OMNI

FOSSIL FUELS INDUSTRY NEWSLETTER #3,
January 4, 2015.

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2015/01/oil-fossil-fuels-newsletter-3.html

Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, Justice, and ENVIRONMENTAL CARE. (#1 August 5, 2012; #2 March 15, 2013).

What’s at stake: creating the political will for a livable world.

My blog: War Department/Peace Department
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

My Newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

Nos. 1-2 below

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The OMNI Climate Change Book Forum (2006-) presents Lolly Tindol’s lecture on the book *State of the World 2014: Governing for Sustainability.* This is an especially important, comprehensive book, whose 22 chapters explore most major aspects of the roles of government or governance in coping with the consequences of climate change already affecting our planet and its inhabitants significantly. Lolly has created an extensive power-point presentation. Last month she presented a lecture on *State of the World 2013:*

Sunday, January 4

Fayetteville Public Library, Walker Auditorium, 1:30


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The Worldwatch Institute, State of the World 2014: Governing for Sustainability

Citizens expect their governments to lead on sustainability. But from largely disappointing international conferences like Rio II to the U.S.'s failure to pass meaningful climate legislation, governments' progress has been lackluster. That's not to say leadership is absent; it just often comes from the bottom up rather than the top down. Action—on climate, species loss, inequity, and other sustainability crises—is being driven by local, people’s, women’s, and grassroots movements around the world, often in opposition to the agendas pursued by governments and big corporations.

These diverse efforts are the subject of the latest volume in the Worldwatch Institute’s highly regarded State of the World series. The 2014 edition, marking the Institute's 40th anniversary, examines both barriers to responsible political and economic governance as well as gridlock-shattering new ideas. The authors analyze a variety of trends and proposals, including regional and local climate initiatives, the rise of benefit corporations and worker-owned firms, the need for energy democracy, the Internet's impact on sustainability, and the importance of eco-literacy. A consistent thread throughout the book is that informed and engaged citizens are key to better governance.

The book is a clear-eyed yet ultimately optimistic assessment of citizens' ability to govern for sustainability. By highlighting both obstacles and opportunities, State of the World 2014 shows how to effect change within and beyond the halls of government. This volume will be especially useful for policymakers, environmental nonprofits, students of environmental studies, sustainability, or economics—and citizens looking to jumpstart significant change around the world.

About State of the World

Worldwatch's flagship publication, State of the World, has educated a broad audience of students, journalists, policymakers, and concerned citizens about trends in sustainable development for a quarter century. The book has been published in 36 languages, and over the years it has authoritatively assessed issues ranging from population, energy, and agriculture to materials use, health, and trade policy. Topics are covered from a global perspective, with an emphasis on innovation and problem-solving. State of the World is recognized as a classic of environmental literature, having attracted luminaries from Kofi Annan to Mikhail Gorbachev to write forewords for the book. News media, policymakers, and NGOs worldwide cite the book for its cutting-edge analysis, reliability, and careful documentation of its arguments, all marshaled to speed the global transition to a sustainable world.

At last month’s Forum Lolly lectured on the State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?
We cannot expect even two such encyclopedic anthologies to cover every important topic in a subject so encompassing. But the editors were napping when they omitted essays on US imperialism, militarism, and unnecessary wars (egregious waste of money needed for the climate change emergency), on over-population (a major source of CO2 and consumption of resources), and on the New Deal and its extension into the 1970s (affirmative government in action). --Dick

**ANALYSIS**

*OIL: Root Cause of Endless War, Distinct Threat to Humanity*

*The need for oil has been and continues to be responsible for the destruction of nature and man. Are we so tunnel visioned? When will we stop and look at the destruction and do something about it?*

*Published: November 16, 2014 | Author: Michael Payne | NationofChange | Op-Ed*


**The Secret World of Oil**


A riveting, immersive investigative exposé of the corrupt and violent side of the globe's key industry

The oil industry provides the lifeblood of modern civilization, and bestselling books have been written about the industry and even individual companies in it, like ExxonMobil. But the modern oil industry is an amazingly shady meeting ground of fixers, gangsters, dictators, competing governments and multinational corporations, and until now, no book has set out to tell the story of this largely hidden world.

