

# CounterPunch

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TELLS THE FACTS AND NAMES THE NAMES

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## Blown Up

### Wind Industry Buffeted by Backlash

By Robert Bryce

With a declaration of “enough is enough” British energy minister John Hayes, neatly summarized the global backlash against the wind-energy sector. In late October, Hayes, a Tory and longtime opponent of the mad dash to erect wind turbines in Britain, told London’s *Telegraph* newspaper that “We can no longer have wind turbines imposed on communities. I can’t single-handedly build a new Jerusalem but I can protect our green and pleasant land.”

Hayes is hardly alone. Politicians in Ireland, Australia, Canada, and the US are actively taking on the once-booming wind industry in a way that was unthinkable just two or three years ago. The politicians are paying attention to

a broad cross-section of rural residents who don’t want 130-meter-high wind projects built in their neighborhoods. They don’t want to hear them and they don’t want to see their red-blinking lights all night, every night.

The battle between the wind industry and rural residents has intensified over the past few years as the industry has moved from largely rural installations to ones that are increasingly suburban and exurban. Between 2005 and 2011, global installed wind capacity quadrupled, going from about 59,000 megawatts to nearly 240,000 megawatts. Billions of dollars are at stake. The wind industry, which is heavily dependent on government subsidies, wants to keep those subsidies flowing.

Given that so much money is at risk, it’s no surprise that the wind industry – along with large swaths of the Green/Left here in the US and Europe – is eager to dismiss the concerns of rural dwellers. But the backlash is real and growing. It is being driven by several factors including: the growing body of evidence which shows that wind-turbine noise can have deleterious health effects, the wind sector’s murderous impact on wildlife, and finally, but perhaps most important: wind energy’s inability to significantly cut carbon dioxide emissions or provide the vast quantities of energy that the global economy demands.

First, let’s consider the dimensions of the backlash against wind energy. It’s an issue that’s largely invisible on the pages of liberal newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*. But if you look at rural publications in Europe, Canada, or the US – or if you follow the news

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## Their Eyes Were Watching You

### Notes on a Growing Surveillance State

By Tom Wright

The philosopher Jean Baudrillard once said that prisons exist in America to disguise the fact that all of society is carceral. If we feel “free” on the outside of the prison, it’s only by comparison. In the same way, he said, Disneyland exists to keep us from noticing that the larger American society is the real cartoon.

Old Jean was my write-in choice for President this year, despite the dual misfortunes of his 1. being a Frenchman, and 2. being dead. But then John Ashcroft once lost a Senate race to a dead guy, so I figured there might be a faint ray of hope in 2012...

Anyway, Baudrillard had a good point about the carceral society. In fact, if he could see it today, he’d probably say that we inmates here in Super Max USA, Inc.

are on the Big Lockdown. At 53, I’m old enough to remember the United States pre-Gulag, when a guy could fill the gas tank, flirt with the checkout girl, float the occasional stop sign, and even board an airplane, without being videotaped or having a nude X-ray imaging machine check for C4 plastic explosives in his undershorts. Somehow, over the last 40 years or so, without anyone having asked our permission, the unfettered sense of privacy and anonymity in America’s urban public spaces has given way to a creeping network of technological surveillance. Younger people, born into a world of ubiquitous electronic eyes, probably take no more notice of the “security” cameras around them than I take of street lights or telephone wires. And even from older people, there’s a

surprising acquiescence.

Fully 70% of Americans tell pollsters they approve of public security cameras for crime-fighting purposes. They don’t seem to mind the invasion of privacy. I suppose they are a subset of the 90% who profess a belief in a Sky God, and are therefore already under the watchful heavenly eye. What’s one more layer of administrative oversight?

In 2009, there were an estimated 30 million surveillance cameras deployed in the United States capturing 4 billion hours of footage a week. That’s one camera for every ten of us. These didn’t just appear overnight, of course, set up by Big Brother after a totalitarian *putsch*. It always starts out small, in a “reasonable” way, and goes from there. Think of drug testing – first it was just commercial airline pilots, but now even the guy who loads my plywood at Home Depot has to piss in a jar. With video surveillance, we could understand the first cameras in places like banks.

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in Australia – you will find a myriad of articles on the subject.

Consider some of the numbers. The European Platform Against Windfarms now lists 555 signatory organizations from 24 countries. In the UK, where fights are raging against industrial wind projects in Wales, Scotland, and elsewhere, some 300 anti-wind groups have been formed. Meanwhile, here in the US, about 140 anti-wind groups are active.

