

**Thompson, D. (1999, June 7). What Global Warming? As the World Heats up, the Public Simply Goes Cold. Time, p. 62.**

## OVERVIEW

"Two weeks before the official beginning of summer, a heat wave baked the eastern third of the U.S. and Canada, driving temperatures high into the 90s and even the 100s (Fahrenheit)." Outside the scientific community there is still a strong debate as to whether there even is such a thing as "global warming."

Many scientific studies point to a gradual warming of the earth's surface. French researchers attempting to explain the late spring heat waves of 1999 found that "heat-trapping gases are at their highest levels in 420,000 years."

The 1997 [Kyoto Treaty](#) attempted to get industrial nations to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gasses. But "more than \$13 million has been spent on ads to block ratification by the U.S. Senate." A recent survey by the [American Geophysical Union](#) found that Americans are less concerned about global warming than they ever were. Director of the study, John Immerwahr, showed his frustration: " 'The more we talk about warming, the more the public's concern goes down.' "

Environmentalists are angry with the President's failure to press the point, at industry's intransigence, and at the public's apathy. On the other side, there is criticism of the extremism of some environmentalists.

The way out of this gridlock, environmentalists say, is to show it's possible to reduce greenhouse gases without sinking the economy. Solutions include cleaner cars and better wind- and solar-powered technologies. Says Greg Wetstone, program director for the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#): 'When these kinds of options become available, people will feel less hopeless.'

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- Do you believe there is any kind of an environmental crisis? If so, do you feel hopeless about it?
- What kind of public discussion do you think would help to bring

people together on this issue and to develop a public policy all can support.

- What would you be willing to do or sacrifice to save our earth's natural resources and to avert environmental damage?

## **IMPLICATIONS**

- Vast destruction of rain forests, coral reefs, and animal species should be of concern to every human being regardless of faith and opinions. All should agree that there is some limit to which pollutants can be released into our atmosphere.
- Discussion of this controversial issue should begin in academic and religious settings where immediate economic issues can be set aside to some degree.

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