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WILD THOUGHTS

Maybe there is hope. A recent survey showed that three-quarters of Americans plan to be more environmentally responsible in 2008. Half of those polled said they would make a 'green' New Year's resolution. Many pledged to cut their household energy use, recycle more or moderate the use of harmful household chemicals. Others promised to take reusable fabric bags to the supermarket.

My resolution this year was to work less, but I'm writing this at 5am in the morning, having been at my desk all night. New Year's resolutions being what they are, let's hope the Americans are more successful.

Better still, they could resolve to vote for a different president. Then again, it would be almost impossible to vote for a less environmentally-friendly president – or one less entangled with some of the world's biggest polluters.

The recent 190-nation climate conference in Bali is a case in point. The Bush Administration – heavily influenced by companies with vested interests in oil and gas – spent the entire time attempting to sabotage the process. The plan was to launch a two-year, intensive round of negotiations that could lead to further binding cuts in greenhouse gas emissions that would come into force when the current Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

Then, after two weeks of arguments, threatened boycotts and trade sanctions, the American team appeared to concede at the eleventh hour. Its apparent U-turn was praised by British politicians for saving the treaty, but what actually happened was that the Americans pulled off – for the second time running – a clever negotiating trick that has resulted in a new agreement even worse than the Kyoto Protocol itself. Nothing has changed.

The only hope is for Americans to take their reusable bags to the polling station and vote for an administration that is prepared to change its entire political funding methods. With a system putting profit ahead of the environment every time, it's hard to believe that making a few green New Year's resolutions will make any difference.

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