DeSmogBlog

Mr. Morriss Gets Acquainted With Irish Confetti

By *Mike Casey*
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Merriam-Webster: Irish Confetti [8] - “A rock or brick used as a missile.”

We recently wrote about professional clean energy critic Andrew Morriss being schooled by Center for American Progress’s Kate Gordon [9] before a friendly crowd at the fossil industry-funded CATO Institute. Back in April, Mr. Morriss couldn’t answer Ms. Gordon’s inconvenient points about the huge government welfare checks received by the dirty energy industries that fund him while he rails against pro-clean energy policies.

Morriss, you see, is a front man for the front group, the Koch-funded Mercatus Center at George Mason University [10]; the Koch-funded Property & Environment Research Center [11] (PERC); and the ExxonMobil and Koch-funded Institute for Energy Research [12]. I’m guessing that he, like others in the cottage industry of anti-clean industry front groups, has been trying to raise more dirty energy money by showing he can put an equals sign between the Solyndra bankruptcy and broad pro-clean energy policies.

In fact, that’s the only explanation I can come up with for why Mr. Morriss would volunteer for another embarrassment. The latest one took place on the Dylan Ratigan Show [13]. Morriss once again blundered right into the core question for which people of his kind have no answer: Why small government advocates ignore $52 billion or more in taxpayer welfare to dirty energy interests – but have the time to waste blathering about how pro-clean energy policies aren’t a good use of our money.

Mr. Ratigan was having none of it, starting off the interview with a round of Irish Confetti: "…we do not have a free market for energy, because the actual cost of fossil fuel in our economy is not reflected at the pump; the military’s not in there, the environment’s not in there, and there’s a wide variety of differing fuel subsidies and tax treatments for all sorts of different fuel sources depending on their relation with our government. So, how can a marketplace decide the fuel source, when one fuel, particularly being gasoline and fossil fuels, have such a substantial comparative subsidy?"

Morriss, stumbling: "Right, right, well, you know, that's a good point, but the answer to one bad subsidy is not to have two bad subsidies…"

Ratigan (cutting off Morriss): "But I didn't say that, I didn't bring you on to indict the president. I'm with you, the president that's crazy, what they're doing is crazy, let's not waste our time on it. But let's talk about the actual problem, which is that the marketplace cannot function if the actual cost of what is in it is rigged. And in this case, we are not paying the actual cost of the fossil fuels, and as a result, no one wants to see $8 a gallon for anything, when I can get $4 a gallon and pass the military costs and all the rest of it off. I guess my question to you is, what would the marketplace do if it was faced with paying the real cost of fossil fuel at the pump?"

Morriss, again stumbling: "Well, people would use a lot less of it, and that's what we want…and so if you price them accurately, people will conserve…so, we have a mechanism to get conservation, it's worked for 100 years, we've been conserving energy in a variety of things…people conserve when prices go up, it's a simple thing it's not popular with politicians, but it's a simple way to fix the problem."

Morriss's Palin-esque wanderings only invited more, this time from co-host Sam Seder: "Hey, Andrew, I've got a question for you. If it's the case that we subsidize oil, and we've been doing carbon-based subsidies since we built the highways, since we promoted cars, since we subsidized these oil companies directly, $50 billion worth of nuclear subsidies, why write an entire book about the tiny subsidies? I mean, you can shrug off the notion of one subsidy isn't as good as the other but we have the chance to incentivize and to build an industry that will have benefits across the spectrum of society. Why are you focused on that one?"

Morriss, once again stumbling: "Well, I'm currently writing a book attacking gasoline… "Why Gasoline Costs So Much"…You're right that there is a great opportunity for innovation…and we know how to do innovation…what we don't want to do is…turn to politicized decision making, and that's what we're seeing…"

The questions kept coming, hard, fast and painful – much as the Irish Confetti Mr. Ratigan's (and my) fellow Irishmen threw in big-city riots during the 19thcentury. This treatment wasn't only just desserts, it was a proof point to a wide array of clean energy advocates that they can and should start throwing some Irish Confetti themselves.

That's because the Solyndra bankruptcy has drawn the predictable fly swarm of people on a mission to hurt one of the few parts of the economy that is actually growing and creating jobs across the country. Michele Malkin, former fossil fuel fundraiser Stephen Moore of the Wall Street Journal, Darrell Issa, Rush Limbaugh, and Inhofe acolyte Marc Morano. All of them are actively trying to and hurt solar company valuations [14], popularity and job-creating momentum [15].

From here on in, getting lucky with on-air hosts who won't let nonsense pass for answers isn't a sufficient strategy. Clean energy success will require us to demand the media press guys like Morriss to answer the hard, obvious questions about where the fat really is in government – welfare checks to mature, highly profitable fossil interests such as ExxonMobil, Chesapeake Energy and Peabody Energy.

Left to themselves, Morriss and crew will gladly hurt the industries of America's future, and make no apologies for it in the process.

If that doesn't deserve some Irish Confetti, I don't know what does.