to lobby for a deal that leads to a significant drop in greenhouse gas emissions, have also focused much of their wrath on the Clinton administration's negotiating position. "As the world's biggest global-warming polluter, we should be taking the lead in cutting our production of greenhouse gases," said Carl Pope, executive director of the Sierra Club, the oldest and largest grass-roots environmental organization in the United States. Instead, Pope complains, the United States is pushing for loopholes in the treaty that would remove legal pressures to produce less-polluting cars and cleaner power plants. "Unfortunately, America is shirking its responsibilities by promoting a risky system to trade pollution instead of reducing it. This leadership by inaction approach is indefensible," he said.'^[4:23]

'Environmentalists ... said US intransigence had handed victory to polluters and defeat to poorer nations facing devastating storms and floods.'... 'Environmental organizations were resting all their hopes on the EU'^[19:25, 23:25]

'[T]he European Union contended the United States was trying to dodge its fair share of the global warming burden by refusing to accept the premise that since the United States produces 24 percent of the world's greenhouse gases, it should achieve its Kyoto target mainly through significant pollution cuts at home.'^[4:26]

'Part of the problem was also a cultural rift, negotiators on both sides said. The European Union, where Green Party politics is a driving force, never found a way to compromise with the United states, where the environmental movement is increasingly working with industries to influence change.'^[5:26, 10:26, 16:26, 18:26, 28:27]

'U.S. environmental groups, who had previously sided with the Europeans in demanding concessions from the Clinton administration, expressed dismay with what they described as the short-sighted attitude taken by those European delegates who decided to quash any compromise. "There is no excuse for having walked away," said Philip E. Clapp... "This was Europe's best chance to achieve a strong climate treaty, and they decided to pass it up. This window of opportunity may not come again. After January, the Europeans could face a Bush administration that is almost certain to push for bigger loopholes in the treaty."^{[4:26, 3:26]*}

* This is slightly astonishing, given that only two days earlier, the same Mr Clapp was reported to have pronounced at a joint news conference organised by U.S. ecological groups that 'we have all concluded that the U.S. has brought these negotiations to the brink of failure by seeking loophole after loophole'^[19:24, 22:24] But maybe this is just another instance of the cultural rift alluded to above.

Box 2: The Pew Centre Opinion Poll

A sample of findings of a national survey of 448 U.S. opinion leaders commissioned by the Pew Centre on Global Climate Change and carried out by The Mellman Group and Wirthlin Worldwide in January 1999. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 4.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For more information, see <http://www.pewclimate.org/projects/mellman.html>.

Generally speaking, how serious of a threat do you think global warming is today?

	Total	Reps	Ind	Dems
very serious	27%	9%	27%	42%
somewhat serious	41%	47%	38%	39%
not too serious	16%	24%	12%	12%
not serious at all	10%	14%	14%	9%
don't know	7%	6%	8%	4%

U.S. voters overall did express more concern during the summer months (74% say global warming is a serious threat, 19% say not serious according to June 1998 poll) and somewhat less concern during the winter months (56% serious threat, 25% not serious according to February 1998 poll).

Percentages of people surveyed who felt that the U.S. should act to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions regardless of what other countries do:

Total	Reps	Ind	Dems
59%	46%	49%	72%

Last year, the United States and the other developed countries of the world made an agreement to collectively reduce their emissions of gases like carbon dioxide that cause global warming. The United States agreed to reduce their emissions by 7% from 1990 levels by the year 2010. Do you favor or oppose this agreement or don't you have an opinion on this?

	Total	Reps	Ind	Dems
Strong favor	53%	39%	37%	69%
not strong favor	23%	18%	32%	23%
no opinion/undecided	9%	13%	9%	4%
not strong oppose	3%	7%	8%	0%
strong oppose	12%	23%	14%	4%

Do you think this agreement will hurt the US economy and cost jobs, do you think this agreement will not affect the US economy and jobs, or do you think this agreement will help the US economy by creating new jobs through new technologies, or don't you have an opinion on this?

	Total	Reps	Ind	Dems
Hurt a great deal	7%	13%	12%	2%
Hurt some	18%	28%	20%	11%
Help some	23%	17%	20%	28%
Help a great deal	11%	7%	9%	15%
Have no effect	26%	26%	20%	30%
don't know	15%	9%	19%	14%

What is one to make of this sort of language? For one, we should be careful not to jump to conclusions, in particular as concerns possible implications about public opinion on the subject matter. By itself, we cannot strictly speaking infer anything about the public mood in the US – although it would be odd to find such

wide-spread newspaper opinion to be diametrically opposed to the views of their customers.

