

Senator Bernie Sanders
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Sean, thank you very much. Congratulations to all of those who put together this very important conference.

This is the issue of our time. And it is clear I think, to anyone who has studied it, that we are not going to win unless there is a massive grass roots effort. And clearly at the center of that grass roots effort has got to be organized labor, and it's got to be the environmental community, and it's got to be young people. (Applause)

As Kathy mentioned a moment ago, the poles are very clear. And everybody in America understands it, except the President of the United States and a few hundred people in the Congress. And that is, that the people understand the severity of global warming. The people understand that it is absolutely imperative, if our quality of life is to be maintained not only in this country but all over the world, especially among and for the poorest people in the world and the poorest countries in the world, that there must be bold action to reverse global warming. That's clear.

And the second thing that the people in *this* country understand, which is certainly not talked about by the corporate media very much, certainly ignored by our good friend in the White House, and that is, that the middle class in America is declining, poverty is increasing, and the gap between the rich and the poor is growing wider. And all over this country, poll after poll shows the American people know that the economy is not working for them.

So those are the two major political realities that we face. If we don't reverse global warming, our planet suffers catastrophic harm. Number two, middle classing is shrinking, poverty is increasing. The challenge that we face, obviously, is how we reverse global warming and in the process create millions of good paying jobs, which

improves the standard of living for our people and the quality of life within our communities. That's the task that we face, and frankly, I think it is solvable if we work together.

Some people say that if we act boldly on global warming, there will be economic dislocation. That's true. There will be some economic dislocation. On the other hand, what happens if we do not act boldly on global warming, not just in terms of the environmental consequence, but in terms of the economic consequence?

The Stern Report as many of you know, which was written by a former Chief Economist of the World Bank, and issued in October 2006 suggests that bold action to combat the threat of global warming will save industrial nations money, and that inaction could cost between 5 – 20 percent of the global gross domestic product. Speaking to the issue in no uncertain terms, the report states, and I quote; “if no action is taken, we will be faced with the kind of downturn that has not been seen since the great depression and the two world wars,” end of quote. So in other words, the argument is, “gee there may be some economic dislocations if we go forward vigorously,” as opposed to “if we do nothing, you're looking at the possibility of a great depression.” I think the answer is: we go forward boldly.

Now what will be the economic costs of severe drought which we are already seeing today, the loss of arable land, and the loss of food production? What's the cost of that, not only in human suffering but in terms of economics? What does it mean if we lose clean drinking water in a world where drinking water today is becoming scarcer and scarcer? How many people die? What is the cost of that? What is the cost of increased forest fires in the US and elsewhere? The US Forest Service is today spending over 40% of their budget in fire suppression. What will be the cost of severe weather disturbances such as hurricane Katrina, not to mention the human suffering, the loss of life, but the billions of dollars in expenses?

Furthermore, and we're seeing some of the military people, people involved in national defense, talking about what will be the cost to this planet if we see nations fighting over scarce and limited natural resources. How many new wars will develop on top of all the other wars, and what will be the economic cost of that? In my view it is inaction, it is not moving forward that will cost us economically and *not* the bold changes that we desperately need.

Now some of you may know, I along with Senator Barbara Boxer of California, have introduced S309, The Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act. This legislation is economy wide, it is science based, and it is the most far reaching and comprehensive bill that has been offered, which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, move us forward to energy efficiency and sustainable energy and in the process reverse global warming. This proposal has about 14 co-sponsors in the Senate. A similar bill has been introduced by Congressman Henry Waxman of California in the House, which also has a number of co-sponsors.

And let me say a little word about the changes that we have seen in Washington in the last few months. Obviously, the good news is that we have ended reactionary one-party government. We have ended a situation where the Chairman of the Environmental Committee believes that global warming is a hoax and replaced him with Senator Barbara Boxer, one of the strongest environmentalists in the Congress. That is very good news indeed.

But, in terms of the political process, let us be clear about several things. We still have a President in the White House who essentially does not believe that global warming is man-made or that we need vigorous action. Also, in terms of how we do business in Congress, not everybody is fully aware of this, you need 60 votes to move important legislation to get cloture in the Senate. We're a long way away from that. So the good news is, and I think Cathy did a good job a moment ago; the issue is now front and center, there is serious legislation, and good legislation will be passed. But I do not want anybody, for one second, to think that we have the political situation right now in

Washington where we're going to be doing all that we have to do. No way – no way at all. Not to mention the fact that we have just a razor thin majority in the Senate. If anybody here thinks that the big money interests and the special interest money do not influence the Democratic Party, then I would suggest that you rethink that proposition. That is certainly the case. (Audience laughs.)

