There is growing consensus in the scientific community that increasing carbon
dioxide (CO₂) emissions since the advent of the Industrial Revolution is causing global
climate change - specifically, global warming or the "greenhouse effect." The United
State is currently responsible for a quarter of global CO₂ emissions. Not surprisingly,
withering U.S. commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions has sparked heated
debate.

The 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Global Warming, signed by then
President George Bush, came to fruition in 1997 in the form of the Kyoto Protocol, which
represents the most comprehensive effort to reduce CO₂ emissions to date. Under Kyoto
guidelines, President Clinton agreed to reduce U.S. greenhouse gasses by 40 percent (or
7% below 1990 levels) between 2008 and 2012. Environmentalists and world leaders
heralded the treaty as a crucial step towards heading off potentially catastrophic global
climate change. During the latest summit held in Morocco in 2001, over 160 countries
came to a ground breaking new agreement requiring 40 industrialized countries to reduce
gas emissions.

Despite these efforts, the accords recently were rejected by the Bush Administration
on the grounds that adherence to them would have grave consequences for the U.S.
economy and that global warming is still a scientific uncertainty. The Bush
administration has estimated that the required U.S. reduction in CO₂ emissions would
result in massive unemployment, steep price increases (52% for gasoline and 86% for
electricity), and a sharp decrease in gross national product. Moreover, the Bush
administration argues, "big league" polluters, like China and India, are exempt from the
restrictions that the U.S. is bound to, even though estimates indicate that by 2025 China
will emit more CO₂ than the current combined total of the U.S., Japan, and Canada.

Critics of the Bush administration policy point to the crippling effect the lack of U.S.
support will have on the strength of the accords themselves. The rejection has also been
a black eye to Bush administration foreign policy, with world leaders and others
characterizing the U.S. as self-absorbed and a poor global citizen. Presidents and Prime
Ministers of Germany, France, Thailand, Venezuela, Mexico, and dozens of other
countries have severely criticized the Bush administration reversal. The Bush
administration has also been criticized by scientists for ignoring evident facts in an over-
zealous obsession with economic expansion. In the words of one Dupont official, "We
saw sufficient science emerging to warrant what in our judgment was prudent action [to
reduce CO₂ emissions] back in 1991."

The Bush administration has made it clear, however, that it has no intention of
reconsidering its position at the present time.

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