Public opinion on these matters can, of course, be – and actually has been – gauged directly by way of opinion surveys, such as the one carried out on behalf of the Washington-based Pew Centre for Global Climate Change (Box 2). In conjunction with these findings, I take the language used in the majority of US press coverage of The Hague as significant corroboration of my suspicion that there is really a divide between public opinion on climate change mitigation and the antagonism publicly professed on Capitol Hill. The reason why this discrepancy has not yet resulted in significant grassroots pressures on Congress to change its mind may well be – as reported by Bill Mc Kibben (Box 3) – that climate change has not reached sufficient prominence in the public eye.

Box 3: *That Sinking Feeling*

Climate talks collapse over carbon sinks, and Americans just don't see the problem, by Bill McKibben *Grist Magazine*, 27 Nov. 2000, www.gristmagazine.com/

But in the end – in the waning hours of Saturday morning – the Europeans decided they couldn't sell this particular contraption at home. It was simply too easy on the Americans, who, arrogantly, had never really believed anyone would call their bluff.

Even if the Europeans hadn't stood tough, though, the document wouldn't have made it through the Senate. Not with George W. Bush as president, and not with Al Gore as president (though if Gore had carried Florida, these negotiations would have at least produced an agreement). And the reason is simple: The American public still does not believe with the necessary passion that climate change represents a problem serious enough to require any compromises in our way of life.

The day will come when Americans will be convinced of the reality of climate change – probably the day after a really big hurricane. When that day comes, we will badly need all the ideas that have been patiently hammered out in places like The Hague. But until that day comes, events like the collapse of these talks may be (sadly) less momentous than they seem.

However, as I have recently argued elsewhere, there may be a way in which these potential grassroots pressures might be activated, namely through the public realisation of potential regional climate change impacts – a realisation which I felt may be fostered by studies such as the recent Report of the National Assessment Synthesis Team (NAST) on *Climate Change Impacts on the United States*. In searching the archives of the various papers, I was hence understandably excited to find a practical instance of this sort of grassroots pressure in a *Detroit Free Press* editorial entitled: *Knollenberg view puts Great Lakes at risk*.

Explicitly referring to the NAST-report, the editor addresses the Representative of suburban Detroit, Republican Joe Knollenberg as 'a one-man blizzard of budget riders to keep the federal government from spending a cent doing anything on global warming. Knollenberg says the treaty is not just undesirable but unnecessary ... But it makes sense to work toward improvements if only because global warming models for the Great Lakes are so dire...Knollenberg says the treaty will cost jobs and raise energy prices. But steep losses could hit another big state industry – recreation and tourism – if the globe heats up too much too fast. Knollenberg's constituents who like their trout and pines as well as their cars may want to fire off a few hot comment to him.'^[17: 26 June]

Did Rep. Knollenberg care? Difficult to say from across the Atlantic, but he did reply immediately protesting his being 'deeply concerned about our environment

and in particular the Great Lakes,' and his taking 'seriously the impact that any global climate change could have on ecosystems and our way of life.'^[17:28 June]

Business Sector Reactions

When Margaret Orgill tells her readers – in *Climate Pact Fiasco Leaves Business Awaiting Rules* * – about the view of many companies that 'the international fight against global warming will provide big growth opportunities,' and that the failure to reach consensus at The Hague 'has dashed business hopes for clear rules over potentially lucrative technology transfer to the developing world,' it is not particularly surprising that the spokesman of the International Chamber of Commerce would agree with her ('Business is disappointed with the outcome ... We came here expecting a decision which would have clarified the rules and guidelines of the Kyoto Protocol'^[3:26]). But it is truly remarkable – even if 'the lure of profits has helped change corporate attitudes to tackling climate change since the Kyoto summit' – to find Glenn Kelly, executive director of the Global Climate Coalition (GCC) lamenting that 'American businesses looking for the rules of the road under the Kyoto protocol have been left high and dry'^[3:26]. Could the GCC's road to The Hague possibly have been via Damascus? Or could it simply be that, since its heyday at Kyoto,

'the GCC has been greatly weakened by defections by prominent companies, including Ford, BP Amoco, Texaco, DaimlerChrysler AG and General Motors Corp., that have recently endorsed scientific studies showing that human influences, such as the release of excessive carbon pollutants, are primarily responsible for the dangers posed by global warming.

