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news of one sort, recent weeks have also brought ominous news of another. The world's drought-prone semi-tropical belts are expanding both to the north and to the south. Melt from the Greenland ice sheet is accelerating. ("The amount of ice lost by Greenland over the last year is the equivalent of two times all the ice in the Alps, or a layer of water more than one-half mile deep covering Washington, D.C." is how Konrad Steffen, a climatologist at the University of Colorado, put it last week, releasing the results of a new study.) The Arctic sea ice is shrinking so fast that within the next few decades, if not years, it could be completely gone in summertime.

"The Arctic is often cited as the canary in the coal mine for climate warming," Jay Zwally, a climate expert at NASA, told the Associated Press. "Now as a sign of climate warming the canary has died."

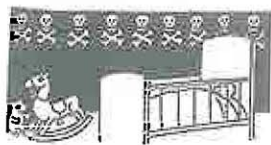
The Nobel Peace Prize committee, in its citation, called Gore "probably the single individual who has done most to create greater worldwide understanding" of what needs to be done to combat global warming. (Gore shared his prize with the members of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.) But the sad or, if you prefer, inconvenient truth is that the reason Gore is finally being heeded is that the reality of climate change has become manifest—something that can be seen and measured around the globe, and even felt in our everyday lives. Such is the inertia of the climate system that far more dramatic changes have already become inevitable. Gore received his prize before any meaningful action has been taken, but quite possibly at the last moment when such action is still practical. He is as aware of this irony as anyone, and his acceptance speech was grateful, hortatory, and, finally, pessimistic.

"Too many of the world's leaders are still best described in the words Winston Churchill applied to those who ignored Adolf Hitler's threat," he said at one point. "They go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent."

He continued, "So today we dumped another seventy million tons of global-warming pollution into the thin shell of atmosphere surrounding our planet, as if it were an open sewer. And tomorrow we will dump a slightly larger amount."

—Elizabeth Kolbert

LUMP OF COAL DEPT. WHO'S SCROOGE?



The holiday season often arrives with a movie villain, and this year, in the tradition of "It's a Wonderful Life" (Old Man Potter) and "Bad Santa," comes "War on Greed," a series of Internet shorts whose first installment focusses on the putative Scrooge-like misdeeds of Henry Kravis, the private-equity man. The film, by Robert Greenwald, drafts Kravis as the new Grinch, and it argues for more regulation of the private-equity industry, juxtaposing images of Kravis's lavish life style (houses on Park Avenue and in Palm Beach and the Dominican Republic) and advantages (the fifteen-per-cent tax rate on capital gains) with commentary by ordinary Americans. Q: "What would you do if you lived in one of the Kravis homes for the holidays?" Little boy: "I would sell it and then I would buy every video game in the world."

The film's release came during a week when—separately but synergistically—interest groups marshalled by the Service Employees International Union held a "toxic toys" protest outside the Kohlberg Kravis Roberts headquarters, on Fifty-seventh Street. The protesters were lambasting K.K.R., a major owner of Toys R Us, for employing a miserly business model that, they said, results in lead and other toxic chemicals being used in toys. (Toys R Us recalled a number of household toys this year, including a hundred and forty-five thousand Elite Operations military play sets.) About a dozen protesters assembled behind a sign that showed a picture of a crying baby and read, "Toys R Toxic? Mr. Kravis, they're not supposed to be." One man used a handheld X-ray device to test the lead content of a pink Toys R Us Hannah Montana backpack.

"Twenty-seven hundred parts per million!" he announced.

"What does that mean?" someone asked.

"It means brain damage!"

Greenwald's film had its première the next day, on the sidewalk outside Kravis's home at 625 Park Avenue. Three protest-

ers wore sandwich boards embedded with flat-screen TVs, on which they planned to show the film to Kravis's neighbors. About twenty picketers, most of them wearing Santa hats and carrying bells, gathered at the corner of Park and Sixty-fifth. They included a community organizer ("I think Kravis is exploiting every child in this country"); two twenty-three-year-old labor canvassers ("The working class is getting screwed, mostly by politicians"); and an ex-Toys R Us delivery-truck driver with a "Hillary" button ("I think he's as bad as George Bush and Homeland Security"). The former truck driver led the crowd in chants of "Hey, hey! Ho, ho! Kravis has got to go!"

At the edge of a barricade, Christine Chavez, wearing a sandwich board, explained that she was something of a mercenary activist: she had been hired through



Henry Kravis: Grinch?

an agency called GT Events, which provides promotional services for corporations (she makes twenty dollars an hour). "I do American Express, the Tribeca Film Festival, Snapple," she said. "This week, I've been giving out goodie bags for Verizon." She hadn't watched the Kravis film, but, she said, "I'm all for it."

A man in a beret asked what was going on.

"We're advertising the 'War on Greed,'" Chavez said. "It's about Henry Kravis, who's a billionaire, and for some reason he's not paying taxes while we all are."

"He lives in this building?"

"Yup," Chavez said. The man took a flyer and a DVD. Another passerby tried to view the film on Chavez's torso. "I can't hear anything," she said.