The global fleet of some 11,000 tankers—that’s tripled during the past decade—moves approximately 2 billion metric tons of oil annually. And every stage of the route, from discovery to consumption, is tainted by corruption and violence, even if little of that is visible to the
public.

*The Secret World of Oil* includes up-close portraits of the figures behind the scenes of the oil industry. Supported by funding from the prestigious Open Society, this is both an entertaining global travelogue and a major work of investigative reporting.

**Hardback, 240 pages**

- **Where to buy >**

**Reviews**

- "Ken Silverstein’s sharp investigative reporting has again dragged a cast of shady operators into the public eye with his must-read book, *The Secret World of Oil*. Oil is the cause of so much pain in the world. As the fossil fuel industry tightens its grip on our warming planet, *The Secret World of Oil* names names, and exposes the brokers, lobbyists, and fixers who profit from the misery of millions and the accelerating pollution of the planet."

  – Amy Goodman, host & executive producer, *Democracy Now!*

- “Ken Silverstein is one of the best investigative journalists of his generation—or any generation. His latest book, *The Secret World of Oil*, is a masterpiece of revelation. With a deft combination of detail and color, Silverstein exposes the darkest shade of crude: the fixers and middlemen who arrange the deals that provide us with the oil we need to keep our cars running and our homes warm. As Silverstein shows, these deals enrich the kleptocrats of our world and make life worse, rather than better, for their unfortunate subjects. It is a shameful and captivating tale about a pipeline of corruption that we must fix."

  – Peter Maass, author of *Crude World: The Violent Twilight of Oil*

- “Much has been written about the oil industry, but Ken Silverstein provides an entirely new window into this vitally important universe. For the first time, we encounter the fixers, flacks, and traders behind the secretive deals that drive the industry and enrich its leading operators. After reading this book, you will never think about oil in the same way again.”

  – Michael Klare, author of *The Race for What’s Left: The Global Scramble for the World’s Last Resources*

- “Silverstein writes with keen reportorial objectivity but also understandable skepticism about...the frighteningly tyrannical hold that oil has on the free (and not-so-free) world. The book’s revelations make Wall Street corruption seem tame by comparison.”

  – *Kirkus Reviews*

  The Guardian *Winner of the Pulitzer prize*

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**To Save the Planet, We Need to Leave Fossil Fuels in the Ground**

—but Oil Companies Have Other Plans. They say no to any “stranded assets.”
A growing and powerful Greek chorus—composed of activists, environmentalists, billionaires, former Goldman Sachs partners, former Goldman Sachs partners who are also former Treasury secretaries, and a former vice president of the United States—has been sounding an urgent message to the world: Big Oil companies cannot, and must not, sell the vast fossil-fuel reserves they have spent billions of dollars finding, digging up and refining. These voices warn that if ExxonMobil, Chevron and Shell are allowed to burn all their carbon, the planet’s temperature will rise beyond the 2-degrees-Celsius threshold that, a consensus of scientists holds, is the tipping point to environmental Armageddon. In economic terms, this means we can have either a safe planet or an ExxonMobil worth hundreds of billions of dollars, but we can’t have both. Nothing less than Earth’s future is at stake.

In June, that chorus seemed to find an important ally: President Obama. In an interview on Showtime’s Years of Living Dangerously, Obama told New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman that Big Oil must leave two-thirds of its fossil fuel in the ground. “We’re not going to be able to burn it all,” Obama said.

There’s just one problem: Big Oil doesn’t agree. On the contrary, Big Oil wants to burn all of the fossil fuel it has found, and then some. It doesn’t want anyone telling it what it can and cannot do. Indeed, there is increasingly a sense that the latest efforts of the environmentalists—including the worldwide People’s Climate March in September—are desperate ones, reflecting political impotence in the face of an intransigent Congress. “The climate movement is choosing these narratives not because they are objectively the best way to describe the problem,” said Steve Coll, the author of Private Empire, the definitive book on the history of ExxonMobil. “It’s because they are the best way to describe the problem in the absence of comprehensive legislation to actually fix the problem, which they can’t achieve in the United States.”

