

The Kyoto Protocol

In February 1997 the AFL-CIO Executive Council adopted a policy statement concerning negotiations for an amendment of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (the Rio Treaty). That statement urged that the "United States insist upon the incorporation of appropriate commitments from all nations to reduce carbon emissions; and seek a reduction schedule compatible with the urgent need to avoid unfair and unnecessary job loss in developed economies. The President should not accept and the Congress should not ratify any amendment or protocol that does not meet these standards."

In July 1997 the U.S. Senate passed S. Res. 98 by a vote of 95-0. S. Res. 98 expressed the sense of the Senate that the "United States should not be a signatory to any protocol... which would

(A) mandate new commitments to limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Annex I parties, unless the protocol ... also mandates new specific scheduled commitments to limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions for Developing Country Parties within the same compliance period, or

(B) would result in serious harm to the economy of the United States ..."

In September 1997 at our Twenty-Second Convention, the delegates affirmed that the AFL-CIO is fully engaged in debate, discussion and negotiation on the complex issue of global climate change. Our objectives are: assuring global environmental repair of the carbon dioxide concentration problem with the formal participation of the entire international community committed to a mutually agreed upon, binding solution; protecting the industrial base of the United States with no movement of jobs or pollution to other countries because of perverse incentives as a result of a flawed international agreement; and providing a just transition for American workers so that no American worker loses economic ground in our pursuit of more sustainable and environment-positive global practices.

In October 1997, President Clinton outlined the U.S. negotiating position for the December meeting in Kyoto, Japan. The President called for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2008-2012, but said that "the United States will not assume binding obligations unless key developing nations meaningfully participate in this effort."

The Kyoto Protocol, negotiated in December 1997, calls upon the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2008-2012, but it imposes no requirements for developing nations to limit, reduce or make any commitments regarding their emission levels.

Numerous economic analyses, including studies conducted by the Clinton Administration, have concluded that reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels can have

serious adverse economic consequences for workers. The Clinton Administration released a study in July 1997 to the House Commerce Committee that showed stabilization at 1990 levels by 2010 would cost 900,000 jobs by 2005. Other studies have concluded that such policies could result in the loss of over 1.5 million jobs by 2005. Reductions at 7 percent below 1990 levels would be more difficult to meet and could mean even greater job loss.

The draft Kyoto Protocol fails to meet the standards for a treaty as set forth and adopted unanimously by the AFL-CIO Executive Council's 1997 resolution and our Convention statement. It fails the tests expressed unanimously by the U.S. Senate in S. Res 98. Further, the proposed Kyoto Protocol fails to meet the objectives set by President Clinton in announcing the U.S. negotiating position.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council therefore calls upon the President to refrain from signing the proposed Kyoto Protocol to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. Instead, we urge the President to lead a serious conversation with the American people in which he presents the legislative and regulatory plans, expected economic effects and projected environmental outcomes that his administration anticipates as a result of implementing their current strategy.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council also reaffirms its commitment to pursue, with allies, rational, achievable solutions to climate change threats that both solve the global problem and protect the economic interests of American workers and their communities.

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