

## Statement on Climate Policy

Passed by the Maritime Trades Department Convention October 8, 1999

Unions are proud of their support for environmental programs including clean air, water, toxic waste clean up, asbestos abatement, pesticide regulation, right-to-know laws and preservation of the natural environment through national park maintenance and expansion.

The major concern of trade unions is to maintain worker job and income security while dealing forthrightly with environmental problems. Unions have found that jobs can often be maintained and created with the right approach to environmental problems, but jobs can be lost if environmental requirements are not present in competing countries, or if an industry is placed at a disadvantage relative to other industries. Jobs cannot be protected under demands for immediate and substantial cuts in energy use.

The development and use of new conservation and energy technologies will have an effect on carbon emissions. New energy sources, including solar and wind, show promise for the future and deserve public support. Currently, geothermal, wood waste, solar and wind provide only 0.2 percent of the nation's electricity.

In the future, the nation must continue to rely heavily on conventional fossil fuels including coal, natural gas, and oil as well as nuclear and hydro power for its energy supply. Together these fuels reliably supply virtually all of the fuel needed for all uses including space heating, transportation and electric generation. Renewable energy sources are expected to produce a growing, but still relatively small, portion of the nation's energy supply over the next decade.

Union representatives engaged in climate policy discussions have found the Kyoto Protocol to be an ineffective means of reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. The protocol has no specific goal for stabilizing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Without such a goal, no rational emission reduction target can be set, nor can a reasonable means for establishing country-by-country responsibilities be established.

The Kyoto Protocol cannot be effective in stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations because it does not require developing countries to limit or reduce their emissions. Even if industrialized countries met their 2010 targets, under the Kyoto Protocol, the much faster growth in developing countries means that greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere continue to rise. Developing countries will surpass industrial countries in carbon dioxide emissions in 2020 with China becoming the largest emitter.

No level of greenhouse gas concentration has been designated as dangerous by the UN panel of scientists. For that reason, no specific target for greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has been established in treaty negotiations. A target of 450 parts per million would require immediate action with a downturn in emissions about 2010. A target of 650 parts per million, on the other hand, would require action around 2040 with a downturn in emissions in 2050. These figures show that there is sufficient time for nations to cautiously and prudently develop climate policy.

Furthermore, a delay in action to reduce emissions for one or two decades will have little effect on greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. But later action will give more time to further develop and expand the use of renewable and conservation technologies and have a smaller impact on energy prices, jobs, and the economy.

The Kyoto Protocol would establish an emissions trading system. That means permits would have to be purchased to sell fossil fuels, which is the equivalent of an energy tax. This kind of tax is expected to be very unpopular among the public because energy prices are a substantial part of family budgets, particularly among low- and moderate-income families.

The claim that immediate action is needed to avoid catastrophic weather events and climate change is not supported by the UN scientific panel, which concluded in its 1995 report that, "Overall, there is no evidence that extreme weather events, or climate variability has

increased, in a global sense, through the 20<sup>th</sup> century ...”

Climate models have been built to predict the effects of rising greenhouse gases. The UN scientific panel has reviewed these models in depth. The models are not widely considered as valid predictors of climate change, because they are still in an experimental phase and have many shortcomings. It will take more research to enable these models to give us a better idea of what kinds of changes increased greenhouse gas concentrations will have on our climate.

Some Administration spokespersons have said that the U.S. might implement the Kyoto Protocol through issuance of regulations, which might include an effort to have carbon dioxide deemed a pollutant under the Clean Air Act. This backdoor approach, if taken, would not have a significant effect on the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, but would raise energy prices and make the U.S. more dependent on imported fuel. It would also cause job loss as industry leaves the U.S. seeking lower energy costs abroad. This backdoor implementation of the protocol may also violate the constitutional authority of the U.S. Senate.

***Given the above factors, it is hereby resolved*** that the MTD oppose any treaty, legislative or regulatory action that would cause loss of jobs by mandating internationally disproportionate greenhouse gas reductions unless there is consensus among MTD affiliates about the effects of higher concentrations of these gases in the atmosphere.

Funding for research and development programs for conservation, efficiency, new energy supply technologies and carbon sequestration technologies should be increased. This increase in R&D should be part of an effort to reduce our dependence on foreign energy sources and to extend the supply of fossil fuels. These new technologies must be available if the nation ultimately determines that greenhouse emissions must be curtailed.

The Kyoto Protocol and any subsequent international climate treaty should be submitted to the U.S. Senate for a thorough hearing and consideration.

Upon adoption by the MTD, this resolution will be sent to the AFL-CIO convention for consideration and approval