

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Pruitt Leaves a Proud Legacy at the EPA

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July 11, 2018

Scott Pruitt wasn't chased out of the EPA because of his ethical lapses but because he was derailing the environmental left's radical effort to tighten its grip on the U.S. economy. Mr. Pruitt was implementing President Trump's executive order to scuttle Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan, which would have forced sharp cutbacks in the use of fossil fuels, at great cost to consumers and with little purpose.

Under President Obama, the EPA's bureaucrats became the shock troops of a new "green revolution"—quite different from the one that revolutionized agriculture. Mr. Trump chose Mr. Pruitt to lead the counterrevolution. Accordingly, Mr. Pruitt scotched the agency's encouragement of "sue and settle" litigation that effectively gave outside lobbyists the power to set EPA policies.

Further horror of horrors, the president pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement, ending the longstanding collaboration between the EPA and the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Governments throughout the world have already spent hundreds of billions of dollars to meet U.N. goals for reducing emissions of carbon dioxide. Last July, Danish scholar [Bjorn Lomborg](#) predicted the cost of implementing the Paris Climate Accord would hit \$2 trillion by 2030.

CO₂ is a natural component of the air we breathe and without it there would be no life on earth. The U.N.'s alarms about a CO₂ "greenhouse" causing global warming are based on dubious computer models. As the Cato Institute's [Pat Michaels](#) and [Ryan Maue](#) observed on this page last month, global surface temperature hasn't risen significantly since 2000.

The stakes are high. Government restrictions on carbon emissions have spawned a large renewable-energy industry specializing in solar panels and windmills. In places where those industries have best thrived, such as Germany and Australia, the result has been unreliable power at sharply higher cost. Germans pay roughly three times what Americans pay for electricity, according to the [International Energy Agency](#).

The idea that "renewables" are some kind of modern planet-saving technology is preposterous. Other than fire, renewables were mankind's only energy sources for eons. Primitive people built their huts with solar-fired mud bricks. The 15th-century European explorers relied on the wind to fill their sails. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" described the well-known peril of being

becalmed on the vast ocean with water everywhere, “nor any drop to drink.” Modern mariners, with ships driven by fossil-fueled turbines, seldom face that problem.

It’s hardly a new discovery that renewables don’t work when the sun doesn’t shine and the wind doesn’t blow. What is less understood is that even when governments force public utilities to buy renewables, power companies still have to use fossil fuels or uranium to keep the grid up and running when the sun and wind are off duty. So renewable power is superfluous to power companies, but its cost reduces their ability to finance baseload power plants. The result is either higher electricity bills or an unreliable grid. Consumers get punished either way.

Even the Bonneville Power Administration, a grand government hydropower complex that provides the U.S. Northwest with 28% of its electricity, has been plagued with this problem as the requirement to make way for government-subsidized wind and solar reduces its ability to utilize its system efficiently. Said a BPA statement in January: “Our power customers have expressed serious concerns that BPA’s recent pattern of rising costs and rates is unsustainable.”

Matters are even worse in some of the countries where parties of the environmentalist left have been more successful. At the behest of its Greens, Germany shut down not only coal plants but also some nuclear facilities after the meltdown at the badly designed Fukushima plant in Japan. High electricity costs were an important factor, along with the refugee influx, in Chancellor Angela Merkel’s election debacle last year.

Australia’s left used to boast that their nation had more solar panels per capita than anywhere else in the world. They said less about Australia’s household electricity costs—also among the world’s highest. When South Australia suffered blackouts in the summer of 2006, politicians began to realize something was amiss. Last October, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull scrapped plans to set new renewables targets, and his government expects to have a new, more reliable, energy plan by next month. It may include such irreligious means as renewed use of the country’s plentiful coal deposits.

Mr. Trump dumped the Paris Agreement to stop the U.S. from going the way of Germany and Australia. Mr. Obama had drunk the U.N. Kool-Aid, echoing the claim that global warming was an existential threat to the planet. His 2015 Clean Power Plan was designed to reduce CO2 emissions from the electric-power sector by 32% from 2005 levels by 2030, notably through greater dependence on wind and solar.

When Mr. Obama launched the CPP (sans congressional legislation) it drew challenges from 150 entities, including 27 states, 24 trade associations, 37 rural electrical cooperatives and three labor unions, the EPA reported. Taking those complaints seriously, the Trump administration moved to scrap the plan. This will save up to \$33 billion in compliance costs by 2030, according to a new EPA estimate.

Mr. Pruitt’s successor at the EPA, acting director Andrew Wheeler, will now take the sniper fire. But consider this: Enviro-shaman Al Gore warned in “Earth in the Balance” that the planet was in imminent peril from global warming fully 26 years ago. Yet temperature readings from weather stations and satellites today show that the earth’s sundry climates are pretty much what they were then. Hyderabad still gets very hot in summer, as it has for centuries, and Yakutsk gets very cold in winter, ditto. San Francisco is pretty nice year-round, except for the fog and the politics.