



UJAE Unions for Jobs And the Environment

Address: PO Box 56173, Washington, DC 20040-6173 Voice and Fax: 301-585-5828 Email: ujae1@comcast.net Website: www.ujae.org

Member Unions

Brotherhood of Locomotive
Engineers

International Brotherhood
of Boilermakers,
Iron Ship Builders,
Blacksmiths, Forgers
and Helpers

International Brotherhood
of Electrical Workers

International Brotherhood
of Teamsters

Marine Engineers Beneficial
Association

Transportation • Communications
International Union

United Food and Commercial
Workers International Union

United Mine Workers
of America

United Transportation Union

Utility Workers Union
of America

President

Bill Cunningham

Newsletter

Nov-Dec 2004

UJAE brief opposes states' lawsuit against major utilities

UJAE filed a friend of the court brief in the global warming lawsuit brought by eight states against the nation's largest power companies. The States want to force the companies to cut their emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) by 30 percent over the next ten years.

The UJAE brief argues that a ruling by the court in favor of the states would hurt efforts to secure a global greenhouse gas reduction treaty because it would undercut the federal government's negotiating authority. Recognizing that the bargaining power of the U.S. depends on give and take, the brief states, "*The US would lose its ability to insist on reductions commitments by other nations to control emissions if Plaintiffs succeeded ... [in forcing] unilateral reductions on a handful of emitters in the United States.*"

The principal treaty on global warming is the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCCC) negotiated in 1992 and signed by the United States. The Kyoto Protocol (which requires emissions reductions in industrialized countries) was negotiated as part of the Framework agreement but was rejected by the U.S. government.

The UJAE brief points out that *no* treaty can be effective in curbing greenhouse emissions unless developing countries accept limitations on their emissions. And *the exemption of developing countries would create a powerful incentive to move production out of the U.S. to escape higher energy costs.*

Developing country emissions are growing faster than those in industrialized countries, and they will overtake industrialized country emissions in the near future.

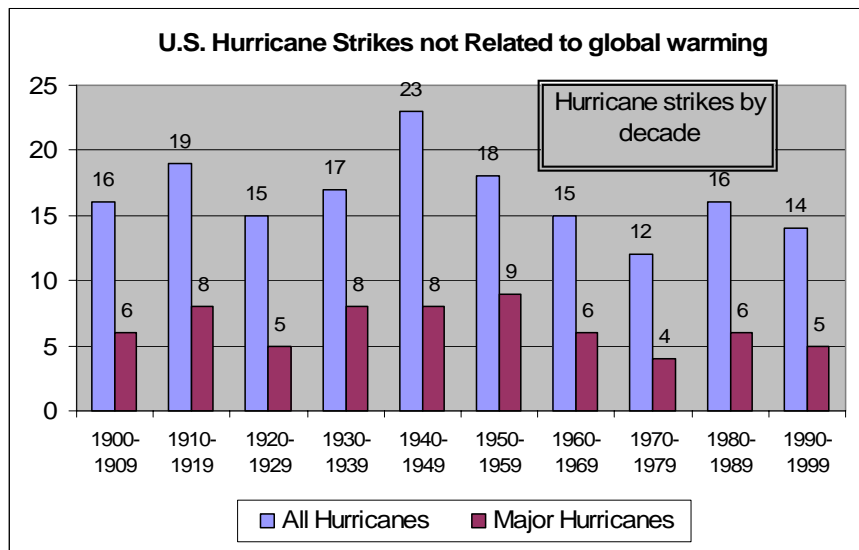
The nine pages of background in the UJAE brief include an excellent account of the unsuccessful attempts by US and other negotiators to obtain commitments from developing countries.

Gene Trisko, an attorney for the Mine Workers was the lead author of the UJAE brief. To view or download the brief go to the website at www.ujae.org.

Florida hurricanes – global warming or just bad luck?

November 30 is the official end of the hurricane season. The number of hurricanes hitting Florida this season has some observers looking for a link between hurricanes and global warming. But according to most scientists, this link does not appear to exist.

A group of 18 hurricane experts, including James O'Brien of Florida State University, wrote a letter to Senator John McCain to clarify the matter. They said the claim that hurricane intensity or frequency has risen in recent decades is "erroneous." They also pointed out that the World Meteorological Organization said that "the peak strength of the strongest hurricanes has not changed, and the mean maximum intensity of all hurricanes has decreased."



Source: National Hurricane Center

According to Hugh Willoughby, senior scientist at the International Hurricane Research Center of Florida International University, "This isn't a global-warming sort of thing ... It's a natural cycle."

Noted hurricane expert William Gray, Professor of Atmospheric Science at the Colorado State University also dismissed the idea that the frequency and intensity of hurricane activity is due to human-induced global warming. He said, "Florida residents should not interpret the four damaging hurricane landfalls to be related to the much publicized human-induced global warming hypothesis."

Russia's surprise move to ratify the Kyoto Protocol

The Russian Parliament ratified the Kyoto Protocol in late October after President Putin signed it. Russia's ratification is important because it allows the Kyoto Protocol to go into force by meeting the requirement that ratifying countries account for at least 55% of industrialized country emissions.

Negotiated in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol has languished and seemed dead in 2001, when the Bush Administration announced it would not seek ratification of the Protocol by the Senate. The US Senate, in 1997, passed a resolution opposing the Protocol.

Russia will not face any immediate constraints because the collapse of the Russian economy put the nation 32 percent below the greenhouse gas emission target required for 2012. In fact, Russia may gain, in the short run, by selling emission permits to the European Union and Japan. But rapid growth in the economy could cause constraints in the future. Putin's advisors were divided on the question of ratification. Andrei Illarionov, Putin's economic advisor and staunch opponent of the Protocol, said the Russian government decision was taken for "political reasons."

Putin has made it clear that one of those political reasons is that he wants the European Union (EU) to support Russia's bid to enter the World Trade Organization on terms favorable to Russia.

For more information email ujae1@comcast.net or

Visit our website at <http://www.ujae.org> ---