The shift in American business opinion could be decisive if and when the U.S. Senate votes on ratification of the Kyoto treaty. Opponents have based their position on the treaty's potential negative impact on coal mining interests and power utilities--who, not coincidentally, were prominent donors in past election campaigns. But lately, even some of those companies have changed their assessment.

American Electric Power Co. of Columbus, Ohio, the largest privately owned electrical utility in the nation, reversed its stance on the treaty when the company realized it could make huge profits by earning carbon credits through the sale of its modern coal-fired power plants that produce much fewer greenhouse gases than the conventional version.

If the treaty goes through, AEP sees a huge market waiting in China, which has soaring energy demands and large coal deposits. But the project will become feasible only if the treaty makes it possible to subsidize the price gap between AEP's modern power plant and the cheaper but dirtier old model.

"Somebody has got to pay that premium to make these kinds of deals work," said Dale E. Heydlauff, AEP's senior vice president for environmental affairs, in an interview. "It's a small price to pay, but it will make a big difference in China's pollution levels and the impact on global warming. And that's just one example why these negotiations matter so much to American business and the fate of the world."^[4:24]

Rep. Knollenberg, for one, is clearly sensitive to the business potential of the Kyoto Protocol (why else would he wish to state explicitly that 'the language [of his multiple budget riders] does not ... restrict in any way the transfer of energy technology to developing countries'^[17:28 June]?) The problem is that he seems to want to have his cake and eat it: i.e. to reap the profits from the sale of technology under the Protocol mechanisms without implementing the Protocol itself ('My language protects the Constitution and the taxpayer by restricting any federal

* A syndicated Reuters article published amongst others by the *Los Angeles Times*^[3:26] and the *New York Times*

spending aimed at implementing the flawed Kyoto Protocol.^[17:28 June] If so, this would come uncomfortably close to the sort of behaviour which elsewhere I felt obliged to refer to as ‘climate change profiteering.’

Conclusions

- *The ‘Cultural Gap’*

So who or what was responsible for the outcome of The Hague? According to French environment minister Dominique Voynet, for one, ‘the breakdown reflected a significant cultural gap between the United States and Europe in how they approach economic and social policies. Voynet said the United States places much of its faith in free-market methods that in France would be deemed "the law of the jungle," whereas she noted Europe tends to put more emphasis on regulatory and fiscal methods. "These differences account for why our positions were so radically antagonistic," she said.^[4:26]

Frank Loy, by contrast, “felt very frustrated by a lot of the stereotypical thinking we encountered here about our country. ...Sure, we may be the world's biggest polluter, but that does not tell you how we are making important progress in reducing our growth of emissions, which is now moving at a rate below that of most European countries. It was troubling to see how some of our partners ignore some fundamental realities.”^[4:26]

Not having been there in these final hours, I am obviously unable to provide an insider analysis of the events leading up to the suspension of the conference, but sometimes a view from outside can also have its merits. And, I’m afraid to say, from this outsider’s vantage point, the European contribution to the events looked rather more like an instance of the proverbial ‘too many cooks,’ than one of some philosophico-cultural gap. Frank Loy was by no means the only one who ended up with eggs on his face, although his turned out to be less metaphorical than others, and it is a good idea if EU member states were to agree on positions and negotiating strategies (how far to compromise) before the final round and to let the final negotiation be carried out by a single Party:

‘European heads of government meeting in the French city of Nice this week would try to thrash out a plan to revive last month's failed climate-change talks, the Independent on Sunday newspaper said.’ If EU leaders secured a deal among themselves, the British Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, would tackle the issue with the US President, Mr Bill Clinton, during his farewell visit to Britain and Ireland on December 12 to 14, the paper said.’*

As concerns Mr Loy’s frustration, it may help in overcoming the lamented lack of mutual understanding to point out that a willingness to accept as little as 13 per cent of one’s original demand^{**} can be interpreted not only as bending over backwards at championship limbo-dancing levels, but also as having made an initial demand which not even audacious bazaar traders would dare making for fear of affronting their counterparts. Making large concessions in this situation – even if the original demand was made with the best of intentions (placating the Senate) – are likely not be counted as *bona fide* compromises, but simply as confirmation of having tried to ‘pull a fast one’ in the first place.