The backlash can even be seen in Denmark, a country frequently lauded by environmental groups for its pro-wind policies. In 2010, the *Copenhagen Post* reported that state-owned Dong Energy had “given up building more wind turbines on Danish land, following protests from residents complaining about the noise the turbines make.” All over the world, policymakers are responding to the backlash by passing rules and legislation that aim to restrict the wind industry’s expansion.

For instance, about two dozen towns in New York state have passed rules banning or restricting wind-energy development. Last year, in Wisconsin, a state senator, Frank Lasee, filed legislation that aimed to require the state to investigate the health effects of

the noise produced by industrial wind turbines. If passed, the bill – the first of its kind in the US – could impose a moratorium on new wind projects until the study is completed. “I’ve heard and seen enough from people I represent to know that we need a factual study,” Lasee told me. The politician said he was responding to families in his district who have abandoned their homes because of noise from wind turbines that have been built near their residences.

A few more examples of the backlash against Big Wind:

In May 2011, according to the BBC, some 1,500 protesters descended on the Welsh assembly, demanding that a massive wind project planned for central Wales be halted.

In mid-2011, in Australia, the state of Victoria responded to the public uproar over wind-project siting, by announcing that it would enforce a two-kilometer (1.25-mile) setback between wind turbines and homes.

In February, John Kelly, a member of the Ireland’s Seanad, introduced a bill that will require large new wind turbines to be at least 1.5 kilometers from any residence.

In May, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the province’s biggest farm organization, came out with a position statement, which gave a big boost to the anti-wind forces in Canada. The federation said that the push for wind energy had “become untenable” and that “rural residents’ health and nuisance complaints must be immediately and fairly addressed.”

In June, in the UK, the Lincolnshire County Council imposed an identical setback from homes, and the county council’s leader, Martin Hill told a local newspaper that “enough is enough... Not only are these things spoiling our beautiful countryside for future generations, they could also seriously damage our tourism industry, who wants to spend their holiday looking at a 400-foot turbine?”

In June, the board of the Northeastern Vermont Development Association voted by an overwhelming majority to impose a three-year moratorium on new wind projects in their region.

Also in June, two members of the Australian senate, John Madigan and Nick Xenophon filed legislation which would financially penalize a wind project

if it generates excessive noise.

In July, about 150 protesters blocked a road near Lowell, Vermont in an attempt to halt a controversial 21-turbine, 63-megawatt project being installed atop Lowell Mountain.

In October, dozens of rural residents living near Utica, New York, filed a lawsuit against the owners of a \$200 million wind project, claiming that the noise from the turbines gives them headaches, disturbs their sleep, and harms their property values. All of the plaintiffs live within a mile of the Hardscrabble Wind Power Project, a 74-megawatt project that began producing electricity in January 2011.

Of all the issues facing the wind-energy sector, perhaps the most nettlesome is the noise problem. It’s also the issue that the wind industry and the die-hard activists on the Green/Left are most eager to dismiss. They aren’t having much luck.

Last year, Ontario’s Environmental Review Tribunal conducted an inquiry into a proposed a wind-energy facility known as the Kent Breeze Project. Although the officials allowed the facility to be built, they concluded that:

“This case has successfully shown that the debate should not be simplified to one about whether wind turbines can cause harm to humans. The evidence presented to the Tribunal demonstrates that they can, if facilities are placed too close to residents. The debate has now evolved to one of degree.”

The Canadian government has announced that it will investigate the health impacts of wind turbines. That investigation was initiated after Ontario’s Environment Ministry logged hundreds of health complaints about the noise generated by the province’s growing fleet of wind turbines.

It’s tempting to dismiss the complaints about wind turbine noise as being little more than NIMBYism. And to be clear, not every wind project is causing problems. Further, the most problematic noise generated by the turbines -- low-frequency sound (20 to 100 hertz) and infrasound (0 to 20 Hz) – has varying effects. Some individuals feel the effects of the noise quickly and compare it to motion sickness. Others may not feel it at all. That said, the harmful effects of infrasound are well known. A 2001 report published by the National Institutes of

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Health said that exposure to infrasound can cause vertigo as well as “fatigue, apathy, and depression, pressure in the ears, loss of concentration, drowsiness.”

Alec Salt, a research scientist at the Cochlear Fluids Research Laboratory at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, has written extensively about the health effects of wind-energy projects. He flatly concludes that wind turbines “can be hazardous to human health.”

