



## Correction, Please!

### A Fight for the Ages: Joe Biden Jousts With Fossil Fuels



**Item:** *Vox* for August 2 commented on the Democratic primary debate held earlier that week. The “strangest exchange of all,” said the news site, came when CNN’s Dana Bash, a moderator, asked former Vice President Joe Biden about fossil fuels. Bash “pressed Biden,” as noted by *Vox*: “Just to clarify, would there be any place for fossil fuels, including coal and fracking, in a Biden administration?” Biden “gave an uncharacteristically straight answer,” said *Vox*. He declared: “No. We would work it out. We would make sure it’s eliminated and no more subsidies for either one of those. Any fossil fuel.”

**Item:** “Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden is pitching a \$5 trillion-plus climate proposal that he says would lead the U.S. to net zero emission of carbon pollution by 2050,” reported the *Associated Press*.

Biden’s plan, reported the *AP* on June 4, is “a mix of tax incentives, federal spending, new regulation and more aggressive foreign policy on climate issues.” The Biden plan, as the wire service put it, “comes as he pushes back on rivals’ assertions that his environmental agenda isn’t bold enough.”

**Item:** The *New York Times* for June 4 also reported about Biden’s “ambitious climate plan.” Said the establishment left-wing paper: The “sweeping proposal from the typically moderate Mr. Biden demonstrates just how far the Democratic field has moved on climate change. His environmental targets are similar to the goals of the Green New Deal [GND] put forward by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York.”

The paper also cited the approval of the plan by the executive director of the Sunrise Movement, an environmental activist group that “has championed Ms. Ocasio-Cortez’s proposal.” The *Times* quoted Varshini Prakash remarking that Biden had “put out a comprehensive climate plan that cites the Green New Deal and names climate change as the greatest challenge facing America and the world.” The group’s leader and the paper credited GND proponents for influencing Biden, with Prakash saying, “The pressure worked.”

**Correction:** The *Times* omitted some context here — failing to remind readers how deeply Biden bowed before the demands of the youth-based green mob, in this case the group called the Sunrise Movement. Sunrise previously publicly berated Biden for trying to appear as a moderate when it came to “climate



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change.” Indeed, the “movement” tweeted: “A ‘middle ground’ policy that’s supportive of more fossil fuel development is a death sentence for our generation and the millions of people on the frontlines of the climate crisis.”

After Joe kowtowed, the *Times* gave him a big hand, saying: “In some ways, Mr. Biden’s plan goes even further than the Green New Deal, which offers aspirational targets but few concrete policy steps to achieve them.”

Biden did take some heat when he admitted outright that fossil fuels in general, including coal and fracking (a process to extract oil and natural gas from the ground), would be “eliminated” in his would-be administration.

In the debate’s aftermath, Pennsylvania Republican Representative Fred Keller pointed out that Biden’s pledge to get rid of coal and fracking represented a sellout to the “far-left extreme of his party.” The former vice president, as Keller put it, was telling “hundreds of thousands of hardworking Americans that he is coming for their jobs and prepared to jack up their energy costs.” Keller pointed to a recent study that showed that the Green New Deal “would cost Pennsylvania taxpayers \$70,000 per person in the first year alone.” In addition, said the congressman, such a move “means weakening our national security by eliminating our ability to be energy independent [and] killing a thriving energy economy.”

So-called progressives (apparently including Joe Biden, depending on the day of the week) want the United States to keep fossil energy “in the ground,” pointing to what they see as a dire risk of climate change. Here’s a more immediate threat: Such policies, including bans on fracking and fossil-fuel production, would be incredibly costly. An analysis, commissioned by the American Petroleum Institute, has found that such actions would result in the loss of 5.9 million jobs and a cumulative gross domestic product reduction of \$11.8 trillion.

Biden (and many fellow Democratic candidates) are eager to eradicate the power that runs the economy of the United States and the world. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the consumption of fossil fuels (defined as petroleum, natural gas, and coal) “grew by 4% in 2018 and accounted for 80% of U.S. total energy consumption. Natural gas consumption reached a record high, rising by 10% from 2017.” Worldwide, according to the International Energy Agency, energy demand in 2018 grew by its “fastest pace this decade ... driven by a robust global economy ... with fossil fuels meeting nearly 70% of the growth for the second year running.”

Moreover, we will venture to guess that Biden did not travel to the debate’s venue in a vehicle driven by the Flintstones. Self-righteousness and hypocrisy are abundant among the avatars of the environmental Left. (One such is another former vice president, Al Gore. After his *Inconvenient Truth* anti-global-warming film was given an Academy Award for best documentary, it was revealed that his Nashville mansion boasted gas and electric bills more than 20 times higher than the average in the United States — and that was for just one of his houses.)

Actually, all of us, including Biden’s new green allies and Democrat competitors, would be hard-pressed to live in today’s world without products that depend on fossil fuels. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) has posted an inventory of 144 products (out of about 6,000) derived from petroleum. Mark Perry, a scholar at AEI and a professor of economics and finance at the University of Michigan-Flint, commented on this topic this summer. Perry said he was pretty sure that even if Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez (a prime Green New Deal advocate) and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders could



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unrealistically get enough windmills and solar panels to produce all of America's electricity and get everybody to drive an electric car, they would still want these petroleum-based products to still be produced, including heart valves, eyeglasses, and dentures for voters in Sen. Sanders' demographic, tires for everybody's electric car, ink to print AOC's and Bernie's campaign literature and the *New York Times*, etc.