* *Australian Financial Review*, 4 Dec. 2000.

** 40 out of 310 MtC/yr, see [3:26] as quoted above.

- *Concessions to US Demands*

"Nations can only negotiate abroad what they believe they can ratify at home," Loy said, referring to the need to win two-thirds approval in the U.S. Senate for any global warming treaty. "The United States is not in the business of signing up to agreements it knows it cannot fulfil. We don't make promises we can't keep."^[4:26]

Nobody can sensibly take issue with this statement by the head of the US delegation at COP6. And personally, I am convinced that what some over-here may have regarded as outrageous demands were made in good faith in the belief that the Senate could not be mollified with anything less. But this coin too has two sides. Concessions for the purpose of enabling a ratification are made in exchange for the promise that, with the concession, there is at least a reasonable chance for the treaty to be ratified. When faced with a demand for such an 'enabling concession,' the key question for those asked to concede thus has to be whether this promise could actually be kept?

When facing US demands for enabling concessions, one would be well-advised to keep in mind Congress's currently undiminished demand for 'meaningful participation' of developing countries, in particular China, India and Brazil. As this demand is primarily driven by worries about 'unfair' competitive disadvantages,* it is highly unlikely that Republican stalwarts and fervent Kyoto opponents like Joe Knollenberg (House Committee on Appropriations),** and Jesse Helms (Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee) might be moved to change their minds about the 'flawed' Protocol in the absence of developing countries taking on ('grandfathering'-type) *reduction* targets in the relevant first commitment period. Given the distribution of responsibility for anthropogenic climate change, this of course is morally completely unacceptable and simply a non-starter. Furthermore, Congress has only limited time to deal with environmental legislation, and it is very likely to give priority to such domestic issues as the re-authorisation of 'Superfund' (CERCLA) and the Endangered Species Act.

In the short run, it is thus most unlikely that the US delegation might be able to convince Congress to ratify the Protocol, regardless of any concessions they might obtain short of a *de facto* elimination of their Annex B target. And fudging the US target to the extent which would presently be required for Congress even to look at the Protocol would inevitably kill any developing country support for the Protocol – at least as tool for the industrialised countries to demonstrate the leadership demanded by the developing world as prerequisite to any further reaching participation.

* 'This fatally-flawed agreement [the Kyoto Protocol] is blatantly unfair because it exempts developing nations from making any commitment to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. As a result, nations like China, India, Mexico, and Brazil, [...] will be given a free pass while the United States is forced to struggle with the Kyoto treaty's stringent mandates. Make no mistake: If implemented, the Kyoto treaty will result in American jobs flowing overseas. Every credible economic study on this treaty paints a dark picture for the American people.' [Knollenberg before the House Subcommittee on National Economic Growth, Natural Resources, and Regulatory Affairs, 20 May 99].

** While only the Senate votes on ratification of a treaty, it has to be kept in mind that both Houses must pass the implementing legislation.

This is not to say that US participation is unimportant, on the contrary. All I suggest is that we should heed Frank Loy's plea and not ignore the 'fundamental reality' that – concessions or no concessions – early US ratification of a text with a chance of coming into force is actually most unlikely (see also Box 3). In order to be able to participate in the Convention process more meaningfully in the medium to long term, the US will need to strengthen the hand of its delegation *at home* by trying to convince Congress that the Kyoto Protocol is worth ratifying as a first concrete step in the climate regime under the Convention.

I am quite aware that this may be easier said than done. But I do not believe it to be impossible. One might, for example, try to explain that – because of trade effects, in particular on crude oil imports – the national economy will suffer much less than is often quoted by opponents of the Protocol. But this may not be all too effective, as many Congressmen will be more swayed by local and sectoral economic concerns connected with their constituencies than by overall effects on the national economy. Some members of Congress may be swayed if they are told about the real progress in emission control already happening in developing countries (in particular in China, the main bone of Congressional contention). Others may be persuaded by some gentle lobbying from the emerging climate change sector (although, additional incentives to avoid the temptation of profiteering may be required). Probably the most effective means to influence Congressional opinion is by way of the sort of grassroots pressures witnessed above from Detroit: few elected officials are immune to pressure from their constituency.*

