

## Reading Passage (208 words ): Global Warming Is a Threat to Polar Ice

Human-induced global warming is a serious problem, especially because of the radical changes in the polar ice. For example, in 2002, a 500 billion ton section of the Antarctic Larsen B ice shelf collapsed into the sea. The U.S.-based National Snow and Ice Data Center describe the break up as the "largest single event in a series of retreats by ice shelves in the peninsula over the last 30 years." Three important conclusions can be drawn from this dramatic incident.

First, the 200 meter thick ice shelf had the surface area which was three times the size of Hong Kong, and it collapsed in less than a month, which is the strongest indicator yet that our polar ice caps are gradually getting warmer. In fact, there has been a short term rise in temperature of around 0.6 degree centigrade over the last 150 years.

Second, this example well illustrates that the ice shelves in the polar regions have been retreating. As is evident in the example of the Antarctic Larsen B ice shelf, the greenhouse emissions associated with the melting of the ice shelves have been causing the sea levels to rise.

Finally, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced to prevent further harm to the environment.

Writing prompt: How does the information in the lecture contradict the points made in the reading passage?

## Lecture (377 words): Global Warming Is NOT a Threat to Polar Ice

Even though the dramatic demise of the Larsen B ice shelf has been used by environmentalists and commentators to show that global warming is a threat to polar ice and our environment, I think we should not so readily jump to conclusions.

Researchers at the University of Illinois suggest a new cooling of the Antarctic between 1966 and 2000. In fact, some regions like the McMurdo Dry Valleys, the largest ice-free area of the Antarctic, appear to have cooled between 1986 and 1999 by as much as two degrees centigrade per decade.

In addition, researchers have found that West Antarctic Ice Sheet has shown precisely the opposite trend seen as Larsen B, namely that this ice sheet may be getting thicker, not thinner. You see the Antarctic illustrates the complexities behind understanding climate change, and it provides little support for a simplistic myth of human-induced global warming. For example, the Antarctic has many climates, and it does not respond to change, whatever the direction in a single, unitary fashion. The data clearly indicate that some parts of the continent have seen warming trends, while other parts have seen cooling trends in recent years. Finally, contrary to popular belief, the collapsed Larsen B ice shelf floated over the sea not the land, so it did not cause the sea levels to rise at all.

To address the claim that we should reduce greenhouse gases to prevent further harm to the environment, I am not convinced that there is a direct connection between gas emissions from automobiles, industry, and virtually everything else to do with economic growth and global warming. In fact, our current interglacial period is already 10,000 years old, and no interglacial period during the last half-million years has persisted for more than 12,000 years. If anything, we are overdue for another ice age. Therefore, it may not be too long before we see ice spreading again. Think of it this way: even if you suppose that global warming exists, at best, the emission of greenhouse gases is only likely to delay our going into another ice age. At worst, the reduction of greenhouse gases will speed our descent into the next ice age. And what would you prefer, a warmer or a colder world?