Salt has plenty of people who agree with him. In April, Peter Narins, a distinguished professor and expert on auditory physiology at the University of California-Los Angeles published a paper in the journal *Acoustics Today*. In his report, Narins and his co-author, Annie Chen found that wind turbines generate “substantial levels of infrasound and low frequency sound” and therefore, “modifications and regulations to wind farm engineering plans and geographical placements are necessary to minimize community exposure and potential human health risks.”

A recent peer-reviewed study that was published in the journal *Noise and Health*, found a relationship between wind farms and “important clinical indicators of health, including sleep quality, daytime sleepiness and mental health.” The study compared two groups of Maine residents with similar demographics. One lived within a mile of a wind project. The other did not. The residents who lived near the wind project suffered more interrupted sleep. All of the people in the study were asked if they had been prescribed sleeping pills. Less than a tenth of the people in the control group – the ones who lived far away from the wind project – had been prescribed sleeping pills. By contrast, more than a quarter of those living near the wind farm said they had prescriptions for sleeping pills.

The study, which was led by a Maine-based radiologist, Michael Nissenbaum, also found a “significant” link between wind turbines and poorer mental health.

Over the past two years, I’ve personally interviewed homeowners in Wisconsin, the UK, New Zealand, Missouri, New York, Nova Scotia, and Ontario, who’ve had wind turbines built near their homes. All of them complained in nearly identical terms about the health issues that cropped up after wind turbines were

built near their homes.

The wind industry regularly dismisses news reports and studies about wind noise and health. But those dismissals can’t avoid an obvious question: If the noise generated by wind turbines isn’t a health problem, why, then, are so many people, in so many different countries, complaining about the issue in nearly identical terms? It beggars belief to assume that all of them are being simultaneously afflicted by a psychosomatic allergy to wind turbines.

The answer to the turbine-noise problem is equally obvious: impose siting restrictions so that wind projects can’t be built within a mile or two of residences. But that kind of restriction would put a very large spanner into the wind-industry’s expansion plans.

Over the past two decades, the federal government has prosecuted hundreds of cases against oil and gas producers and electric utilities for violating some of America’s oldest wildlife-protection laws: the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Eagle Protection Act. But the Obama administration – like the Bush administration before it – has never prosecuted the wind industry despite myriad examples of widespread, unpermitted bird kills by wind turbines. (A violation of either law can result in a fine of \$250,000 and/or imprisonment for two years.)

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has plenty of evidence that wind turbines are killing birds in large numbers. In 2009, the agency estimated that some 440,000 birds per year are being killed by wind turbines in the US alone. And nearly all of those birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and/or the Eagle Protection Act.

Last year, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that about 70 golden eagles per year are being killed by wind turbines at Altamont Pass in central California. That finding follows a 2008 study funded by the Alameda County Community Development Agency, which estimated that about 2,400 raptors, including burrowing owls, American kestrels, and red-tailed hawks – as well as about 7,500 other birds – are being killed every year by the wind turbines at Altamont.

A pernicious double standard is at work here and it riles Eric Glitzenstein, a Washington, DC-based lawyer who wrote the petition to the Fish and

Wildlife Service for the American Bird Conservancy. He told me, “It’s absolutely clear that there’s been a mandate from the top” echelons of the federal government not to prosecute the wind industry for violating wildlife laws.

Glitzenstein comes to this issue from the Left. Before forming his own law firm, he worked for Public Citizen, an organization created by Ralph Nader. But when it comes to wind energy, “Many environmental groups have been claiming that too few people are paying attention to the science of climate change, but some of those same groups are ignoring the science that shows wind energy’s negative impacts on bird and bat populations.”

That willful ignorance appears to be ending. In 2011, a coalition of environmental groups, led by the American Bird Conservancy, submitted a petition to the US Fish and Wildlife Service which asked the agency to create regulations that would better protect migratory birds. Some 91 groups have since signed onto the petition including entities like the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Endangered Species Coalition, and numerous chapters of the

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Audubon Society.

The problem is not limited to the US. In January, the Spanish Society of Ornithology estimated that Spain's 18,000 wind turbines may be killing as many as 18 million birds and bats per year. The Madrid-based group said that Spain has not done adequate environmental impact studies on wind projects, resulting in projects built in areas that are "incompatible with the conservation of threatened species." Sooner or later, governments in Europe and the US are going to have to face an unpleasant truth: by mandating and in many cases, subsidizing, wind energy, they are taking an active role in accelerating the destruction of their own wildlife.

Peel away all of the arguments for wind energy, and they are fundamentally about one issue: carbon dioxide. Indeed, the wind-energy lobby routinely cites carbon dioxide-reduction as its primary reason for being. The Global Wind Energy Council claims that reducing the amount of carbon dioxide into atmosphere "is the most important environmental benefit from wind power generation." The American Wind Energy Association has declared that "there is no need to wait for a new climate solution. Wind power is one of only a few near-term options to reduce emissions."

