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## Global Warming: Media is hyping this issue

By Jack Strayer

Nowhere is the yawning gap between science and alarmism better illustrated these days than the rancorous, decade-long debate over the extent of human contribution to global warming -- which, pardon the pun, is on the verge of boiling over.

The argument has created zigzag fissures in the scientific community and among politicians -- usually, but not always -- with advocates of an unrestrained free market on one side and those who favor rigid government controls on the other.

It's not quite to the point of becoming another one of those "red state vs. blue state" cross-fires, but it's getting close.

### Scare tactics

In late March, Time magazine, CBS's *60 Minutes* and ABC News with former Clinton administration spinmeister George Stephanopoulos all weighed in with lengthy reports pronouncing the ongoing debate about the cause of global warming all but over.

No right-thinking American, they implied, could seriously question the fashionable

wisdom that SUVs, jet planes, electric utilities, chemical plants and, yes, even fast-food outlets are belching megatons of carbon dioxide into the air and causing our fragile planet to rapidly overheat.

Most egregious of all was Time, which resorted to the scare tactics of a supermarket tabloid -- perhaps to shore up slumping circulation and ad revenues. *Be Worried, Be Very Worried*, its global warming cover all but blared.

Was the media's latest campaign to stampede Americans into accepting higher taxes and rigid restrictions on their personal freedoms part of an orchestrated campaign?

Well, Time and ABC -- in a special collaboration -- released a new poll that found 85 percent of Americans now believe global warming probably is occurring and 62 percent believe it threatens them personally.

This despite recent reports from the National Academy of Sciences and scientists at Harvard's prestigious Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, among others,

pointing out that the rise in the Earth's temperature has been roughly one degree Fahrenheit over the last 120 years. That's well in line with the gradual pattern of warming and chilling that has occurred since humans began walking upright.

The Time-ABC poll strikes me as a bit peculiar. I don't recall ever hearing anyone express fears about global warming in the workplace, on vacation or in my friendly local pub, where every controversial topic pops up and is discussed *ad infinitum*.

Almost all of the buzz about extreme climate change appears to be coming from the mainstream media. And no wonder! For the past decade, members of such groups as the Pew Center on Climate Change, the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund have spent money like drunken sailors in an attempt to convince us the sky finally is falling. Unfortunately for them, many of the same people now tub-thumping for global warming legislation were once warning us about the perils of global chilling. In the mid-1970s, for instance, The New York Times predicted that

cooling temperatures ``may mark the return of the Ice Age."

### **No original research**

Newsweek chimed in with a story declaring meteorologists were almost unanimous in their opinion that a "cooling world" might well cause catastrophic famine. The Christian Science Monitor solemnly noted that glaciers were advancing, growing

seasons in England and Scandinavia were getting shorter and ``the North Atlantic is cooling down about as fast as an ocean can."

This isn't sound science; it is pure politics -- fed like hogswill to ravenous media that often are far too lazy to do a modicum of original research on the issue.

Certainly scientists should study the impact of climate

change, and journalists should report about it. What they shouldn't be doing is trying to panic Americans over a dubious hypothetical. We have enough to worry about already, including Iraq, avian flu, fanatic terrorists, AIDS and the decline in our nation's industrial might.

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