

Clinton EPA Czar On Mercury: “Do As I Say, Not As I Did”

by Amy Ridenour
(NAPSA)—What do al Qaeda and mercury pollution have in common?

The answer: Clinton appointees who did little about either one now are claiming in MoveOn.org’s political TV ad campaign that—thanks to President George Bush—both threaten your health.



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Al Qaeda’s terrorist threat is real. On the other hand, current levels of mercury pollution—despite activist-induced hype—stand little chance of doing you any harm.

Richard Clarke recently charged that President Bush “ignored terrorism for months,” although Clarke himself served as the nation’s anti-terrorism chief for eight years under President Bill Clinton compared to only eight months under Mr. Bush.

Carol Browner, Environmental Protection Agency chief under President Clinton, now is promoting TV ads that contend Bush is blocking a national cleanup of mercury pollution from power plants. That’s a bit hypocritical. Browner herself never imposed a

crackdown on power-plant mercury emissions during the eight years she ran the EPA.

Bush, by contrast, has proposed a plan to cut such mercury emissions 40 percent by 2010, and 70 percent by 2018.

Not that another mercury crackdown matters as much as people are being led to believe.

Harvard researchers recently failed to find any mercury-related health effects among regular consumers of swordfish, the most likely source of mercury exposure among Americans.

The Rochester School of Medicine found no adverse mercury impacts among children in the Seychelles Islands, although Islanders have little to eat except mercury-contaminated fish.

In fact, there’s only one case of fish causing mercury poisoning in the scientific literature: At Japan’s Minamata Bay, where tons of industrial mercury waste was dumped into the water for more than 20 years, 46 people died and hundreds were sickened by this heavy, localized pollution. But that sort of polluting has been illegal here in the U.S. for many decades.

While there have been reports of kids getting dangerous exposure after stealing mercury from

school science labs, Americans’ exposure to mercury was radically cut by the industrial cleanup that followed passage of 1972’s Clean Water Act.

That mercury cleanup, in fact, was one of the reasons for today’s larger populations of fish-eating eagles and ospreys.

The EPA has since cut remaining mercury emissions about 50 percent through regulations on municipal, medical and hazardous waste incinerators.

During the Clinton Administration, the EPA said: “People who consume average amounts of a variety of commercially available fish as part of a balanced diet are not likely to consume harmful amounts of mercury.” And the EPA is not an organization to minimize a juicy health risk.

The real risk here is that a politically-motivated fish/mercury scare will frighten people away from including heart-healthy fish in their diets.

President Bush’s policies are not the danger here. The danger is that we will listen to his critics.

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