Here's the hard reality: wind energy cannot, will not, provide any major reductions in carbon dioxide emissions. In fact, wind cannot even meet incremental global demand for electricity, much less make a dent in the world's demand for hydrocarbons.

The numbers tell the story. Between 1985 and 2011, global electricity demand increased by about 450 terawatt-hours per year. That's the equivalent of adding one Brazil (which used 485 terawatt-hours in 2010) to the electricity sector every year. And the International Energy Agency expects global electricity use to continue growing by about one Brazil per year through 2035.

In 2011, the total output from all of the world's wind turbines was 437 terawatt-hours. That amount of electricity was generated from nearly 240,000 megawatts of installed wind capacity. (US wind-energy capacity in 2011 was about 47,000 megawatts.) Therefore, for wind energy to just meet incremental demand growth for electricity – and not

displace any coal, natural gas, nuclear, oil, or hydro – the global wind sector would have to install about five times as much wind capacity as the US had in 2011, and it would have to do so every year. That's simply not going to happen.

It will not happen because of simple physics. Wind energy's fatal flaw is its low power density. No matter the location wind turbines only produce about 2 watts per square meter – about 5 megawatts per square mile.

Therefore, if the countries of the world wanted to only meet incremental electricity demand with wind energy, it would require covering a land area of about 48,000 square miles – a territory about the size of New York state – with wind turbines every year. That's an extremely unlikely scenario, particularly given the backlash that is already occurring against wind projects. Due to the noise generated by the turbines, no humans could live on that 48,000 square miles of land. Prefer to put those turbines offshore? Fine. But then you must expect costs that are three to four times those of onshore wind projects.

The punchline – plain as a 130-meter turbine – wind energy developments can't even keep pace with soaring global electricity appetite, much less make a significant dent in global carbon-dioxide emissions. Given that fact, and the ongoing backlash against the wind industry, it appears that the wind-energy boom is coming to an end. **CP**

**Robert Bryce** is an Austin-based author and journalist. His latest book: *Power Hungry: The Myths of "Green" Energy and the Real Fuels of the Future*.

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**WRIGHT** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"School video surveillance integrators abound, and are capable of meeting both small and large system needs," says GovernmentVideo.com.

"We've installed full IP-based surveillance systems for schools in the US and Canada, ranging in size from 32 to 400 cameras a location," says Vy Hoang, executive vice president of Sales and Marketing at i3International in Toronto, Ontario. "Many have directly connected their camera systems to provide access to local police, so that SWAT teams can see what's happening during a lockdown."

That's just the beginning: Using products such as On-Net Surveillance

Systems' Intelligent IP Video Delivery Solutions, a school surveillance system can automatically monitor a complete set of cameras, with the software watching for specific sequences of suspicious events and alert selected officials as needed.

Who knows? Perhaps future advances will detect cheating on the SAT test, or spot the kid who doesn't say the Pledge of Allegiance. I could have thought of bigger problems to spend the money on. You know, like the one in five US school children living in poverty. But then I don't live in Texas, where one school district voted to spend its money by tracking students through an RFID chip implanted in their student ID cards. Different priorities.

Maybe I should listen to Mike Haldas of CCTV Camera Pros, who tells us that "Vandalism, sexual predators and school shootings are an unfortunate product of our society at times, but with a good surveillance system, you can prevent your school, or your children, from falling victim."

Mike tells parents that they can "see what their kids are up to at school," not just from home or office, but "from anywhere in the world." "... all they have to do is log into the remote viewing system... to see the school through the... security surveillance system..." "The cost...is well worth the peace of mind you get," Mike says. (And who would not want to be able to follow the SWAT teams through their schools in real time?)

Oh, also! "...one school in New Jersey has found that when children know there is a camera watching, they are much more likely to behave and do well in school." Mike really knows how to close a deal.

By the way, if you are one of those parents who has to check on Johnny from "anywhere in the world," be sure when you're going through airport security these days to *put all your guns into your checked bags*. The Transportation Security Administration found 1,320 guns last year (many of them loaded) which people were trying to take in their carry-on bags. No, they weren't terrorists. Terrorists don't use guns, they use personal toiletries larger than 3 Fl. Oz. The guns were left in the carry-on bags by passengers who "simply forgot they had them." According to the *New York Times*, "Security experts attribute

the increase to two factors: a rise in gun sales and the sharp growth of so-called right-to-carry laws across the country that significantly relax regulations on carrying guns in many areas of public life, from colleges to hospitals.”

