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It took a century for scientists to agree that gases produced by human activity were causing the world to warm up. Now, in an engaging book that reads like a detective story, physicist Weart (Scientists in Power; Nuclear Fear) reports the history of global warming theory, including the internal conflicts plaguing the research community and the role government has had in promoting climate studies. Some researchers, he writes, pursued red herrings, while others on the right track often could not get attention or funding. Still others made classic errors but uncovered significant seeds of truth in the process. With just enough scientific detail and plenty of biographical narrative, Weart conveys the difficulties of studying vast, chaotic weather systems. As one of the profiled researchers puts it, the earth's climate is "a capricious beast"; instead of taking its threat seriously, he says, we have been "poking it with a sharp stick." Weart's goal is "to help the reader understand our predicament by explaining how we got here." Blending parallel stories, he implies that although geophysicists took a long time to understand the various elements of global warming, they were all working toward a common goal. Without resorting to fear-mongering, Weart gives an informed history and offers his readers solutions to consider.