That political reality just got a whole lot worse, too, in the wake of the midterm elections, when lawmakers deep inside Big Oil’s pockets swept further into power. Caught in a moment of seeming ennui a few days later, Bill McKibben, the Middlebury College professor and 350.org leader, was at something of a loss to describe exactly how the movement presses on from here. “My guess is [the election] means we need to really push outside the formal political system, so things like divestment become even more critical,” he wrote in an e-mail. “That said, we’re already working as hard on it as we know how to.” On December 2, McKibben resigned as the chair of 350.org. His
interim successor, K.C. Golden, reached by phone, acknowledged there is “a yawning
gap” between what is morally and ethically the right thing to do on the environment and
“what the political system is able to deliver.” Nevertheless, he argues that “a lot of
things are moving in the right direction.” Divestiture, he says, is one of them: “It’s one
step at a time. Divestment gives every person, every institution, every pension fund the
opportunity to take control and do something positive.”

* * *

Big oil companies have made no secret of their belief that they can have it all: both a
huge market valuation and a planet that suffers no catastrophic effects from climate
change. For the record, ExxonMobil is the world’s second-most-valuable company
(trailing distantly behind Apple), and its AAA-rated bonds are yielding only slightly more
than similar-duration Treasury securities, suggesting that creditors are not the slightest
bit worried about a default or a write-down of the value of the so-called stranded assets
—oil and gas that ExxonMobil has found but that environmentalists hope will never be
sold. “They’re some of the biggest political players on Earth, and they have enormous
clout,” McKibben said of Big Oil. “So they will use that clout to try and ensure that
they’re allowed to burn everything they’ve got, and there’s all this stuff they continue to
look for every day.”

* * *

In truth, Big Oil seems more or less indifferent to the political and media commotion. It’s
as if Big Oil is from Mars and the scientists, environmentalists and enlightened
politicians are from Venus. ExxonMobil is busy spending $40 billion this year searching
in the remotest parts of the globe—Banyu Urip, anyone?—for new sources of fossil
fuel. And it continues to rake in the dough: in 2014, ExxonMobil is expected to generate
EBITDA (Wall Street jargon for the amount of cash a company generates annually) of
around $80 billion, enjoying a whopping 19 percent profit margin (based on a
consensus revenue estimate of around $430 billion) and an astounding annualized
return on equity of nearly 20 percent. In other words, Big Oil remains incredibly
profitable. For Big Oil, it’s simply business as usual. In late September, Rosneft, the
Russian oil giant, announced that its joint venture with ExxonMobil in the Arctic has
discovered a major cache of oil and gas.

* * *

Like Lee Raymond, his hard-charging predecessor, ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson has
become the embodiment of Big Oil. Tillerson grew up in rural Texas and Oklahoma. He
is a proud Eagle Scout, and Ayn Rand’s Atlas Shrugged is his favorite book. After
receiving his civil-engineering degree from the University of Texas, Tillerson joined
Exxon and never left. In 2006, at 53, he became CEO. According to Private Empire, he
brought to the top job a more nuanced view of climate change. Whereas Raymond was
essentially a climate-change denier, Tillerson has been willing to throw Exxon’s
considerable financial resources into studying the issue, lobbying Congress and trying
to communicate more diplomatically. “But the essential convictions and the business
model haven't changed," Coll said. In fact, Tillerson has made few concessions on the subject of climate change.

- Tillerson rarely grants one-on-one interviews with journalists—he declined my repeated requests—but occasionally he will appear in a comfortable forum. One such moment occurred in June 2012 at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in Manhattan. Tillerson came ostensibly to trumpet that, thanks to the newly rediscovered wonders of hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” the country was awash in natural gas, of which ExxonMobil was the largest domestic producer (owing to the $35 billion acquisition of XTO Energy that Tillerson engineered in 2010). This was before the world had been clued in fully that the United States was on the verge, as Tillerson described it, of “energy security.” It was, he said, “nothing short of extraordinary.” (In October, the United States passed Saudi Arabia as the world’s largest producer of liquid petroleum, and that new dynamic has sent OPEC into some unexpected turmoil.)