North America is now the world leader for revenue growth in the video surveillance industry. Which may seem like a good thing, with all that firepower in our nation’s colleges and hospitals. Of course, both guns and surveillance cameras are justified in the same instrumental terms, namely that they make us more “secure.” The Batman movie patrons would have been better off if everyone in the theater had been packing heat. And all those Commie Muslim sex-predators lurking in the schoolyard would scatter like cockroaches under the Panoptic gaze of the camera. Fifty years of Television Mind-Control Beams have by now convinced us of the utility of the personal .357 Magnum in daily problem-solving. And now we are being conditioned to accept surveillance as well. The inescapable portrayals of lurid and savage crimes combine with regular depiction of surveillance cameras shown in a positive light. In “reality” shows like *Survivor*, the ubiquitous camera conditions us to accept its presence as normal. And in crime dramas, “true crime” shows, and dramas like *Person of Interest*, surveillance cameras are portrayed as a powerful tool in both solving and preventing violent crime.

But it just isn’t so.

Simply put, surveillance cameras have not been shown to significantly reduce crime. Aundreia Cameron, et. al, (2008), conducted a “meta-analysis,” (jargon for “a study of a bunch of other studies”). Here’s what they found:

“Building upon previous research of CCTV by the California Research Bureau, we first examine 44 video surveillance evaluations, primarily conducted in the United Kingdom, that investigate the technology’s deterrent effect on crime. Following deployment of CCTV, 41 percent of these evaluations reported a statistically significant reduction in crime, 43 percent reported no statistically significant effect (increase or decrease) on crime, and 16 percent showed a significant crime increase. Importantly, none of the five evaluations of CCTV conducted in the United States

found a statistically significant crime reduction.”

In other words, 57% of the studies showed either no effect on crime or an actual increase in crime. Like other researchers, they found no statistically significant reductions in either violent crime, crime rates, property crimes, or even arrest rates for misdemeanors.

Everything changed with the 9-11 attacks, which served as the launch pad for huge new federal outlays in domestic security projects. Billions of dollars became available to local surveillance and policing programs. The Feds shoveling out the dough weren’t being bothered with pesky statistical data on the ineffectiveness of video surveillance, because street crime was no longer the target. “Terrorism” was the new hobgoblin.

As the Electronic Privacy Information Center reported in 2005,

“Chicago has 2250 cameras in its ‘Homeland Security Grid,’ which DHS helped finance with a \$5.1 million grant, and will be adding cameras in the next two years with funds from another \$48 million grant from Homeland Security. By 2006, Chicago will have a 900-mile fiber-optic grid. The cameras are linked to a \$43 million operations center constantly monitored by police officers.”

I suppose we can all be thankful that crazed jihadists have not brought down the Sears Tower using a box knife. But that 900-mile fiber-optic grid wouldn’t have stopped them if they had tried, just as it did not prevent 5000 Chicago residents from being killed by gun violence since the year 2000. That’s almost two 9-11s, by the way, if anyone is counting, but nobody’s spending billions to fight *that* problem. In fact, no politician can even mention it, or they’d be sunk by the N.R.A.

But back to Big Brother. In New York City, the Polizei joined forces with the city’s most notorious criminal elements, namely the giant Wall Street banks that brought us the current Depression. Just this year the city completed a publicly-funded (naturally) \$150 million mega spy center called the Lower Manhattan Security Initiative. As Pam Martens reported in CounterPunch last year, live video feeds from 1000 NYPD cameras, as well as 2000 private cameras owned by the banksters, are monitored around the clock at a central hi-tech Coordination

Center. Incredibly, firms like Goldman Sachs and Citigroup gained permanent seats at this Center, where law-abiding citizens on the streets of Manhattan are now watched by “personnel from Wall Street firms that are currently under at least 51 Federal and state corruption probes for mortgage securitization fraud and other matters.” As hardly needs saying, there was no public input into privacy guidelines or any other aspect of the program, and no outside oversight. Nor are any of the cameras mounted inside the banks, looking at the Savile Row suits slurping at the public trough. What did you think? Remember: the cameras are controlled by people with power, watching the people without power. Very simple. Back to your TV set.

