A man-made disaster

Ken Midkiff, director of the Sierra Club Clean Water Campaign in Columbia, refuses to buy gas at any Exxon Mobil station and has remained true to his word for the last 16 years.

His reasoning has less to do with reducing harmful emissions and over-consumption and more to do with protesting the world’s worst environmental disaster. In 1989, an Exxon Valdez oil tanker hit Prince William Sound’s Bligh Reef near Alaska causing — to use the label. “greenhouse effect” start to register on scientists were attesting to more than just oil spillages and the issue of global warming. The deteriorating ozone layer and the subsequent “greenhouse effect” started to register on people’s radar.

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Wake-up call

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SOUND FAMILIAR? ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

This year alone, the United States experienced more than 21 hurricanes. Running out of authorized names, the weather center moved on to the Greek alphabet. Debate raged after Katrina-devastated New Orleans. Had we experienced the phenomenon so much that nature was turning against us or was this serious hurricane season part of a cycle? Either way, President Bush refused to sign the Kyoto Treaty that would force America to curb carbon dioxide emissions, and environmentalists are predicting a bleaker future if our fuel consumption remains at such a high level.

TOP 5 EXPORTERS TO THE U.S. (THOUSANDS OF BARRELS PER DAY IN 1980)

1) Persian Gulf Nations (1,519)
2) Saudi Arabia (1,261)
3) Nigeria (857)
4) Mexico (533)
5) Venezuela (481)

TOTAL IMPORTS 6,909
TOTAL OPEC 4,300

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

POLITICS

THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Ronald Reagan’s first term as president started in 1981, during which he cut taxes, decreased domestic spending and built up the military. Reagan was open about hating communism and the USSR, sparking the Strategic Defense Initiative, or “Star Wars.” It was a project to build a defense from space against a potential Soviet missile attack on the U.S. During a speech in 1989, Reagan said of the Soviet Union, “They are the focus of evil in the modern world.” He met with USSR leader Mikhail Gorbachev five times before the Cold War ended.

Another legacy was the Iran Contra affair (1985) in which Reagan’s administration sold arms to Iran to finance rebels in Nicaragua to overthrow the socialist government. But he also improved relations with Saudi Arabia by supplying them with weapons.

Reagan had only been president for less than a year when he was shot by John Hinckley Jr. in 1981. One quick recovery, and he was back in the presidential hot seat, changing the American conservative movement. His presidency was known as the start of the turning point for the U.S. Republican Party, and he was known as America’s Greatest Communicator with a flurry of new economic policies called “Reaganomics” to match. Reagan reversed economic trends and started his supply-side economic program of tax and non-defense budget cuts. With a focus to influence the supply of labor and goods in order to lead to economic health, the status quo was reversed. His added tax cuts for the unemployed was hoped for the economy to work.