

THIS MOMENT ON EARTH

Today's new environmentalists and their vision for the future

by John Kerry and Teresa Heinz Kerry
2007, Perseus Books, 244 pages

I know what you're thinking: Ol' Coffee Coaster guy there, bringing up these environmental arguments and publications, is straying in the direction of tree-hugging, snail-darter-saving, rain-forest-worshipping commie pinko ecototalitarianism. 'Has his way, the state's gonna swarm the neighborhood with carbon cops who will drag away anyone grilling steaks.

Au contraire (though I must confess lately to thinking excessively about the CO2 dumped into the atmosphere by charcoal fires). Fact is I'm simply becoming more and more aware of my accommodations on Spaceship Earth as it hurtles through the cosmos.

The Kerrys' new book picks up from a couple of other excellent books and movies on free-market environmentalism that I've reviewed hereon: *Crimes against Nature* by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., *The Weather Makers* by Tim Flannery, and *An Inconvenient Truth* via Al Gore. Moment does add a few key discussions, though much I've become aware of from these other works.

I'd say what distinguishes the Kerry book from my favorite all purpose ecological book so far, *The Weather Makers*, lies in the following:

- Description by Teresa of the large number of chemical toxins that have crept and leapt into our neighborhoods over the years.
- Presentation of some important and largely successful individual citizen battles against egregious polluters.
- Revelations about how some global corporations, e.g. Dupont, Texas Instruments, and 3M, are greening their commerce to the benefit of the bottom line.
- Substantial documentation of the unique resistance of this current gang in the White House to any measures that inconvenience their buddies in the continued, headlong, fouling extraction of dead-dinosaur fluids

Dinosaurs mining dinosaurs. This lot (the Bushies) is truly unique in the annals of history: like Thelma and Louise, they know there's a cliff up ahead, but instead of slowing down and proceeding cautiously, they put the pedal to the metal.

I love this paragraph:

We no longer have the luxury of engaging in a debate that does not lead to action.... This is not just an "environmental" issue; it is a moral issue and a matter of life and death. There's no excuse for inertia. Even if, contrary to all science, the proponents of action on global climate change were proven wrong, what harm would the actions to combat global warming cause? We would have produced healthier people with cleaner air, sustainable farming and fishing practices, more healthful food, and more effective sources of cleaner energy, all of which add up to greater security. But if those who deny climate change get their way and then are proved wrong, we will suffer catastrophe beyond description. Which side of the ledger would you prefer to be on? — page 139

Another valuable addition to the larger argument is the demolition of the skeptics' position. The skeptics argue either substantial global warming is not occurring and/or the warming we see is not due to anthropogenic (human-generated) carbon:

To be credible, the skeptics about human causation of current global climate change would need both to explain what alternative mechanism could account for the pattern of changes that is being observed, and explain how it could be that the known human-caused buildup in greenhouse gases is not having the effects predicted for it by the sum of current climate-science knowledge (since by the skeptics' assumption something else is having these effects). No skeptic has met either test. — Dr. John Holden, Harvard University Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Nobel Peace Prize winner

I at least agree with the latter part of Dr. Holden's maxim, i.e. if we are to accept the skeptics' position, some fact of reality must be shown to decisively refute the anthropogenic global warming theory. And we ain't seen none. In addition, and what's more practically important, I would say not only is Mother Nature being tampered with, she's really pissed off! We need to do something to appease her quickly.

No panic but proceed with haste. This Moment on Earth provides a thorough listing of what we can do individually right now as citizens to minimize the problem.

The people who are going to win the war for preservation of our air, land, and water are ordinary citizens working together to stop other persons, governments, or corporate entities from committing theft. It's as simple as that. Pollution is theft, and it's time we put a stop to it.

The book is largely a tribute to and a calling for citizen action. From the family farmers fighting concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) that would bury their neighbors in cow manure to the fishermen families of Riverkeeper working to protect their streams and rivers from toxic aggression, the people are literally taking their country back.

A significant book and a helpful book, not too long, with dozens of fabulous references.