

## ***Global Warming: Seven Hard Realities for Americans***

*As the Bush Administration Pushes the World  
Closer to an Ecological Holocaust, It's Time to Look in the Mirror*

Another crucial international climate change meeting unfolded in Montreal this week, and it's hard to escape the conclusion that the United States has become the most dangerous nation on earth.

As American citizens, we should feel nothing but shame and horror as the U.S., the world's largest greenhouse gas polluter, continues its reckless refusal to commit to binding emissions reductions. It's time we took stock of our central role in the deepening global warming crisis, because what Americans do from this point forward will in all likelihood decide the fate of the earth.

1. **75% of the gases destabilizing the atmosphere came from wealthy countries, like the United States, over the last two centuries.**

Carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, stays in the atmosphere for 100-200 years. We have put the world into this dire situation. It is our moral responsibility to get started on addressing it. Listening to the Bush Administration you would think that the problem came from China and India. The average Indian emits 2.1 tons of carbon per year, the average Chinese, 2.7 tons, the average American a staggering 20.1 tons. And we've been producing greenhouse gases at very high levels for a long time.

2. **Climate change is already killing and sickening large numbers of people. Until global warming is adequately addressed this tremendous suffering will increase.**

It's time we stopped discussing global warming as a tragedy that may one day unfold. The World Health Organization reported in November that climate change kills 150,000 and sickens 5 million each year. And tragically, the men, women, and children bearing the brunt of this suffering bear the least responsibility for causing it.

Greenhouse gases emitted today in the United States rapidly mix with the global atmosphere, and therefore impact all nations. We are part of a global community, one human family, and it's time we acted as if we knew this.

3. **No rational person can dismiss the possibility that the survival of humanity is now at risk.**

The destabilization of natural systems is moving so quickly, in so many different ways, that we can no longer be confident that environmental conditions will not just continue to worsen. Think of cities flooding, falling grain harvests, economic chaos as nations are bankrupted by weather disasters, all resulting in the inevitable breakdown of society. Or massive storms and soaring temperatures could simply wipe us out. And what about the impacts we have failed to imagine?

4. **The scale of the threat is so great, that addressing global warming should be the number one political priority of the world community.**

Global warming is already undermining other critical initiatives like poverty alleviation. If not addressed it will only get worse. Only a unified international response offers any hope. The longer we wait the more expensive a response will be, and the less likely it will be to succeed.

5. **The most prudent action humanity can take is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly and sharply as possible.**

The main cause of global warming is the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas. There is no question that the entire global economy can run on 100% renewable energy with existing technologies. We need to transform the global energy infrastructure as swiftly as possible.

6. **The key obstacle to addressing the global warming threat is the refusal of the world's number one producer of greenhouse gases, the United States, to commit to reducing its own emissions.**

The United States produces 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions, far more than any other country. Any global greenhouse gas reduction plan that does not include the United States will not compensate for our huge emissions. Unless U.S. policy changes, the global warming threat will not be addressed, indeed *can not* be addressed, and we can expect humanity's future to be a continual descent into chaos. As one Japanese diplomat put it, "there is no way that only half of the boat will sink."

Furthermore, rising emissions from developing countries, particularly China and India, will need to be considered. How will we ever be in a position to work with them to control their emissions if we refuse to do so ourselves?

7. **The only conceivable way that U.S. policy will change is through massive, organized pressure from millions of American citizens.**

The world's top climate scientists have been issuing urgent proclamations on global warming since 1990. Yet, the U.S. government refuses to craft a responsible policy right up to the present day. At this point, it's safe to conclude that federal office-holders will continue their intransigence until they are politically forced to do otherwise. The time has come for every American citizen to ask themselves: 'What am I doing to pressure the President and the U.S. Congress into adequately addressing this apocalyptic threat?'

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Our lives have changed. The lives we imagined we might be living now, without this environmental cloud hanging over our heads, have been denied to us. We Americans are central to any hope of dispelling that cloud. The eyes of our children and all of humanity rest upon us.

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