Incidentally, we’re not talking about the grainy old cameras you remember above the cigarette rack at 7-Eleven. No sir, the Panopticon has gotten up to date. Technological advancement has improved surveillance just like it has all other areas of modern life. And now all that Homeland money is buying some pretty impressive Police State gizmos. In 2010, DHS announced a 100 megapixel camera with a fish-eye lens capable of 360-degree surveillance. Where CCTV was just the 1<sup>st</sup> generation technology, now we have what is called “Video Analytics,” or VA, the hidden linkage of existing camera networks with sophisticated computers employing complex search algorithms and cheaply storing vast amounts of data. “We have arrived at a unique moment in the history of surveillance,” writes James Vlahos. “The price of both megapixels and gigabytes has plummeted, making it possible to collect a previously unimaginable quantity and quality of data.”

In its ever-expanding capability, the unseen software behind the camera can analyze objects and people, sort them into categories (gender, race...), and assign a risk profile to alert human overseers. This is not just in “security” situations, but in retail and marketing contexts as well. In *Eyes Everywhere* (2011), Joseph Ferenbok and Andrew Clement explain, “This digital processing enables a form of algorithmic surveillance...that is hidden from even the most observant surveillance subject.” One security company, Cisco Systems Inc, “encourages their retail

store customers to monitor shoppers based on a range of demographic criteria, potentially influencing how customers are sorted and treated.”

No big surprise how this tends to work out. As Clive Norris writes in the same book, “In (our) 1999 study it was the young, the male and the black who were systematically and disproportionately targeted, not because of their involvement in crime or disorder, but for no obvious reason and on the basis of categorical suspicion alone.”

Video analytics are already monitoring us at work, and studying us as consumers to squeeze out every possible bit of profit, without our knowledge or consent. The “algorithmic gaze” of the software watches employees, to look for signs of transaction fraud. And cameras embedded in digital advertisements watch shoppers, study how long they look at different parts of the ad, and build customer profiles built on “demographic” information the camera finds.

Ferenbok and Clement warn that as VA technology advances in areas such as facial recognition, and link up with visual digital databases like driver licenses and health records, police and corporations will potentially have access to vast personal information. As captured visual data becomes “increasingly personal, linkable, mobile, searchable” –and therefore more valuable to those able to exploit it, our privacy and identities are ever more threatened.

Yesterday I filled the tank in my Ford F150, not flirting with anyone, as there was only the credit card machine there at the pump. I parted with the \$100 electronically via my Visa card, saving a few cents a gallon by first swiping in my Safeway Club Card (which tracks all my purchases for marketing purposes). I was being watched on four huge video cameras, even though there’s no way in hell I could have driven off without paying, since it’s pre-pay only. Then I drove up to the county dump, where I was again under video surveillance (exactly why is not clear—just for the hell of it, I suppose, unless they think Jimmy Hoffa may still turn up. I’ve written to ask why, but never got a reply.) Then they had to scan my driver license to tag it to my weight ticket. Just in case I decided to drive off without paying, they tell me. Since I’m a remodeling contractor, I’ve gone to this dump regularly for fifteen

years and know the attendants by name, and they know me. Still, they have to record me, or lose their jobs.

Foucault said that the main purpose of the Panopticon was “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.” I believe he was onto something. **CP**

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## Making Green a Threat Again

### By Scott Parkin

**T**he energy was there. It was an overcast spring morning in April 2011 in the nation’s capital. Thousands had shown up to take action on climate change. The earlier march led us to the Chamber of Commerce, BP’s Washington D.C. offices, the American Petroleum Institute and other office buildings associated with oil spills, coal mining, carbon emissions and more. We heard speakers. We saw street theater. It was all very tame and managed. It lacked confrontation.

It was almost a year to the day after the Gulf oil spill, yet offshore drilling continued as usual with little consequence for oil giant British Petroleum. Out west, the Obama administration had just opened up thousands of acres for coal mining in the Powder River Basin. Appalachia’s mountains were still under attack by the coal industry. Natural gas extraction, also known as “fracking,” was spreading like an epidemic through the countryside.

Over 15,000 youth, students and climate activists had gathered at Powershift for weekend of education, networking and keynote speakers. There were keynote speeches by Al Gore and Bill McKibben, yet little was offered in the way of taking action against Big Oil and Big Coal. We are faced with the greatest crisis in the history of the world, so we were told, yet the Beltway green groups had only produced failure in Copenhagen and Washington.

Globally, we had watched the Arab Spring throw out dictators; anti-austerity movements in Iceland and Greece rise up against corrupted regimes and massive

protests in the Wisconsin state house fighting for labor rights. We were only a few months away from Occupy Wall Street.

