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The Independent on

## Kyoto: there is no alternative

Sunday, 7 December 2003

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The future of the planet now rests in the hands of three people: President George Bush, President Vladimir Putin - and the unlikely figure of one Aubrey Meyer, a former concert violinist from east London. President Bush has set out to kill the Kyoto Protocol. Despite growing support in the US for addressing climate change, he has spared no effort in stopping it coming into effect. He is putting the screws on President Putin. Under the protocol's rules, it now only needs Russia's ratification to come into force. The signals from Moscow are mixed, but Putin is thought to be waiting to see whether the US or the European governments, who support Kyoto, will come up with the best price.

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And Mr Meyer? He is the still relatively unknown originator of a body that is fast becoming the leading contender in the fight against global warming, after Kyoto. To that end, he has set up the Global Commons Institute. Michael Meacher, the former Environment minister, endorses the plan - dubbed "contraction and convergence" - on page 22. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, the World Council of Churches, and African governments have all adopted it. Under the plan, every person on the planet would have the right to emit the same amount of carbon dioxide, which is the main cause of global warming. Each nation would be set quotas, adding up to a figure the world's climate could tolerate. They would be expected to meet them, say by 2050, and could buy and sell parts of them.

Kyoto must first be brought into force: there is no alternative. Then nations should start negotiating bigger cuts in pollution on this equitable basis - worked out in an unprepossessing London flat.