- Tillerson then addressed his critics. “Ours is an industry that is built on technology, it’s built on science, it’s built on engineering, and because we have a society that by and large is illiterate in these areas—science, math and engineering—what we do is a mystery to them, and they find it scary,” he said. “And because of that, it creates easy opportunities for opponents of development—activist organizations—to manufacture fear. And so as these technologies emerge, we know the immediate response from certain...interested parties out there is going to be to manufacture fear, because that’s how you slow this down. And nowhere is it more effective than in the United States.”

- During the question period, David Fenton, the founder of the public relations firm Fenton Communications, asked Tillerson about the effects of burning fossil fuels on the environment. “The seas will rise, the coastlines will be unstable for generations, the price of food will go crazy,” Fenton said. “This is what we face, and we all know it…. [If] we burn all these reserves that you talked about, you can kiss future generations goodbye.”

- Tillerson was unimpressed. He said the scientific models that spit out such conclusions were flawed, so the ability to predict “with any accuracy” the impact of carbon emissions on the climate “is really pretty limited.” He did concede that continuing to burn carbon would “have a warming impact” on the planet, but he didn’t believe anyone could say how much. Then he added something extraordinary: the solution to the unknown impact of climate change was merely one of “adapting” to new circumstances. “As human beings...we have spent our entire existence adapting, OK? So we will adapt to this,” he said. “It’s an engineering problem, and it has engineering solutions. The fear factor that people want to throw out there, to say ‘We just have to stop this,’ I do not accept.”

- Six months after Tillerson spoke at the CFR, John Watson, the chairman and CEO of Chevron, showed up there, too. Much of the East Coast was still reeling from the near-catastrophic consequences of Hurricane Sandy, the size and scope of which many
environmentalists blamed on climate change. Indeed, a new World Meteorological Organization report found that in the 2000s, there were nearly 3,500 natural disasters from floods, storms, droughts and extreme temperatures—almost five times the number of such disasters reported in the 1970s. Watson echoed Tillerson’s observation that the United States was increasingly energy-secure and called it a “once-in-a-generation opportunity.”

Watson said the “best estimates” for the next “twenty or thirty years” were that “we’re still going to be deriving 70 percent to 80 percent of our energy from fossil fuels,” despite the remarkable progress made in the use of renewables. Was there nothing that could be done? moderator Alan Murray wondered. “There’s nothing you can do about it if you want light, heat, mobility and affordable energy,” Watson replied.

Fenton was in the audience that day, too. Again he asked what a Big Oil CEO intended to do to slow the warming of the planet. Like Tillerson, Watson was unmoved. “We have a long way to go before we can replace the current forms of energy that we have today with affordable versions that are less carbon-intensive,” Watson said.

If there was any remaining doubt that Big Oil cannot be shamed into reducing the hunt for, and burning of, fossil fuels, it was pretty much erased with the recent release—courtesy of The New York Times—of a transcript made of a private speech given by Richard Berman, an influential political consultant, to the Western Energy Alliance’s annual meeting this past June in Colorado Springs. Berman, the founder and CEO of the Washington-based Berman and Co., was hoping Big Oil would help fund a $3 million public-relations campaign against what he called “Big Green Radicals.” The subject of his presentation was “Big Green Radicals: Exposing Environmental Groups.”