Needless to say, the North American climate movements wanted in on the action. As the morning march ended that day at Lafayette Park, the unofficial march, spearheaded by Rising Tide North America, formed and headed into the streets of Washington DC. Tim DeChristopher of Salt Lake City, who had become a folk hero to climate activists after derailing a federal land auction and protecting thousands of acres of southern Utah wilderness, announced on the microphone that it was time for more drastic action. Anyone who wanted to take that step should join the Rising Tide march that was heading down 17<sup>th</sup> St NW to the Dept. of Interior.

The crowd quickly swelled to over a thousand, both singing “We Shall Overcome” and chanting “Keep It in the Ground” and “Our Climate is Under Attack, What’ll We Do? Act Up, Fight Back!”

As we approached the Dept. of Interior, the group of twenty that had been pre-organized to occupy the lobby began to move towards the doors. To our surprise and shock, a crowd of over 300 stormed in after them and joined the sit-in. Chanting “We’ve got power! We’ve got power!” It was scary. It was exhilarating. It was powerful. Direct action is supposed to push a person’s comfort zone, but even veteran direct action organizers felt their comfort zones pushed when many in the march joined the occupation. In the end, 21 were arrested as part of the sit-in. The Dept. of Interior action began a shift for the youth and grassroots activists with the North American climate movements. Soon, they would become a force to be reckoned with.

The clock is ticking and the science is not just a theory, it’s science. Yet, corporate and political decision-makers continue to ignore warnings for short term profit.

A new scientific report put out by the United Nations on the second day of the 18th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP18) in Doha in November reports that thawing of the Arctic permafrost will “significantly amplify global warming.” Permafrost emission spurred by rising global temperature will

contribute up to 39% of global emissions. On the third day of COP18 negotiations, the World Meteorological Organization warned the delegates that the Arctic ice melt had reached an alarming rate and that “far-reaching changes” from climate change would impact the Earth.

Despite these dire warnings from the scientific community, wealthy industrialized nations continue to stall any sort of climate progress in Doha. The top topic at COP18 has been an extension of the Kyoto Protocol – up for renewal this year – to 2020. The Associated Press reports, a number of wealthy nations including Japan, Russia and Canada have joined the ranks of the US and “refused to endorse the extension.” The US has never endorsed Kyoto and continues to block any progress on agreements to reduce global emissions or pass legislation to regulate its own emissions.

Not surprisingly, the fossil fuel lobby has a chokehold on the American political system. In 2012, oil and gas industries combined with Big Coal to spend over \$150 million on elections to both parties.

US deputy climate envoy Jonathan Pershing told the media in Doha that the Obama administration plans to stick to its 2009 goal of reducing emissions by 17% by 2020. Pershing went on to say that US efforts to curb emissions are “enormous.”

Yet, Obama recently signed into law a bipartisan bill to shield the US airline industry from a European Union carbon tax. Furthermore, Obama’s top candidate to replace Hillary Clinton at the State Dept., UN Ambassador Susan Rice, has been revealed to be a major investor in companies developing Canadian tar sands and building the Keystone XL pipeline.

Why haven’t governments and corporations been forced to act on climate change?

To begin with, the mainstream strategy, which controls large portions of resources to fight climate change, is too rooted in working within the existing political and economic system. In 2009, the environmental establishment comprised of small grouping of donors and environmental non-profits primarily based in Washington DC placed its faith in the Obama administration. They hoped that his ability to regulate emissions through the Environmental

Protection Agency, combined with lobbying Congress to pass meaningful climate legislation in 2010 and pressuring world governments to secure a unilateral agreement on climate at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP15) in Copenhagen, would turn the tide on global emissions. These strategies are fraught with compromise on a global crisis that pays no heed to politics as usual.

Second, the environmental establishment was completely unprepared for the power that Corporate America, wielded in Washington DC. In 2009, oil and gas companies spent \$121 million to dispatch 745 lobbyists to Congress in 2009 to influence the climate bill. Before the 2010 election, Big Oil put \$19,588,091 into the US election cycle. Big Coal put in \$10,423,347. The Beltway Greens were outgunned, outspent and outmatched.

Finally, turning the tide on the most powerful industry in history requires more than lobbyists and policy people. It requires rebel energy fueling people power and non-violent direct action. In the 1970s when activists were doing battle to end the war in Vietnam and stop the proliferation of nuclear power, author and activist George Lakey wrote in the pamphlet *The Sword that Heals*:

“You can’t pull off powerful nonviolent direct action without rebel energy. You’ve run this campaign as a conventional lobbying operation and you can’t – at the last minute – switch gears and become a nonviolent protest movement!”

