



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on February 9, 2021

Biden's Keystone XL Pipeline Order Doesn't Serve His Supporters' Interests

President Joe Biden's executive order halting construction of the Keystone XL pipeline is inimical to the interests of some of his key supporters: labor unions and environmental groups.

It didn't take long for unions to realize they'd been had by the man who [promised](#) to be "the most pro-union president you've ever seen."

After Biden signed his order, the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) issued a [statement](#) excoriating the man they had earlier [endorsed heartily](#): "The Biden Administration's decision to cancel the Keystone XL pipeline permit on day one of his presidency is both insulting and disappointing to the thousands of hard-working LIUNA members who will lose good-paying, middle class family-supporting jobs. By blocking this 100 percent union project, and pandering to environmental extremists, a thousand union jobs will immediately vanish and 10,000 additional jobs will be foregone."

Other unions soon [followed suit](#).

The latest labor leader to join the bandwagon is Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO. In a Sunday [interview](#), Axios reporter Jonathan Swan brought up LIUNA's statement and asked Trumka, "Can you explain why the president was right?"

Trumka couldn't. "I wish he hadn't done that on the first day because the Laborers' International was right. It did and will cost us jobs in the process," he said. "I wish he had paired that more carefully with the thing that he did second, by saying, 'Here's where we're creating jobs. We can do mine reclamation. We can fix leaks, and we can fix seeps and create hundreds of thousands of jobs in doing all of that stuff.'"

Swan later asked Trumka if he agreed with this portion of the LIUNA statement: "We support the president's campaign to build back better. Killing good union jobs on day one with nothing to replace them is not building back better."

"Yes," replied Trumka.

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Meanwhile, the “environmental extremists” (in LIUNA’s words) who clamored for an end to Keystone XL ought to reconsider whether killing the pipeline will really be good for the planet.

“In the real world, Canadian oil will still travel from Alberta, Canada to U.S. refineries on the Gulf Coast, but by railroad. We know that jobs will be lost. The Administration said the pipeline was cancelled to help the environment, so we ask the questions, ‘What is the real impact on our carbon footprint? What’s the impact on overall CO₂ levels?’” Toby Mack, CEO of the Energy Equipment and Infrastructure Alliance (EEIA), said in a [press release](#).

To answer those questions, EEIA performed a few basic calculations:

According to the Association of American Railroads, it requires 433 gallons of locomotive diesel fuel to pull one loaded crude oil tank car from the Canadian Oil Sands to the U.S. Gulf Coast, about 2,200 miles. It takes another 144 gallons to bring the empty tank car back for a refill. That’s 577 gallons total.

It takes 645 loaded tank cars per day to transport the amount of oil that Keystone XL might have carried — about 400,000 barrels per day. That’s 235,425 tank car loads per year. Multiplied by 577 gallons each, that amounts to about 136 million gallons of diesel burned per year.

Since each gallon of diesel emits 22.44 pounds of CO₂, that means the locomotives pulling those trains will emit over 1.5 million tons of CO₂. That’s all net addition to CO₂ emissions since Keystone XL would have been powered entirely by renewable energy.

1.5 million tons of CO₂ is equivalent to emissions of 490,000 more cars on the road.

In other words, if environmentalists really want to minimize carbon emissions, they should be furious with Biden for deep-sixing the pipeline. As Mack put it, “It’s clear that politics, not a commitment to the environment, dictated the Biden Administration’s decision to cancel the Keystone XL pipeline.”

Politics, of course, is the name of the game in Washington. Biden may have kept his word on Keystone XL, but his decision was not based on what was best for his supporters (even if some thought it was at the time), let alone what was best for America. It was based on a faulty, destructive ideology.

Union leaders have seen the light. When will their “green” counterparts do likewise?



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