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## Blaming the Bureaucracy

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POOR PRESIDENT Bush. First his own campaign staff thoughtlessly included atmosphere-warming carbon dioxide in a list of power plant pollutants he promised to seek to control through mandatory caps if elected. When EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman took that commitment seriously and cited it as part of the administration's response to global warming, there was a howl of protest from coal and other industry interests. Mr. Bush made a quick about-face, saying such controls would be too costly for energy consumers, and a spokesman said campaign aides had made a mistake.

Now it's "the bureaucracy" that has produced a report acknowledging the human contribution to climate change and detailing possible damage to the United States. Though it lays out exactly the same policies, or lack thereof, for responding to climate change that Mr. Bush announced in February, the report goes farther than the administration previously has in acknowledging that human activity is contributing to warming temperatures that may produce serious effects on the United States, from dwindling western snowpacks to heat waves and loss of coastal marshlands. Publication of the report on the EPA's Web site drew outrage from those who challenge climate-change science. Mr. Bush, questioned by reporters, was quick to dismiss "the report put out by the bureaucracy."

Never mind that it was produced by officials of his own administration and submitted by the United States to the United Nations in response to treaty obligations that Mr. Bush said he wants to honor even as he abandons the Kyoto protocol. The key fact here, promptly seized upon by both sides in the debate, is that if you acknowledge that climate change can be expected to do bad things and that human activity bears a significant share of the blame, then you might logically feel obliged to take tougher steps to lower U.S. emissions of greenhouse gases than Mr. Bush has been willing to take. The report doesn't go there. But it's a short leap to make, and the right one, no matter how much Mr. Bush tries to brush off the message.

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