In North America, Corporate America, the political establishment and the media has convinced us that national politicians and well paid non-profit staff are the change agents we’ve been waiting for. Thus far, they’ve only delivered epic failures in Copenhagen and Washington DC. We mustn’t let the priorities of big well-resourced institutions trump planetary or community survival. The momentum to stop climate change is going to come from the rebel energy that challenges not only the established order, but the established opposition as well.

As daunting as it sounds, climate rebels wouldn’t be reinventing the environmental movement’s wheel in building a grassroots mass climate movement. Far from it, in fact, greens have threatened corporate power with non-violent direct action and people power for decades.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, emerging from the anti-war and burgeoning environmental movement, the anti-nuclear, or “No Nukes,” movement rose up to challenge the Nixon administration’s plan to build 100 new nuclear power plants by the year 2000. In 1976 and 1977, thousands with the Clamshell Alliance used non-violent direct action to occupy the site of a proposed nuclear plant in Seabrook, NH. Similar mass actions followed Seabrook. The Three Mile Island disaster was a watershed event that by the early 1980s put millions into the streets against US nuclear power. While Seabrook and few other plants were built, the vast majority of plants proposed remain halted.

Similarly, in the early 1980s, a group of disgruntled redneck tree-huggers fed up with constant compromise on wilderness protection in western states by the Beltway Greens formed the radical ecological movement known as “Earth First!” Their politics of “No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth” manifested into the direct action tactics of road blockades and tree-sits that strengthened and emboldened the environmental movement. Their campaigns and tactics targeted corporate logging and development companies, but also created much needed political space for grassroots activists on environmental issues. Former Sierra Club director and Friends of the Earth founder David Brower remarked “I thank God for the arrival of Earth First!, they make me look moderate.”

A third movement that challenged corporate power for the betterment of the environment was the global justice movement. This grassroots street wing of anti-austerity, human rights and environmental movements emerged from the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle in 1999. Rooted in direct action, direct democracy and anti-capitalism of movements both in the US and abroad, the global justice movement undermined trade talks set to privatize labor, environmental and human rights protections across the globe.

In the laboratory of resistance we call “social change,” the “No Nukes” movement, Earth First! and the global justice movement all had at least one strategy that set them apart from the establishment: they did their most important work out of Washington

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DC. The anti-nuclear movement didn't organize their massive rallies in Washington until they had built power on the highways and byways of the country. Likewise Earth First! and the organizers coming out of the WTO protests rejected Beltway politics as usual to build and embolden their own anti-establishment movements.

Fortunately, the rebel energy is alive and well in today's climate movement. Outside of Washington DC, grassroots activists, direct action organizers, smaller environmental, faith-based and student groups, rank and file Sierra Club members and environmental and climate justice groups have mobilized a very different climate movement from the air conditioned offices of the Beltway Greens.

Climate activists, the youth climate movement in particular, are hungry to make some real change and take real action. Just this summer, numerous actions from a mass civil disobedience in West Virginia at the Hobet Mine to a week of civil disobediences opposing the western coal exports in the Montana state capital to community-led direct

actions against fracking in New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania have created space for groups to make meaningful progress both on their issues and internally within the movement. While this work has been complimentary and cumulative, it's not always necessarily collaborative, nor should it be.

The fight over tar sands development and the Keystone XL pipeline has galvanized climate activists of all ages. Over the past year, we have witnessed people from the Lakota nation in South Dakota and from Moscow, Idaho putting their bodies in roads and highways blocking large transport trucks carrying oil refining equipment to develop further tar sands extraction.

In Texas a young marine veteran named Ben Kessler returned from the war in Afghanistan to witness oil and gas companies ravaging north and east Texas with fracking and the southern leg of the Keystone XL pipeline. He got involved in environmental and climate organizing, and with friends, formed a student environmental group at the University of North Texas. In April 2011, some of them attended Powershift in Washington

DC At the Dept. of Interior, Kessler took his first civil disobedience arrest. More importantly the group went back to Denton, Texas and transformed their group into an anchor for a grassroots direct action campaign called the Tar Sands Blockade, which joined with Texas landowners to form the Tar Sands Blockade and has organized dozens of actions and a two month old tree blockade to stop the construction of the southern leg of the Keystone XL pipeline.

People are hungry for climate action that does more than asks you to send emails to your climate denying congressperson or update your Facebook status with some clever message about fossil fuels. A new anti-establishment movement has broken with Washington's embedded elites and has energized a new generation to stand in front of the bulldozers and coal trucks and, in the words of Naomi Klein to make "one hell of a comeback." **CP**

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