So we've got a lot of work in front of us, that's the bad news. But the good news is all over this country people want change. The good news is that working people want that change to benefit them economically. The good news is that on campuses all across country, young people see *this* is the issue of their generation, and they are bringing a lot of energy into the process.

While many states, in fact over 20 states, have already implemented requirements that a certain percentage of their electricity be generated from renewable energy, the federal government under the pathetic leadership of the Bush administration, that is a kind word. I was going to say something nasty, but that's a gentle word, has basically sat on the sidelines. The legislation that we have offered I think provides a good opportunity for job creation through clean energy and energy efficiency to be specific. Among other things S309 calls for an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 compared to the base year of 1990, and requires that 20% of our nation's electricity come from renewable sources such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal by the year 2020. This requirement along with other federal action would lead to substantial investments in growing our clean energy capacity, something that we can do, and something that we must do.

Where do we want to be as a nation in 10 years and in 20 years?

And my one suggestion to my friends in the environmental community is that sometimes we talk about things like portfolios, sustainable energy portfolios and so forth of which nobody in America has a clue of what we are talking about. So we might want to translate some of that terminology, inside the beltway terminology, into language that the American people can understand.

Now in my view, there are major breakthroughs that we should be striving for, and with grass roots support we can in fact attain. In terms of transportation, just in terms of transportation, there are enormous opportunities in front of us to clean up our environment and create new jobs. By raising the CAFE standards and providing tax credits and other incentives, we can reverse the decline of the American automobile industry as we build internal combustion cars that are far, far more efficient than the current cars now in the market.

Some of you may have seen the Union of Concerned Scientists, using off-the-shelf technology, not any new brilliant inventions, using technology that is currently on the road right now, can increase miles per gallon for SUVs by 70 percent, seven zero percent. We can build, obviously, hybrids. It is absurd, that even in term of hybrids, the miles per gallon for the hybrids is moving in the WRONG direction. Today in America we are driving vehicles that get worse mileage per gallon than 20 years ago, talk about insanity.

We are on the verge of making some breakthroughs in electric cars. Some of you should see the film, *Who Killed the Electric Car?* Well, they made have tried to kill it, but in fact the electric car is coming back. I was in a car two weeks ago that has a range now of over 200 miles. There is a thought that within four or five years there will be a car on the market at a *reasonable* price that can get over 200 miles range. There is a lot of discussion obviously about hydrogen fuel cars as well.

In terms of automobile manufacturing are at least two main points that we must convey to Detroit: 1) that we want them to produce a new line of automobiles that are energy efficient; and 2) we want them to build them here in the US of America. (Audience applauds.) As you know, the automobile industry in this country has been given many, many millions of dollars in corporate welfare. And their response has been to build the Hummer, and to drive their own industry into the ground, and then to move jobs to China. If Detroit wants another nickel from the US Congress, they better change their act! (Applause.)

Furthermore, we need a revolution in rail transportation in this country. Think; think of the tens and tens of thousands of very good paying jobs that we can create as we rebuild our rail system, which is so very far behind Europe, Japan, and even China. Think of the new jobs that we can create as we modernize and expand the subways in our major cities – many of them are very, very old, falling apart – as we build the kind of modern public transportation system that we need for rural America.

In terms of energy efficiency, in terms of energy efficiency which is what is referred to as the “low hanging fruit,” what we can really address quite easily. We can do that in some very rapid and effective ways. Instead of cutting back on the weatherization program in Congress, as the President recently has done, we need to substantially *expand* that program.

I come from a state where the weather sometimes gets below 20 or 30 below zero, and in that sense there are really some fans of global warming in Vermont, I must tell you. We have homes in our state of lower income people, where the heat is just going right out the walls, going right out the roofs, right out the windows.

Today in America if you are middle class, forget being low income, and you wanted to retrofit your house and save the perhaps 25 or 40 percent that experts tell use we can save in terms of energy we use in our homes, you would find it very difficult to get workers who knew how to do that. We can create substantial new jobs as we retrofit homes all over this county.

Furthermore, the incandescent light bulb, that wonderful light bulb, that invention given to us by Thomas Alva Edison 120 years ago, it’s done a great job, but it has played its role in history. I was just talking to a guy the other day. It’s not just compact fluorescence, we are on the verge of getting into the market LED lighting – those bulbs will last for 20 years and consume one tenth of the electricity that the incandescent bulb now consumes. The fellow was telling me that dozens, if we do that, if we move to that

direction as we must, dozens and dozens of coal burning plants will never have to come onto line. We have made some very good progress in recent years in creating more energy efficient appliances, and in terms of improving our heating and cooling systems. There's no question that we can do a lot better than that.

