

HERITAGE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
Carbon Dioxide: Problem or Propaganda?
Montana Petroleum Association
January 15, 2010
Nathan Robertus

RECEIVED JAN 15 2010

One of the most hotly debated topics in the history of the 21st century is the human emission of greenhouse gasses, especially carbon dioxide. Two clear, opposing sides have formed over this issue, arguing for and against the effects of human industry emissions. One group claims that we are poisoning our atmosphere and leaving a dying planet for the generation to come. Others argue that our CO₂ emissions are not enough to cause any damage. Each point must be considered before making a decision as to where one stands.

Carbon dioxide has been produced through factories and exhaust fumes since the 1800s. Starting in the 1950s, global carbon emission skyrocketed from a total of about 1250 million metric tons to 8000 million in about fifty years.¹ Obviously as a race we are creating huge amounts of carbon dioxide. 8000 million metric tons is a staggeringly large amount of gas. According to the Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, "Atmospheric CO₂ concentrations rose from 288 ppmv in 1850 to 369.5 ppmv in 2000, for an increase of 81.5 ppmv, or 174 PgC."² This is an increase of 28 percent over the last 150 years, or about 5.3 percent per year. A consistent five percent increase per year is significant, and could cause concern to some. If we continue at our current pace of CO₂ emission, by the year 2150 we may accumulate a concentration of 473 ppmv, or probably even higher due to an exponential growth rate. Industry is increasing all the time, and despite efforts to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions, the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere yearly is still increasing. Green movements have been sprouting up across the country and even across the globe, but emissions are not stopped, and CO₂ production even appears to be moving along undeterred. If

¹ "Historical CO₂ record" Etheridge, D.M. Division of Atmospheric Research. <http://cidac.ornl.gov/ftp.trends/co2>

² "Frequently Asked Global Change questions" Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center. <http://www.cdiac.ornl.gov/pns/faq.html>

considered on the small scale, we could be causing serious problem for our atmosphere. This is where the other side of the argument finds its stronghold.

CO2 emissions may be at a record high, (8000 million metric tons produced in our history as a race) but is that really a problem? How much CO2 really exists in the atmosphere? Is 8,000,000,000 metric tons really that large compared to the total amount of CO2 already existing in the atmosphere? Simple calculations can easily answer these questions for anyone. First, one must get an idea of the scale at which one should view atmospheric statistics. Earth's atmosphere is gigantic, and contains a vast amount of gas. The atmosphere itself currently contains roughly 200,000 gigatons of CO2.³ 200,000 gigatons is equal to 200,000,000,000,000 metric tons. 8000 million metric tons is equal to 8,000,000,000 metric tons. Compared to two hundred trillion, eight billion is much smaller. In fact, eight billion metric tons of carbon dioxide is only about .004 percent of all the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere currently, or 2/5 of a tenth of one percent. This figure is extremely small, and is very strong evidence for the insignificance of human CO2 production. Yes, an average vehicle may produce 19.6 pounds of CO2 per every gallon of gasoline burned, but that is still insignificant in the massive scale that must be viewed. Even the millions or billions of vehicles on Planet Earth collectively producing CO2 do not cause any significant change in the atmospheric greenhouse gas.

I personally believe (as is probably already obvious) that humans are decidedly not major contributors of CO2 for two reasons. First, I believe this because the arguments presented against my stand are very weak, as they do not have a correct viewpoint on scale when dealing with the massive numbers involved in our atmosphere. Looking at statistics on a small scale can seem to be extremely compelling evidence for a given argument, but providing only a portion of the truth

³ "Historical CO2 record derived from a spline fit (20 year cutoff) of the Law Dome DE08 and DE08-2 ice cores". Retrieved 2007-06-12.

is a lie. When considering an argument, one must look at all points of said argument, no matter what his or her bias is, and evaluate that information. Sadly many people are naïve and only listen to what they are told, rather than researching for themselves. The second reason I believe that most atmospheric CO₂ is not anthropogenic is that the facts state otherwise. According to mathematical calculations that do not carry bias or emotion, as a human race we have only produced a minuscule amount of carbon dioxide as compared to the total amount. This is what has caused me to decide where I stand on this controversial issue: poor opposing arguments and plain facts.

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