- *How to proceed.*

What is needed at the end of COP6 (Part II) is a text which is ratifiable by sufficiently many parties for the Protocol to come into force by 2002. Such a text must satisfy three necessary conditions: (i) it must be sufficiently specified for the CDM to begin generating early credits, and (ii) it must neither nullify the already limited environmental effectiveness of the Protocol, nor jeopardises the environmental integrity of the entire regime (by building in unsustainable 'loopholes' which will have to be carried over into post-Kyoto agreements under the Convention), and last but by no means least, (iii) it has to resolve the issues of funding and adverse effects, technology transfer and adaptation under the convention.

Can this be achieved? I believe so, but only if one keeps in mind that not each and every one of the currently unresolved issues need to be resolved for inclusion in this sort of text. The 'supplementarity-trading-cap' issue, for example, can be

* The Pew opinion poll also shows what appears to be a co-incidence of public and Senate opinion about the need to introduce emission controls for developing countries. The difference between the two, however, is crucial. The public, quite rightly, realises that Protocol, on its own, could not possibly achieve the environmental aim of the convention without emission constraints on the developing world. Given that the Kyoto Protocol was never meant to be the sole instrument for achieving the aim of the Convention, but merely a first step in which industrialised countries could demonstrate that they are serious about doing something about a problem for which they are largely responsible, it should be possible to overcome this hurdle (the irony here being that in the medium term, Jürgen Trittin's stance might not just have helped to keep the political aim of showing leadership alive, but actually benefited future US delegations).

Box 4: Latest Developments (as of 5 December 2000)

‘President Clinton has approached the European Union to propose a quick resumption of climate change talks aimed at securing a deal on cutting global greenhouse gas emissions, a German newspaper reported on Friday. Clinton is keen to reach a deal before the end of his presidency in late January, the respected Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily reported, citing unnamed EU sources.’^[5:1 Dec.]

‘Top-level efforts to revive the failed deal on climate change are to be made this week at the European Union summit in Nice. Tony Blair and EU leaders are seeking to thrash out a deal before President Clinton leaves office in the new year. The Independent on Sunday has learned that a framework for reviving the talks is being put together by Britain, other leading EU countries and the US. The EU meeting in Nice will seek to agree a strategy for a fresh agreement, which will be discussed by Mr Blair and President Clinton on his visit to Northern Ireland on 13 December. "A huge amount of effort is going on behind the scenes," said a British environmental source. A senior minister said: "It's very sensitive but we think we can get it back on track." The outline for a deal will then go to a US-EU summit before Christmas and there is a prospect that if the other nations in the so-called umbrella group, including Japan, Canada and Australia, agree to the deal, a fresh United Nations climate change conference could be called early in the new year to approve the package.’^[London Independent on Sunday, 3 Dec. 2000]

left open at this stage, for its resolution is not required for early CDM activity. As concerns sinks, an initial positive list will do equally well.

Why do we need such a text? Not just to satisfy the business sector! By far the more important reason was cogently pointed out in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*

‘Much of the media’s coverage on the collapse of the talks has focused on the apparent inability of the EU and US to reach a compromise on sinks and supplementarity. However, to imagine that agreement on these issues alone would have saved the talks in the last hour is to make the arrogant – and mistaken – assumption that this would have proved acceptable to the G-77/China.’^[ENB Vol.12 No.163]

I hope that in trying to resolve the current impasse, European and American negotiators and policy makers will not fall victim to trans-Atlantic myopia and keep in mind that while it is possible for a deal to come into force without the blessing of the US Senate, it is not possible without ratification of at least 19 developing countries. An agreement which amounts to nothing more than fudging the Protocol with an ‘Umbrella loophole’ will not be worth the paper it is written on: neither Congress nor developing countries will accept such a text. Unfortunately, latest events do not bode too well in this respect, for it seems to me a folly to think that G77+China could simply be summoned to approve a trans-Atlantic deal (see Box 4). But let me end on a somewhat more optimistic note.

While one of the most quoted statements of The Hague was about a metaphorical loss of entrails, there is no doubt in my mind about the most noteworthy one, namely Frank Loy’s declaration that ‘we will not give up ... the stakes are too high, the science too decisive and our planet and our children too precious.’^[5:26, 10:26, 18:26, 28:27]