

A Particle Physicist looks at Global Warming

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Paul Roberts, Journalist, on Global Warming, in *The End of Oil* :

Whereas one might hope after 20 years of scientific and political debate to see the outlines of an action plan, climate policy has instead stalled in a mind-numbing blame game in which governments, corporations and advocacy groups argue over who is most at fault for past emissions, who should cut future emissions, and who should pay for it all -- while the collective gaze of the global public glazes over in boredom and incomprehension.

Most physicists surveying media coverage of this topic would agree. However the purpose of the media is to tell an interesting story, not to present detailed scientific evidence. Consequently, contrarian, alarmist and controversial views are often given equal time, even when their scientific basis is demonstrably weak. The literature on this complex subject being indeed highly specialized, it is not easy to explain to newspaper readers and TV viewers. However, much of the physics behind global warming is a familiar part of a particle physicist's general background. In evaluating it, we therefore owe it to ourselves, and to those members of the general public with whom we may discuss it, to apply the same critical faculties we use in our own work.

I shall therefore try to look at this topic from a particle physicist's point of view with special reference to the many points of contact with our own discipline, and to the activities and opinions of some of our well-known colleagues.