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Book Review of *Policy Making in an Era of Global Environmental Change* (R. E. Munn, J. W. M. la Riviere & N. van Lookeren Campagne eds., 1996)

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- POLICY MAKING IN AN ERA OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE Edited by R. E. Munn, J. W. M. la Riviere and N. van Lookeren Campagne (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht: 1996) ISBN 0-7923-4072-8; xviii+225pp; US\$49.50

This volume cogently provides a scientific, political, and economic background for understanding and evaluating the issue of global climate change. The most helpful information, included in chapters one through four, is a brief, but thorough, overview of international scientific research efforts and the present understanding of the problem of global climate change. The book provides vivid examples of important changes in the global environment that have already occurred due to human population growth and activity. It also provides projections about changes that may occur during the next century. To be sure, these descriptions and projections reflect how, by limiting releases of pollutants into the environment, modern control technologies have reduced the extent of environmental degradation. Control technology, however, cannot be expected to eliminate adverse environmental impacts, particularly because anthropogenic sources are increasing in number and size. For example, the book points out that, although the number of cars has risen faster than the number of people, emissions controls have limited total current emissions of pollutants from automobiles to amounts that are below the level of emissions from the much smaller number of automobiles that had no emissions controls. Forecasts indicate though that soon the total level of controlled automobile emissions will exceed the previous levels of uncontrolled emissions, because the number of automobiles in use continues to grow.

Chapter two outlines the principal international environmental research initiatives related to global environmental change. These research initiatives are critical. Although, as the book describes briefly, the precautionary principle has come to be rather widely accepted by the international community, public and governmental attitudes toward environmental regulation are dependent on scientific studies demonstrating a need for regulation. Chapter three provides a very informative description of the cycles and systems that give structure to the world's climate system. These processes are plainly quite complex, but their general tendency is to promote environmental changes that may harm human populations. For example, vegetation losses tend to reduce in-land precipitation, and water storage has tended to shift from land to sea, exacerbating the loss of vegetation. Chapter four provides a well-written and quite informative description of the climate system, including discussions of the important relationship between ambient temperatures and the ocean conveyor belt and between the fast and slow climate systems. This chapter concludes with an extended discussion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC's) scenarios for future climate conditions and the consequences of the projected climate changes on humans.

The next part of the book addresses the public policy responses to the risks presented by global climate change, and increased greenhouse gas concentrations in particular. Chapter five presents an overview of the development of international

environmental policy during the past quarter century. Critical to this development has been a recognition, notably presented by the Brundtland Commission Report in 1983, that economic growth needs to be considered together with environmental impacts and that economic development needs to be sustainable for future generations. Partly because this concept of sustainable development lacks clarity, support for the concept is quite broad. Chapter six begins the book's more specific focus on how governments have acted to promote sustainable development. This chapter provides greater detail about the now critical relationship between science and governmental policy, using global climate change as its principal example. The authors suggest that action must be taken in three inter-related contexts: improved scientific understanding, improved predictive capabilities, and precautionary responses. Chapter seven then provides several examples of how governments have acted in response to the global environmental change threatened in the next century. These responses have been pursued on several fronts. One broad strategy has been to establish or to improve scientific infrastructure to ensure better understanding of the underlying environmental processes. A second approach has been to prevent or to limit change by controlling the entry of pollutants into the environment. The third approach is to provide for short-term adjustments or long-term adaptations to any global environmental change resulting from pollution. A final strategy is to restore an affected ecosystem or structure and thereby limit adverse effects.

The last two chapters of the book discuss how private industry and environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOS) have responded to the problem of global environmental change. Chapter eight begins by describing the great diversity of the business community. As would be expected, the business community includes an exceptional variety of members in terms of their size, business practices, and environmental concerns. The chapter focuses particularly on the business opportunities that are arising due to the responses that need to be taken to the challenges of global climate change. The last part of the chapter presents interviews with six individuals who have extensive experience with and knowledge of the business community in the Netherlands. These interviews nicely illustrate the interest that the business community has in global environmental change, as well as their varied responses to it. The final chapter then briefly describes the important role that ENGOS have played in ensuring that national governments address the problem of global environmental change. Indeed, it is noted that more than 1,000 ENGOS participated as accredited groups at the 1992 Rio Conference. The book suggests that the role of ENGOS may be increasingly important in the next century.

In sum, this is a helpful introduction to the science and politics of global environmental change, particularly climate change.

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