

Al Gore can't deny that his climate crusade involves great suffering

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The more than seven billion people living in the world today need affordable, abundant energy — and a livable climate — to flourish. But the world's leading source of energy is also the leading source of increasing greenhouse gases.

What to do? This is the vital question Al Gore took on in his 2006 film *An Inconvenient Truth*, and takes on again in his newly released follow-up *An Inconvenient Sequel*.

As the most influential figure in the international climate conversation, Gore has a responsibility to give us the *whole picture* of fossil fuels' impacts — both their benefits and the risks they pose to humans flourishing. Unfortunately, Gore has given us a deeply biased picture that completely ignores fossil fuels' indispensable benefits and wildly exaggerates their impact on climate.

The running theme throughout *An Inconvenient Sequel* is that Gore's first film was even more right than he expected. The movie begins with defenders of fossil fuels mocking or ignoring the dramatic predictions of *An Inconvenient Truth*. Leaving aside a heroic (and highly disputed) portrayal of Gore rescuing the Paris climate accord, the rest of the movie focuses on vindicating Gore's two chief predictions: 1) That we could replace fossil fuels with cheap solar- and wind-powered "renewables"; and 2) that continued use of fossil fuels would lead to catastrophic temperature rises, catastrophic sea-level rises, catastrophic flooding, catastrophic drought, catastrophic storms, and catastrophic disease proliferation.

To justify these claims, Gore makes extensive uses of anecdotes: he shows us the town of Georgetown, Tex. and its use of 100-per-cent renewable energy, a deadly heat wave in India, a deadly flood in Miami, a deadly drought in Syria, a deadly storm in the Philippines, and the Zika virus penetrating the United States.

Some of his anecdotes are meant to prove that cheap solar and wind are, as 2006 Gore prophesied, quickly dominating the world's energy supply and, as 2006 Gore also warned us, that our rapidly warming climate is killing more and more people each year. But he has not given us the whole picture.

Take the rising dominance of solar and wind, which is used to paint supporters of fossil fuels as troglodytes, fools, and shills for Big Oil. The combined share of world energy consumption from

renewables is all of two per cent. And it's an expensive, unreliable, and therefore difficult-to-scale two per cent.

Because solar and wind are “unreliables,” they need to be backed up by reliable sources of power, usually fossil fuels, or sometimes non-carbon sources including nuclear and large-scale hydro power (all of which Gore and other environmentalists refuse to support). This is why every grid that incorporates significant solar and wind has more expensive electricity. Germans, on the hook for Chancellor Angela Merkel's self-righteous anti-carbon commitments, are already paying three times the rates for electricity that Americans do.

Stories about “100-per-cent renewable” locations like Georgetown, Tex. are not just anecdotal evidence, they are lies. The Texas grid from which Georgetown draws its electricity is comprised of 43.7 per cent natural gas, 28.8 per cent coal, 12 per cent nuclear, and only 15.6 per cent renewable. Using a virtue-signalling gimmick pioneered by Apple, Facebook, and Google, Georgetown pays its state utility to label its grid electricity “renewable” — even though it draws its power from that fossil-fuel heavy Texas grid — while tarring others on the grid as “non-renewable.”

If we look at the overall trends instead of engaging in anecdotal manipulation we see that fossil fuel energy is the fastest-growing energy source in the world — still. Fossil fuels have never been more vital to human flourishing. There are 1,600 coal Advances in technology are making fossil fuels cleaner, safer, and more efficient than ever. To reduce their growth let alone to radically restrict their use — which is what Gore advocates — means forcing energy poverty on billions of people.

Gore and others should be free to make the case that the danger of greenhouse gases is so serious as to warrant that scale of human misery. But they should have to quantify and justify the magnitude of climate danger. And that brings us to the truth about climate.

The overall trend in climate danger is that it is at an all-time low. The Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) shows 6,114 climate-related deaths in 2016. In other recent years the numbers have maxed out in the tens of thousands. Compare this to the 1930s when, adjusted for population, climate-related deaths hit the 10-million mark several times.

The most significant cause of our radically reduced climate danger is industrial development, which takes a naturally dangerous climate and makes it unnaturally safe. And industrial development is driven by cheap, plentiful, reliable energy — which, today, overwhelmingly means fossil fuels. Climate will always be dangerous so priority number one is to have the energy and development to tame it. Modern irrigation, residential heating and air conditioning have made once uninhabitable places perfectly comfortable.

Gore's *Inconvenient Sequel* gives a biased, self-serving, and convenient picture of fossil fuels and climate — convenient for Gore's legacy, that is, but inconvenient for the billions his energy poverty policies will harm. As citizens, we must start demanding responsible thought leaders who will give us the whole picture that life-and-death energy and climate decisions require.

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