

INSIDE TRACK: SOWING SEEDS OF DOUBT IN THE GREENHOUSE

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Body

A group of electric energy and coal companies is launching a \$500,000 test advertising and public relations campaign to cast doubt on the international scientific consensus that the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will cause the earth to warm. The group, which calls itself the Information Council for the Environment (ICE), hopes to rally public support for opposing policy decisions that restrict the use of fossil fuels.



If the tests, which are to be held in Fargo, ND; Flagstaff, AZ, and Bowling Green, KY, are successful, ICE may undertake a national campaign to debunk projections of global warming, said Gale Klappa, president of the Council.



But the industry is already split on the propriety of such a campaign, with some organizations fearing it will backfire. Mark De Michele, president of Arizona Public Services, a big electric utility, has stated that the issue of global warming is too serious and complex "to be dealt with in a slick ad campaign," according to a report by Becca Rothschild in the ARIZONA DAILY SUN. A spokeswoman for the Edison Electric Institute emphasized to GREENWIRE that the electric utility trade group is taking no part in the campaign except to provide survey results. A number of electric utilities, including Southern California Edison, are already taking the global warming threat seriously enough to start emphasizing conservation measures to cut down on their combustion of coal and other fossil fuels.



Mr. Klappa, who is vice president for communications of The Southern Company, an Atlanta-based public utility, said in an interview that "the perspective of ICE is this: There is a significant body of scientists who believe that projections of catastrophe from global warming are very inaccurate and very misleading. Through advertising and public relations, ICE is trying to bring the view of this body into the debate in a more visible way."

He conceded that member companies of the group have an economic interest in preventing stringent measures to restrict the burning of fuel. "There is no question that our economic interests are involved. But a larger question is the future of fossil fuels."

A memorandum from Richard L. Lawson, president of the National Coal Association to coal-producing members of the group, obtained by GREENWIRE, asks them to contribute money to ICE because,



"Despite growing scientific uncertainty and the devastating economic potential of premature action on global warming, many policymakers are prepared to act. Public opinion polls reveal that 60 percent of the American people already believe global warming is a serious environmental problem. Our industry cannot sit on the sidelines in this debate."

Internal ICE documents obtained by GREENWIRE proposed that the ad and p.r. campaigns be targeted at "older, less-educated males from larger households," and "younger, lower-income women."

The campaign proposes a "creative strategy" that would, among other things, "directly attack the proponents of global warming by relating irrefutable evidence to the contrary" and "attack proponents through comparison of global warming to historical or mythical instances of gloom and doom."

One ad prepared for the campaign, shows a sailing ship about to drop off the edge of a flat world into the jaws of a waiting dragon. The headline reads: "Some say the earth is warming. Some also said the earth was flat." The message is clearly that those who believe global warming is a problem -- currently including, incidentally, the mainstream consensus of the international scientific community -- are credulous innocents who believe in fairy tales.

Another ad asks, "If the earth is getting warmer, why is Minneapolis getting colder?" and says that average temperatures in Minneapolis and Albany have dropped over a long period of years. But Rafe Pomerance, a senior associate of the World Resources Institute, asserted that "the science and any claim to reasonable presentation of the issues in these advertisements ought to be dismissed." He noted that a recent article in the Journal of Climate of the American Meteorological Society shows records from the chief weather station in Eastern Minnesota show that average temperature has dropped by 1.6 degrees Centigrade between the 1860's and 1987. Records published by the National Climatic Data Center of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration show the past five years have been as hot as the previous record-high period in the United States.

ICE has enlisted three scientists -- Dr. Robert Balling of Arizona State U., Dr. Sherwood Idso of the U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory, and Dr. Patrick Michaels of the U. of Virginia -- to carry its message around the country. They were chosen, ICE's Klappa said, "because they are representative of this entire body of opinion that does not believe in catastrophic global warming and are willing to participate in this effort."

In response to a question he said that the scientists were not being paid honoraria but that ICE had offered to pay their expenses.

A spokesman for the Union of Concerned Scientists, Alden Meyer, said that the three scientists "are ringleaders of the skeptic fringe within the scientific community." What they are saying about global warming goes against the grain of the consensus reached by the International Panel on Climate Change (formed by the United Nations to find the international consensus on global warming), the National Academy of Sciences in the U.S. and the second World Climate Conference held in Geneva last year.

Dr. James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York City and who has done some of the critical research on the global warming issue, said of the three scientists representing ICE: "These guys are not nuts. They are

respectable scientists. I would not say that they are the top people in their field. There are no original points they are making. I am a little surprised that these people don't stay home and do some research but I am not surprised that this council would call on them."

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