

## TALKING CLIMATE CHANGE WITH HARKNESS FELLOW TIM WIRTH '57 | By Nick Devonshire '07

Senator Tim Wirth '57 has worked on many important issues, including education, international affairs and budget policy during his distinguished career. He has served in Congress, at the State Department and, since 1998, as president of the United Nations Foundation. However, when he visited Exeter in February as part of the Harkness Fellow program, the issue he chose to shine a strong light on was global climate change.

In visits to classes and during an all-school assembly talk, Mr. Wirth articulated just how all-encompassing and multifaceted climate change is. It touches on everything from energy to economics, and affects citizens from America to Micronesia. Echoing his friend and former senate colleague Al Gore, he called global warming the single most important issue to face our generation.

The figures Mr. Wirth posed were daunting, like how carbon dioxide emissions will have to be cut by 70 percent to insure a sustainable future. However, Exonians are not strangers to the magnitude of this problem. Thanks to the annual Green Cup Competition and to the work of the Environmental Task Force and student clubs like the Environmental Action Committee, Exeter has become one of the leading green secondary schools in the country, and students are quite aware and concerned. What was inspiring about Mr. Wirth's presentation was his ability to make it clear just how serious the situation is, and his faith that real progress is possible. He had the ear of the entire student body.

In a follow-up discussion with the E-Proctors and other interested students, Mr. Wirth addressed more specific questions, and gave a concise history of carbon dioxide regulation, from the Rio Treaty of 1992 up to bills presently being debated in Congress. He offered a detailed forecast of how the senate would vote on certain bills, and which senators have recognized that global warming is an international issue, not a political one.

Whether the student was from Denver or Indonesia, Mr. Wirth had a deep understanding of the eco-challenges the area faced. Once the meeting had finished, a throng of Exonians continued to follow Mr. Wirth wherever he went, trying to get in just a few more questions with this incredible resource. (Some of us even waited for him to appear in dining hall after we made him late for his WPEA radio interview.) His visit will continue to inspire us to work toward the sustainable future he describes so well.



BRIAN CROWLEY

*A respected environmental advocate during his years in Congress and as president of the United Nation Foundation, Senator Tim Wirth '57 called global warming the single most important issue facing this generation.*

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*Nick Devonshire '07 is a co-head of the Environmental Action Committee (EAC) and an E-Proctor.*