In his talk, Berman described the fight against environmentalists as “an endless war” that could only be won by appealing to people’s emotions—fear, love, anger, greed and sympathy—rather than to their rational thought. (“FLAGS” is Berman’s self-styled acronym for this strategy.) “Fear and anger have to be part of this campaign,” he told his audience. “If you want to win, that’s what we’re going to do. We’re not going to get people to like the oil and gas industry over the next few months…. What you got to do is get people fearful of what is on the table, and then you got to get people angry over the fact that they are being misled. No one likes being lied to. No one likes being told, ‘Oh, this won’t hurt.’ And so that is central to the messaging campaign going forward.” Berman said that green groups are well funded and are not going away anytime soon. “They are in the business to change laws,” he continued. “And you change laws by changing people’s behavior. You change laws by changing people’s attitudes, which in turn is followed by legislators changing their opinion. So think of it as an endless war. And you have to budget for it.”

Environmentalists are waging their side of this war with vastly fewer resources than Big Oil commands, but with an increasingly diverse arsenal of tactics. As Berman implicitly
concedes, climate campaigners have had some impact on public awareness, even though that has not translated yet into political gains. And for activists like Marcie Smith of the Responsible Endowments Coalition, divestment is more about turning fossil-fuel companies into social pariahs than it is about depressing their stock price. “It’s about sending a political signal that the fossil-fuel industry’s environmentally destructive and politically corrupt business practices are no longer tolerated,” she said.

Taking on Big Oil also requires venturing onto its economic terrain. One environmentalist who has done so is Mark Campanale, a former money manager and the founder of the Carbon Tracker Initiative, a London-based nonprofit. To get Big Oil to ‘fess up about the magnitude of its “stranded assets,” Campanale has encouraged activist investors to put resolutions on shareholder ballots during the spring corporate proxy season. It’s a clever tactic born of Campanale’s finance background. But like the “stranded assets” argument generally, it has met with only modest success.

In October 2013, with Campanale’s help, Ceres, a nonprofit environmental and shareholder activist organization, corralled seventy institutional investors with some $3 trillion of assets under management to demand that Big Oil come clean about the fossil-fuel assets that it might never be able to turn into cash. “We would like to understand ExxonMobil’s reserve exposure to the risks associated with current and probable future policies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050,” the investors wrote to Tillerson. The activists wanted a resolution in ExxonMobil’s May 2014 proxy requiring the company to prepare a report, by September 2014, to address the “stranded assets” dilemma.

That’s the last thing Tillerson wanted, of course. And thus began an arduous negotiation. On March 20, the two sides announced a compromise: ExxonMobil would release its first-ever public assessment of the risks to its balance sheet of the “stranded assets,” and the activists would withdraw their resolution. The environmentalists crowed. “I think Exxon coming to the table…was incredibly important because, just a few short years ago, Exxon had been a climate denier,” explained Danielle Fugere, the president and chief counsel of As You Sow, an environmental activist organization.

But it seemed like a Pyrrhic victory, at best. Some would say that Tillerson snookered them. ExxonMobil’s thirty-page report was nothing more than a defense of the status quo and a rehash of much of what Tillerson had said two years earlier at the CFR. The company did not believe it was sitting on any stranded “hydrocarbon reserves,” nor did it believe any would become stranded. On the contrary, Tillerson argued, burning as much fossil fuel as possible was the key to lifting billions of people out of economic hardship and helping them achieve a better life.

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To accompany this narrative, the report had two sets of photos: one contrasted a man plowing a field using yoked oxen with a farmer driving a big industrial tractor; the other contrasted a bent-over woman, dressed in primitive garb and feeding sticks into a
wood fire outside her mud hut, with an Asian woman and her daughter heating a meal in stainless-steel pots on a stove in a spotless kitchen.

- ExxonMobil did acknowledge that there was “always the possibility that government action”—in the form of a carbon tax, a “cap and trade” regulation or a “carbon capture” plan where carbon emissions are buried underground—“may impact the company,” but it dismissed as “highly unlikely” any chance of new laws or regulations that would prevent its proven reserves from being burned. That kind of reform seems even less likely to happen in the 114th Congress, which begins in January. The company cited its own studies as finding that the “world will require all the carbon-based energy that ExxonMobil plans to produce”—35 percent more in 2040 than in 2010—and that it did not “anticipate society being able to supplant traditional carbon-based forms of energy with other energy forms, such as renewables, to the extent needed to meet this carbon budget.”

