

Evangelical Leaders Exploited by Global Warming--Population Control Lobby

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WASHINGTON and GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (Sept. 29, 2006) — Why would a pro-abortion foundation want to fund an Evangelical Christian initiative to fight global warming?

That question is raised in *From Climate Control to Population Control: Troubling Background on the "Evangelical Climate Initiative,"* a new paper jointly released by the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty and the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

The "Evangelical Climate Initiative" (ECI) was launched in February in what was described by its organizers as a Bible-based response to global warming. The 86 prominent signers argued that "this is God's world and any damage that we do to God's world is an offense against God Himself." Moreover, ECI proponents claimed that "most of the climate change problem is human induced" and makes predictions that that "millions of people could die in this century."

What the publicity surrounding the ECI failed to disclose was that the initiative dangerously connects an Evangelical "creation care" ethic to those groups that are lobbying for population control and abortion-on-demand. Such efforts, if successful, would give anti-Christian ideologies unmerited moral and theological cover that they now lack.

"Our fear is that Evangelical leaders who in good faith associated themselves with the ECI are being exploited by organizations that not only deny their biblically-based value system, but hold such beliefs in contempt," said Jay Richards, Ph.D., a research fellow at Acton.

ECI signers include megachurch pastor Rick Warren, *Christianity Today* editor David Neff, and former Vice President of Governmental Affairs for National Association of Evangelicals Robert P. Dugan.

One of the largest funders of the ECI effort was the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Hewlett Foundation, which contributed \$475,000 to the ECI, is a major contributor to the causes of abortion and population control. The Hewlett Foundation funds *both* environmental and population control groups not by coincidence, but because it thinks that an increase in human population must degrade the environment. The foundation's population project is focused on "helping women and families choose the number and spacing of children, protecting against sexually transmitted infections, and eliminating unsafe abortion." Such language is a thinly veiled defense of abortion-on-demand, which the Hewlett Foundation supports generously.

James Tonkowich, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, pointed out that there is a long history of environmentalist thinking that sees humans primarily as consumers and polluters. "That thinking leads many to insist that abortion rights are integral to any environmental agenda," he said. "By contrast, we affirm that Earth was shaped by a benevolent Creator to be the habitat that sustains and enriches all human life even as humans subdue and enrich the Earth through our creativity and industry."

At least some evangelical leaders who support the ECI perspective have already begun to link their desire to stop global warming with population control. In a May 2006 speech to the World Bank, Richard Cizik, Vice President for Governmental Affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, told the audience: "I'd like to take on the population issue, but in my community global warming is the third rail issue. I've touched the third rail . . . but still have a job. And I'll still have a job after my talk here today. But population is a much more dangerous issue to touch. . . We need to confront population

control and we can — we're not Roman Catholics after all — but it's too hot to handle now.”