

## Balancing The Argument Over Global Climate Change

Western Fuels Association promotes an alternative vision when it comes to the future of national energy and environmental policy. Our vision is positive and pro-people. It is based on low-cost electricity and has three components. Each is discussed, in turn, in this special section of the 1993 annual report. The first deals with peoples' concern about the impact of increasing atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide on the environment.

What Virginia climatologist Pat Michaels calls "the popular vision" portrays as catastrophic the potential for global climate change caused by emissions of carbon dioxide from society's fossil fuel use. The tendrils of that vision thread themselves throughout policy debates on the direction of energy policy and the role of coal in generating electricity. This has been observed at all levels of government: local, state, and federal. When the controversy first erupted at the peak of summer

in 1988, Western Fuels Association decided it was important to take a stand.

As a first step, management became intimately familiar with the details of the popular vision. In the process, scientists were found who are skeptical about much of what seemed generally accepted about the potential for climate change. Among them were Michaels,

Robert Balling of Arizona State University, and S. Fred Singer of the University of Virginia. Their presentations during Western Fuels' 1989 annual energy conference led to our introduction to the work of other scientists.

Western Fuels financed a 1990 research symposium sponsored by Arizona State University's Laboratory of Climatology and intended to define a research agenda. Two dozen scientists presented and defended their proposals before peers. An important consensus emerged:

- The historical record of observed temperature change suggests global warming for a doubling of carbon dioxide will be far below the 4.2°C that fuels the popular vision.
- More refined climate models tend to project most of their warming to occur in high latitude winter, which partitions most of the warming into the night. This prevents most of the deleterious effects of global warming and in fact lengthens growing seasons.

# AN ALTERNATIVE VISION