

The Left's Top 10 Climate Denials



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After World War I, President Woodrow Wilson was the toast of Paris when he arrived to participate in peace talks. But not everyone was amused by his proposals. “Mr. Wilson bores me with his Fourteen Points; why, God Almighty has only 10,” French President Georges Clemenceau said. In the spirit of limiting ourselves to the most important things, let’s look at the top 10 things the left is getting wrong about climate change policy.

First, too many on the left oppose nuclear power. If the goal is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, nuclear is a must. In the U.S. alone, nuclear power prevented more than 476 metric tons of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere in 2019. That’s the equivalent of removing 100 million cars from the roads. Nuclear plants are producing gigawatts of electricity around the clock. It’s the only zero-carbon clean energy that can be scaled at small, medium and large sizes. As for safety, nuclear’s record shows it can operate safely on land (power plants) and at sea (ships and submarines).

Second, opposition to mining. The U.S. needs to tap into our mineral resources to deliver a cleaner future. Rare earth elements are essential to many sectors of our economy, including renewable energy, manufacturing, and defense. But the U.S. relies on China for 80 percent of our rare earths. To change this, policymakers must modernize the permitting process to reduce bureaucratic red tape and encourage mining here.

Third, speaking of regulations, the left wants to roll back the Trump Administration’s National Environmental Policy Act reforms. Before 2020, a NEPA review took an average of 4.5 years to complete. That slowed down projects, including green projects, but delivered no benefit. Environmentalists should support maintaining Trump’s reforms, as they reduced the timeline of an Environmental Impact Statement so it should never take more than one year.

Fourth, the left acts as if fossil fuels are the enemy, when in fact they are part of the solution. Since 2000, no energy source has proved more useful in reducing carbon dioxide emissions than natural gas. Switching from coal fired electricity plants to gas fired plants accounts for “the majority of the progress the U.S. has made in reducing emissions over the past decade,” the Rhodium Group reports. Meanwhile, natural gas boosts the American economy, reducing imports of foreign fuels. Natural gas is crucial to reaching our clean energy future, and it allows us to keep coal in the ground until we can find a cleaner way to get energy from that resource as well.

Fifth, no energy source is perfect. The left just talks about renewables, and they can be great. However, building solar panels and wind turbines require rare earth elements mined in China. And the wind doesn’t always blow, and the sun doesn’t always shine. All sources of energy effect the environment. It’s important to weigh all the costs and benefits, and build a resilient system using all sources of energy. **Sixth**, the left won’t admit that pipelines are good for the environment.

Environmentalists are working to shut down the Keystone XL pipeline and wouldn’t allow natural gas pipelines across the state of New York. But that doesn’t mean the country isn’t moving fuel. Instead, the delivery system is a long “pipeline” of trucks spewing out diesel exhaust, or train cars at risk of derailling. A series of direct pipelines would be cleaner and safer.

Seventh, the left’s “all of government” approach will backfire. The proposed Green New Deal, for example, includes provisions that call for a guaranteed job for every American and healthcare for all. These ideas do nothing to lower emissions or address climate change. Instead, an “all of the above” approach should focus on the environment and encourage the private sector to further compete in clean energy development by simplifying the tax code for companies across the board, including clean energy and energy innovation manufacturing companies.

Eighth, many on the left insist that “time is running out” yet they are delaying action and linking climate to unrelated policy goals like Medicare for All. Scientific research suggests that if we can reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to 450 ppm that we can avoid or mitigate the worst negative impacts on our climate and environment. That level of reduction is achievable, but only if we unleash innovations in next-generation nuclear, hydrogen, and carbon capture technology that are being pioneered by the private sector.

Ninth, progressives are waging a proxy war against capitalism. When environmental activists like Greta Thunberg warn of “mass extinction” and that “Colonial, racist, and patriarchal systems of oppression have created and fueled” the “climate crisis”, and that “**We need to dismantle them all,**” it’s no wonder that many people, conservatives in particular, raise questions about whether there’s a bigger agenda at hand. And by “dismantling them all” does she mean the bedrock of free and sustainable societies, namely democracy, just capitalism, or both? Science and math tell us when it comes to combatting climate change, capitalism is the solution, not the problem.

Tenth, progressive policies will hurt the cause of environmental justice. Extreme environmentalists are promoting a “degrowth” agenda. However, the evidence shows that freer economies, the ones that encourage growth, are cleaner economies. A **recent paper** published by C3 Solutions looked at economic data and case studies from nearly 180 countries. It found that the best way to reduce carbon emissions at a global scale is to promote greater economic freedom around the world. Policymakers can bring the poorest and least economically free countries up the economic ladder by rejecting socialism (i.e. shared misery) and embracing the proven principles of free market capitalism. If you care about helping poor people, embrace capitalism and economic freedom.

Ten is a nice round number, as Late Night philosopher David Letterman knows. The left’s views on climate change policy aren’t evil; environmentalists want a clean planet, as we all do. They just aren’t on the right path. If they’ll adjust their views on these ten topics, they’ll start to become part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.