

FEB 00 1990

Asbestos

To: L. TROPET -
This led in
cooling, but
big bunch.
U
Dast

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT
RMC-289

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Scientific Faddism

TX TNER
RMC0084280

George Bush went over to Georgetown University yesterday to address a U.N.-sponsored group of environmentalists gathered to discuss the subject of global warming. All he said was: "Wherever possible we believe that market mechanisms should be applied and that our policies must be consistent with economic growth and free-market principles in all countries." Based on the reaction, you would have thought the President had held up a mirror in front of a vampire convention.

Market mechanisms? Economic growth? "Aaaaaaahhhhh!" shrieked the environmental elite. Or, as David Becker of the Sierra Club so plainly put it: "It was a gross disappointment. There was more talk in the speech about economics than about the environment." What more does anyone need to know about the environmentalist gestalt?

Congress and the administration are embarking on consideration of the Clean Air bill. If the past is prelude, science and economics are in for a rough ride.

We've been round the track with many scientific fads recently, such as "nuclear winter" and the asbestos panic. Early on, the system always seems to promote the fads and suppress the science.

Carl Sagan's nuclear winter postulations, much ballyhood when they first appeared, have now been dismissed by most of the scientific community. The idea was that a sudden release of smoke, caused by burning cities in a nuclear war, would have a drastic cooling effect on the atmosphere, and that the human race would eventually be annihilated by the temperature drop. It turns out that the assumptions and estimates upon which the computer models were based were deeply flawed.

Today, estimates of post-nuclear war cooling have moderated. "It's nice to see these guys acting like scientists again," one researcher told the New York Times. In the nuclear winter delusion, only the credibility of a few arms control hysterics suffered. But another false alarm—the asbestos scare—shows that the costs of scientific faddism can be enormous.

Congress passed a law banning asbestos, and schools have spent billions removing it. Scientists are now calling

of asbestos, including a recent one by Harvard's Energy and Environmental Policy Center, which reached essentially the same conclusions.

In their Science article, researchers from Johns Hopkins, Yale and other institutions confronted the asbestos issue head on: "Does airborne asbestos present a risk to the health of individuals in schools and other buildings? The available data do not indicate that asbestos-associated malignancies or functional impairment will occur as a result of exposure in most airborne concentrations of asbestos in buildings." The study pointed out that the incidence of asbestos-related lung cancer occurred mainly among asbestos workers and primarily those who also smoked. This is a long way from Johnny sitting in a classroom.

"Clearly, the asbestos panic in the U.S. must be curtailed," the scientists concluded, noting that the only time serious health risks are created is when asbestos is ripped out of the walls as part of the removal process and thereby released into air. But removal is what the regulations mandate. The EPA estimates that it will cost \$53 billion over 30 years to comply with federal asbestos removal mandates.

The National School Boards Association has estimated the asbestos-removal costs for elementary and secondary schools to be about \$6 billion. Put differently, instead of hiring new teachers, upgrading their curricula, initiating anti-drug programs or improving facilities, many schools have been forced to squander their money on a federally declared, nonexistent health threat.

The man most responsible for the law that led to this monumental waste is former Congressman James Florio, who who was recently inaugurated as Governor of New Jersey, and was last seen laying hands on the state's auto insurance system.

The global-warming issue suggests that a similar process is under way again. The comments of skeptical scientists have received more attention than in the past, but on balance the debate still plays on the level of religious belief. Mr. Bush's chief of staff, John Sununu, is being roundly attacked.