- ExxonMobil is not alone in this view. Also in response to activist pressure, Royal Dutch Shell on May 16 produced a twenty-page letter that managed the intellectual jujitsu of seeming to acknowledge the climate conundrum while making it clear that Shell—like Exxon—would have no stranded assets, adding: “There is a risk that focusing on ‘stranded assets’ or the concept of the ‘carbon bubble’ distracts attention away from the reality of a growing population, increasing prosperity and growing energy demand.” The message from Big Oil seemed to be, in the words of environmental writer Mark Hertsgaard, “You don’t think we’re going to burn this? Just watch us.”

- Even though it sure seemed that ExxonMobil had extended a large middle finger to the environmental activists, they did not necessarily see it. “This is a behemoth corporation and, at the very least, they’ve acknowledged the issue of climate-change risk,” said Natasha Lamb at Arjuna Capital. “In my estimation, ExxonMobil was not giving us the finger. It was giving global government the finger [by] saying, ‘You’re not going to do anything about this risk, so we can sit pat.’” Fugere, at As You Sow, said she found the proxy exercise illuminating, if only to prove definitively that ExxonMobil will not be swayed. “They believe that the demand for fossil fuel will increase; that’s an incredibly important perspective,” she said. “They are creating a fiction.” Undaunted, Lamb and Fugere proposed a new resolution for ExxonMobil’s 2015 proxy: that the company commit to increasing the amount of capital it returns to shareholders through stock buybacks and dividends, instead of spending the money on increasingly costly fossil-fuel exploration.

- Of course, divestiture is the easiest step for an investor if he or she no longer believes a stock will make money; just sell the stock and be done. McKibben and former vice president Al Gore have been leading advocates of large endowments and pension funds divesting themselves of Big Oil stocks. In September, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund—built, in part, on the wealth of the heirs of John D. Rockefeller, the founder of what has become ExxonMobil—said it would begin immediately divesting the stocks it
owns in coal and tar-sands companies and then, eventually, in all fossil-fuel companies. “The divestment movement will continue to grow very, very quickly,” McKibben said, “and I think as it does, it’ll be one of the several things that’s putting pressure on the political system to shift.” He is particularly heartened by the University of Dayton’s June announcement that it would eliminate fossil-fuel stocks from its $670 million endowment. “It’s a good indication, I think, of which way the world is going,” he said. In Stockholm to accept an award on December 1, McKibben asked the city to sell its fossil-fuel stocks.

But there are big hurdles for the divestiture movement. For starters, at a price equal to just less than five times its estimated 2014 EBITDA of $80 billion, ExxonMobil’s stock is cheap, making it attractive to institutional investors, particularly in an overheated market. Google, by contrast, trades at around fourteen times its estimated 2014 EBITDA. None of the twenty-four research analysts who cover ExxonMobil have “sell” recommendations on its stock—about par for the course on Wall Street, where the big banks depend on corporations for fees and are loath to urge investors to dump their securities, especially when they appear to be cheap. And this is despite a 40 percent drop since June in the market price of a barrel of crude oil.

At ExxonMobil’s annual research analysts’ meeting, held in March at the New York Stock Exchange, there was not a single mention of the words “stranded assets” or “carbon bubble.” One questioner noted that many of the company’s new capital expenditures seem to be for projects that are getting harder to do. But Tillerson swatted away this concern deftly.

Still, the activists remain hopeful their divestiture message is gaining traction. McKibben and others point to Stanford University’s decision in May to sell off the coal stocks in its $18 billion endowment. But, in truth, this was a minor concession on Stanford’s part, amounting to a couple of million dollars. (Stanford made no mention of divesting oil and gas stocks, or of ExxonMobil’s 2002 pledge of $100 million—out of a projected $225 million budget—to create the Global Climate and Energy Project at the university.) And the mighty Harvard, with an endowment of $36 billion, won’t even go that far. In a statement issued in October 2013, Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust said she preferred “engagement” with the Big Oil companies to divestment. “We should think about how we might use our voice not to ostracize such companies but to encourage them to be a positive force both in meeting society’s long-term energy needs while addressing pressing environmental imperatives,” she wrote, in delicious corporate-speak.