Once again, and this is where the issue of the environment and global warming gets beyond just environmental concerns or labor union concerns. Where are the compact fluorescent bulbs manufactured? To the best of my knowledge there's not one damn bulb manufactured in the United States of America. Where are the appliances increasingly manufactured? So all of these issues get back to basic trade issues and other economic issues is to tell which is another issue, which is to suggest that the middle class in America does not survive, and we continue to lose millions of good paying manufacturing jobs.

So as we move our country toward energy efficiency, toward sustainable energy, corporate America has got to know. We've got to make that demand to changes in our trade policies, as well as our economic policies, that instead of throwing American workers out into the street, lowering our standard of living, hiring people in China at 30 cents an hour and bringing that product back into this country, that those days are over. We've got to rebuild our manufacturing base in America. (Applause)

In terms of sustainable energy, such as wind and solar, 20 or 30 years ago these were pipe dreams. These were people, professors standing up talking about what could happen, and no one really saw the practicality of it. Well, those ideas are now on the ground. They're working, and they're working today. We have some very good models already in terms of what Germany is doing and in terms of what the state of California is doing. Germany is now installing some 80,000 photovoltaic units a year on rooftops as well as building photovoltaic electric generating plants. California has passed legislation, so that within the next 10 years in California, in addition to the wind farms that they have begun, they hope to have one million rooftop units of photovoltaics.

As a nation, it seems to me that if California can do 1 million, as a nation we can do 10 million. And what everybody should know, because sometimes people don't know, they say "well it's something in California and Nevada and Arizona, that solar energy will be just great." That's wrong. Photovoltaics work in Vermont. Photovoltaics work in climates that are not all that sunny. They may not be as efficient, but they work. Think about the jobs that we create as we produce 10 million units of rooftop photovoltaics. Think about the jobs that we create as we install those units. Think about the jobs that we create as we develop photovoltaic electricity plants. We're talking about a whole lot of plants.

In terms of wind, as you know wind is the fastest growing source of new energy in the entire world. A friend of mine from Vermont, who is going to be manufacturing small wind turbine within a few years, he tells me that within a few years, he as a small company will be able to have on the market small turbines to be used in rural homes, which on average, obviously depending on wind, will produce half the electricity that a home needs. In California they're doing some very sensible things. What they're doing is providing a rebate. If you want to buy a small wind turbine, they will cover half the cost.

These are some of the ideas that we should be thinking about as we move toward sustainable energy. And if somebody tells you my goodness this is going to cost billions and billions of dollars, you tell them, "Yes you're right. It will cost billions and billions of dollars. But it will cost a hell of a lot less than the trillion dollars in tax breaks that Bush's Republicans want to give to the wealthiest 3/10 of one percent by repealing the estate tax." (Applause)

So if we put our money into tax credits, into rebates, into ways to help working families, middle class people purchase the types of sustainable energy that will lower greenhouse gas emissions, that in fact can lower their electric bill over a period of years. I think that that is a very, very good investment.

Let me just conclude, I always get intimidated being around scientists and all these people, you know a lot more about these things that I do. I do know something about politics. And that is, we've got the issue, and we can win this thing. If you think this is a difficult challenge, think about where the US stood in 1941, prepared to take on Nazism and Japanese Imperialism. That was a tough challenge. This one, we know what the cause of greenhouse gas emissions are, we know what the cause of global warming is, and you know what, we know how to combat it.

The problem is not a technology issue. The problem is not a scientific issue. The problem is a political issue. It is a political issue, and our job, and what this conference is about is bringing the American people together, bringing working people together, bringing environment people together, bringing young people together.

And I think that as we go about our greenhouse organizing, as we put pressure on Washington and our state capitols to do the right thing, a number of things are going to occur. It's not just that we reverse global warming and we make the air that we breathe cleaner so that we prevent the kinds of diseases that environmental degradation causes. It's not just that we make our water cleaner so that we can fish in our streams and our lakes and don't have to necessarily buy bottled water in order to drink. We do something else. I think we cleanse the soul of this country, because I think that deep down that many of us understand that there is something wrong when we produce more and more garbage which gets into our atmosphere, in order to purchase more and more products that we don't need, in order to force us to drive longer and longer distances to work in cars which are expensive and which pollute the environment, that it separates us from our neighbors and our communities.

I think that if we get our act together, we bring our people together, we have the courage to stand up to the powerful special interests, which have done so much harm, that not only are we going to create millions of good paying jobs, not only are we going to reverse global warming and leave the planet that we want to our kids and grandchildren, a planet that they can enjoy, but we may also revitalize the soul of our county and bring us all

closer together. This is the challenge that we face. I am 100 percent confident that if we work together, we can, in fact win this struggle. Thank you all very much.