

NOT QUITE THE ENERGY TASK FORCE

I get the feeling today's installment of Cheney started out as a story about the Energy Task Force. It also tells the story of the Klamath fish kill and snowmobiles in Yellowstone. The big news, though, is Christine Todd Whitman's side of several issues, where Cheney blindly put business issues ahead of environmental requirements. In some ways, last week's Rolling Stone article on Cheney's involvement in climate change—which relies heavily on FOIAed documents—provides a valuable complement to the WaPo story, so I'm going to read them in conjunction. Doing so, I believe, closes the circle, shows how Cheney's unwavering ties to the energy industry drive the rest of his actions.

The WaPo describes the Energy Task Force as an unquestioning affirmation of business assertions that environmental regulations hamper business and energy development.

Sitting through Cheney's task force meetings, Whitman had been stunned by what she viewed as an unquestioned belief that EPA's regulations were primarily to blame for keeping companies from building new power plants. "I was upset, mad, offended that there seemed to be so much head-nodding around the table," she said.

Whitman said she had to fight "tooth and nail" to prevent Cheney's task force from handing over the job of reforming the New Source Review to the Energy Department, a battle she said she won only after appealing to White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card Jr. This was an environmental issue with major implications for air quality and health, she believed, and it shouldn't be driven by a task force primarily concerned with

█ increasing production.

Directly out of that effort, Rolling Stone suggests, arose the propaganda campaign that served to undercut EPA itself.