For the record, after Biden's nationally televised pledge to eliminate fossil fuels, his campaign folks tried (albeit very quietly) to "walk back" his promise. Presumably, that means he can have it both ways. Indeed, there are some who still recall that in 2012 Biden said in Ohio, when speaking of various energy sources: "Look, it's all of the above for us. We desperately need coal, and we need it to get cleaner and cleaner. We desperately need all the source[s] of energy." Another inconvenient truth, eh?

Others of us are old enough to remember when Joe Biden, wrongly, claimed to be from a family of coal miners and the first of his clan to attend college. His claims were lifted, along with other word-for-word unattributed remarks, from a British Labour Party politician. That politician, Neil Kinnock, was accurately describing his own life. Pennsylvania-born Biden, it turns out, was not from a Welsh coal-mining family.

Folks on his embarrassed campaign, who had fed Joe with the remarks made by Kinnock, did eventually dig up a Biden ancestor, several generations back, who had been a mining engineer. However, that distant relative apparently graduated from Lehigh so that didn't really help. With the exposure of other plagiarism incidents, Biden dropped out of that presidential bid in September 1987. (Prior to this year, Biden has run or seriously contemplated presidential races six times. Practice seemingly has not made him better.)

The political pressure to take radical action against the perceived ills of climate change comes from many sides, in this country and elsewhere. Earlier this year, for instance, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, an Independent and declared socialist who is also a Democratic presidential candidate, was asked on ABC's *The View* if he thought that the Green New Deal went "too far." Responded the senator: "No. You cannot go too far on the issue of climate change. The future of the planet is at stake."

That's the same socialist who owns three houses.

Meanwhile, Sanders' state has closed its Vermont Yankee nuclear plant, which used to be a producer of what has been called the Real Green New Deal. That's because nuclear power is "carbon-free," around the clock, all year round. It does what the fans of "renewable" energy, solar and wind energy in particular, profess their favored systems do. (The U.S. Energy Information Administration credits overall renewables with about 12 percent of national energy consumption in 2018.) According to climate scientists, it would take 474 years for Vermont's new wind farms, at the current rate they are being built, to equal the generation of electricity that was lost when that nuclear plant was closed.

What also happened when the plant was shut? James Meigs, the former editor-in-chief of *Popular Mechanics*, answers. "Carbon emissions went up," he recalled. "This supposedly green state, ultra-liberal Vermont, went backwards."

The United States does not have a monopoly on climate alarmists. Consider the BBC report on July 24 claiming that there is a growing consensus that we have just "18 months to save the planet." For evidence, the BBC cited the considerable sagacity of, among others, His Royal Highness Prince Charles Philip Arthur George, Prince of Wales, KG, KT, GCB, OM, AK, QSO, PC, ADC, Earl of Chester, Duke of



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Cornwall, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles and Prince and Great Steward of Scotland.

That's just one royal guy, of course. The prince had just told foreign ministers from around the Commonwealth, "I am firmly of the view that the next 18 months will decide our ability to keep climate change to survivable levels and to restore nature to the equilibrium we need for our survival." Charles did not remind his audience that he had previously given the world a 100-month deadline; that older cutoff, you will be happy to hear, passed without catastrophe. So he made up another.

Just when you think the Left has gone as far as possible, you find that there are extremists so to the port that they are about to fall overboard.

Many "progressives" claim that it will take universal adoption of renewable energy to save us from the coming bane of climate change. That "cure" is not in the cards anytime soon. As it happens, it takes a lot of non-renewable energy to make renewable energy. "Renewable" energy does not magically appear. It also requires mining, steel, plastic, concrete, and storage capability. This consumes hydrocarbons. Plus, the "non-renewable" materials needed for this purpose then wear out, need to be replaced, and create waste. If we were to build enough wind turbines to create a large portion of our energy needs, it would take huge amount of coal and oil just to made the blades. For another example, consider that almost all the solar panels in the world are built in Asia; their manufacture requires energy grids that are largely dependent on coal. As summarized by Mark Mills, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, just building

one wind turbine requires 900 tons of steel, 2,500 tons of concrete and 45 tons of nonrecyclable plastic. Solar power requires even more cement, steel and glass — not to mention other metals. Global silver and indium mining will jump 250% and 1,200% respectively over the next couple of decades to provide the materials necessary to build the number of solar panels, the International Energy Agency forecasts. World demand for rare-earth elements — which aren't rare but are rarely mined in America — will rise 300% to 1,000% by 2050 to meet the Paris green goals. If electric vehicles replace conventional cars, demand for cobalt and lithium will rise more than 20-fold. That doesn't count batteries to back up wind and solar grids.

Indeed, the more folks discover about the production of those batteries, particularly that they are made in China, the less attractive they are.

That is also what happens when you look at Joe Biden's "Plan for a Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice." As was pointed out by columnist Paul Driessen, a senior policy analyst for the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow, the cumulative electricity demand for Biden's energy programs "would be at least double what the United States currently generates." There would be "wind turbines and solar panels on scales that few can even imagine." In addition, Driessen continues, if all this "power is to be backed up by batteries — since coal and gas-fired backup power generators would be eliminated — we would need billions of batteries ... and thus even more land and raw materials."

The term "silly" doesn't do this foolishness justice.

— William P. Hoar

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