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“Rationality” and Global Warming

I often appreciate Charley Reese’s columns in *The Kentucky Standard* because he makes me think and re-examine ideas.

I was especially taken with his column, “Are Global Warming predictions rational?”

I don’t have the scientific background of Michael Crichton but I have read over the years a file at least 12 inches thick on global warming and climate change. I also have been following closely the calls from religious leaders about it all.

It seems to me that the crux of the matter is the *rate* at which the warming and the climate are changing. The historical record seems clear that on average our planet Earth is always cooling or heating up. Cycles heretofore have taken centuries and millennia. Reports I read point to notable change in decades in the past forty or so years of our Industrial Revolution.

In response to “So what?” the crunch is the ability of humans, plants and animals to adapt in such shorter cycles. For but a starter, what are parts of the planet going to do for water when the glaciers melt a lot more?

I do share Mr Crichton’s concern about 2 problems:

- Politicizing of science. A point of interest: there is something of an uproar among US scientists that one branch of our federal government has been demanding that government reports prepared by scientists be edited not to mention climate change or global warming.
- Commercialization of university research. A related and bigger problem here: the militarization of university research—the moreso when military activity contributed a lot of carbon dioxide and other pollutants to our Earth home environment.

Also, in trade treaty work our government works to demand the right of companies to patent biological enti-

ties in other countries.

I am very taken with the February 2, 2007 report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). That panel consists of hundreds of scientists and government officials and their report is a consensus document. (Attaining that consensus between 2 such groups fleshes out the image of “herding kittens”!) Thus, this report is considered to be a very careful and conservative document. A second part is due out in April, and a third in May, 2007.

The IPCC notes, “the warming of the climate is unequivocal” and that “continued greenhouse-gas emissions at or above current rates would cause further warming and induce many changes in the global climate system during the 21st century that would very likely be larger than those observed during the 20th century.”

As U.S. Catholic Bishops and other religious leaders have noted, “At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, not about partisan advantage of interest group pressures. It is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family....It is about our human stewardship of God’s creation and our responsibility to those who come after us.”

The call to us rational human beings then is at least 3-fold:

1. Give priority to what all this means for persons who are poor.
2. Reflect the pursuit of the common good in our debate and decisions.
3. Practice prudence, act with urgency lest the problem worsen and remedies cost even more.

Having said all this, I do hope all the global warming/climate change skeptics are right! I see a rapidly growing set of signs point elsewhere though.

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