

October 16, 2007

On the Gore Effect: The Nobel and the Politics

To the Editor:

In 1980 four physicians, all of us at Harvard, joined three of our Soviet colleagues to co-found the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. The group won the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize for alerting the world to what would happen to people and to our planet in the event of a nuclear war.

By giving its 2007 Peace Prize to Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (front page, Oct. 13), the Nobel Committee has warned us of a new global threat, in magnitude and in the duration of its impacts comparable to nuclear war, but one that is harder for most people to recognize.

Global climate change is Armageddon in slow motion, dangerously altering the atmosphere, land, oceans and life on Earth, including human life, in incremental steps. As Al Gore and the panel have told us with great authority, there is no longer any serious scientific debate about the catastrophic consequences we will face if we continue our unsustainable burning of fossil fuels.

The Nobel Committee gives its Peace Prize not only to recognize outstanding achievement on behalf of humanity, but also to catalyze positive action toward a better world for us all. We must hope this much-deserved award awakens people everywhere to address global climate change with the urgency it demands, starting now.

Eric Chivian, M.D.

Boston, Oct. 13, 2007

The writer is director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School.

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To the Editor:

Re “The Trivial Pursuit” (column, Oct. 13):

Bob Herbert quotes Al Gore saying that our political system requires leaders to tolerate too much triviality, artifice and nonsense. Sad, but true. Sad, too, that Mr. Gore chooses to criticize the system from the sidelines when he could be the change.

Jamie Baldwin

Redding, Conn., Oct. 13, 2007

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