Economy vs. Environment
by David Owen (The New Yorker)

The Kyoto Protocol is about to expire and the targets set in 1990 to reducing greenhouse gases have slightly been reached, but this is not due to changes in policy. The sudden ‘slowing down’ in greenhouse gas emission has a direct connection to the current recession. Since prices are higher, people have begun to use fewer resources in order to save money. In the United States and Canada, most of the greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere were a result of fuels emitted from cars. In recent years gas prices have gone up and people have started driving less. This provides for more time to solve environmental problems. A downside to this is economic problems must also be solved and the goal is get the rate of consumerism back up to where it was, leaving an enormous ecological footprint that will lead to increased emissions of greenhouse gases.

In my opinion, the recession has caused most American and Canadian citizens to “go green”, but I think that once we come out of the recession we will be able to afford more leaving the idea of “going green” behind us. Environmental awareness amongst affluent people is a result of a rise in prices. If people cannot afford to waste resources, then they will not waste resources. But once they are able to afford to waste resources, they may go back to building their ecologic footprint.

The affluent world is trying to be more environmentally aware, but they do not want to get rid of luxuries that they have become closely acquainted to, like cars. With the invention of the Hybrid, one can go further distances before having to get gas again, but this does not help the environment. Since one can get more miles with a hybrid car, more people will be encouraged to drive farther distances, emitted insane amounts of greenhouse gases into the air. Electric cars are also useless to the environment being that the electricity must be generated from somewhere. We are making efforts to become an environmentally aware nation, but we have to keep trying.