

Throughout most of the half-million years of man's existence on earth, his fuels consisted of wood and other remains of plants ... the effect of this burning on the content of atmospheric carbon dioxide was negligible, because it only slightly speeded up the natural decay processes that continually recycle carbon from the biosphere to the atmosphere. During the last few centuries, however, man has begun to burn the fossil fuels that were locked in the sedimentary rocks over five hundred million years, and this combustion is measurably increasing the atmospheric carbon dioxide. ...

Not all of this added carbon dioxide will remain in the air. Part of it will become dissolved in the ocean. ... The part that remains in the atmosphere may have a significant effect on climate ... [and] raise the temperature of the lower air. ... Other possible effects of an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide [include] melting of the Antarctic ice cap. ... Rise of sea level ... Warming of sea water ... Increased acidity of fresh waters ...

We can conclude with fair assurance that at the present time, fossil fuels are the only source of CO₂ being added to the ocean-atmosphere-biosphere system. ... Throughout these hundred years [from 1860s –1960s], the rate of fossil fuel combustion, and thus of CO₂ production, continually increased, on the average about 3.2 percent per year. The amount produced in 1962 was almost 25 times the annual production in the mid 1860's.

-United States. President's Science Advisory Committee. Environmental Pollution Panel, "Restoring the Quality of Our Environment" (1965) excerpt.