



# OP/ED

## Energy crisis much broader than perceived

Monday, January 29, 2001

By Philip Orton

Most Americans are aware that the ongoing California energy crisis may help drive the U.S. economy into a recession. It's time we made the connection, however, between this and the global energy crisis, global warming. The consensus is broad among economists and scientists that this is going to be the governing issue of the new century.

According to the California Energy Commission, a major factor pushing the state into brownouts has been climate misbehavior -- a surprise, extended dry spell has settled on the Pacific Northwest, removing Columbia River hydro power from California's short list of emergency options. In an ironic twist, a report released this week by the 2,000 scientists of the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that the world's increasing climate misbehavior is likely a result of our dependence on energy.

Misbehavior is a relative term. We of the Northwest are well aware that the weather rarely behaves and deserves a good scolding every once in a while. However, the report cites an increase in the overall area of the world experiencing moisture extremes from 1900-1995 (flooding or drought). They conclude that this is qualitatively consistent with changes expected from the observed global warming of 1 degree over the past century. By contrast, the world will warm by 2.5 to 10.4 degrees this century, according to the report.

If the climate is reaching more extremes, at an accelerating rate, what are the economic implications? At last February's World Economic Forum in Switzerland, the CEOs of the 1,000 largest corporations voted climate change the most urgent issue facing humanity today. More recently, the world's sixth largest insurance company has warned that damage to property due to global warming could bankrupt the world by 2065.

On the political front, international talks in November failed to reach a consensus on how to carry out a 1987 agreement by industrialized countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2010. The United States played a major role in scuttling the

### INSIDE Op/Ed

- » [NewsFlash](#)
- » [SportsFlash](#)
- » [Oregonian](#)
- » [Metro+Suburbs](#)
- » [Obituaries](#)
- » [Special Reports](#)
- » [Traffic Cams](#)
- » [Weather](#)
- » [News](#)

**MUST CLICKS**

- » [Forums & Chat](#)
- » [Elections](#)
- » [Columnists](#)
- » [Lottery results](#)

**MARKETPLACE**

- » [Marketplace](#)
  - [Career Services](#)
  - [Gifts & Collectibles](#)
  - [Home & Garden](#)
- » [E-Stores](#)
- » [Coupons](#)
- » [Yellow Pages](#)
- » [Maps](#)
- » [Auctions](#)

**CLASSIFIEDS**

- » [Find a Job](#)
- » [Find a Car](#)
- » [Find a Home](#)
- » [Find More](#)
- » [Place an Ad](#)

**My Newsletters**

- » [Emailed scores, news and info you want!](#)

talks, working to decrease the required emissions reductions in favor of other means of reducing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Talks resume this May in Bonn, Germany.

The long-term solution is a massive energy shift, away from fossil fuels and toward sustainability. It is estimated that emissions reductions of 70% are eventually needed to stabilize the climate. Some European countries have opted to move ahead, including Britain (60% over 50 years), Holland (80% over 40 years) and Germany (contemplating 50% cuts). Aside from reducing the economic damages of global warming, businesses in these countries will benefit as they lead the way with new technologies and a stable long-term vision.

To solve our energy crisis, our leaders must acknowledge that we have a global problem, with economic and humanitarian implications on a much larger scale than the California economy. To avoid a continuation and extreme worsening of these damages over the next several decades, we need to begin addressing long-term solutions.

---

*Philip Orton is a research associate in environmental science and engineering at the Oregon Graduate Institute in Beaverton.*

» [Top](#) » [Print this page](#) » [Send to a friend](#)

[To subscribe to The Oregonian, click here](#)

Copyright 2001 Oregon Live. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

## TODAY'S OP/ED

Monday, Feb. 12, 2001

### **Editorial**

- » [Energy versus salmon](#)
- » [A duel over public dollars](#)

### **Commentary**

#### **Online Guest Columns**

- » [Feds must move to put price caps on power](#)

### **Letters**

- » [Support, don't badger, deputies](#)
- » [Founding Father's legacy](#)
- » [Harness tides for energy](#)
- » [Editorial only partly right](#)
- » [Stop second-guessing police](#)
- » [Tax cut is a class issue](#)
- » [Money doesn't measure virtue](#)
- » [Not much compassion](#)
- » [Who cares about salmon?](#)
- » [The regional energy crisis](#)

**Jack Ohman**

» [Click here to see Jack's latest cartoon](#)

Forums: [Townsquare](#), [Oregon](#), [Wild Talk](#), [Local Forums](#), [more](#)

» [Today](#) | [Month](#)