Campanale, at Carbon Tracker, said he understands the dilemma supposedly faced by large institutional investors, which insist that divestiture, for them, is not as simple as just selling stock. So-called passive fund managers feel constrained to buy fossil-fuel stocks because these companies are a big part of the world economy, and it can be unwise, professionally, to leave them out of a portfolio. “If you do, you’ll ultimately lose
your investors’ money, so it’s better just to run with the herd,” he said of their thinking. But while Campanale is sympathetic to these concerns, he remains unbowed: “It’s irrational to invest in more fossil fuels, knowing that we’ve got enough already invested to burn the planet.”

* * *

After the November 2014 election, Ceres, the environmental group that works with Carbon Tracker, lamented that while GOP control of Congress “will certainly have consequences,” the more important development from the group’s perspective was the release of a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that demanded “substantial emissions reductions over the next few decades and near zero emissions of CO2 and other long-lived [greenhouse gases] by the end of the century” and urged a complete phasing out of fossil fuels in favor of “clean energy.” Ceres sees a huge opportunity for investors. “The inevitable and necessary shift...will unleash innovation and create multitrillion-dollar investment opportunities,” wrote Christopher Fox, director of special projects, in a recent blog post. “At the same time, this essential shift will create risks for any current and future investments in fossil fuels.”

There’s no denying anymore that we have been thoroughly warned about the dangers of continuing to burn fossil fuels. The problem is that it’s increasingly hard to believe that Big Oil won’t get its way. “The Exxons of the world have all the money,” McKibben allows. “But that doesn’t mean I don’t think we’re going to win.” He worries that we’re running out of time, though, and points to the “massive and irrevocable” melting of the West Antarctic ice sheet. “That’s Exxon’s gift so far to the planet,” he says. “I don’t know whether we can stop them in time or not, but we’re definitely putting a dent in everyone’s understanding of the future.”

Mark Hertsgaard believes that winning this fight requires raw political power. Every one of the successful social movements in this country started with political protest. Mere resolutions on corporate proxy statements are insufficient. “It’s not like we don’t have enough policy proposals,” he concludes. “It’s not like we don’t have enough legal advocates or inside players in Washington, DC. That is not the problem. The problem is that there is no political power behind that, and in order to get the government to make Exxon leave that stuff in the ground, to really leave two-thirds in the ground—that’s going to take political power and not a bunch of shiny reports.”

Read Next: Dan Zegart has an idea. “Want to Stop Climate Change? Take the Fossil Fuel Industry to Court.”

William D. Cohan

December 10, 2014
The Great Invisible review: an eloquent return to Deepwater Horizon

4/5 stars

Though at its heart a work of advocacy, this documentary about the aftermath of BP’s disastrous oil spill is nuanced and cinematic.

A hydraulic fracturing operation near Mead, Colorado (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

A growing and powerful Greek chorus—composed of activists, environmentalists, billionaires, former Goldman Sachs partners, former Goldman Sachs partners who are also former Treasury secretaries, and a former vice president of the United States—has been sounding an urgent message to the world: Big Oil companies cannot, and must not, sell the vast fossil-fuel reserves they have spent billions of dollars finding, digging up and refining. These voices warn that if ExxonMobil, Chevron and Shell are allowed to burn all their carbon, the planet’s temperature will rise beyond the 2-degrees-Celsius threshold that, a consensus of scientists holds, is the tipping point to environmental Armageddon. In economic terms, this means we can have either a safe planet or an ExxonMobil worth hundreds of billions of dollars, but we can’t have both. Nothing less than Earth’s future is at stake.

In June, that chorus seemed to find an important ally: President Obama. In an interview on Showtime’s Years of Living Dangerously, Obama told New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman that Big Oil must leave two-thirds of its fossil fuel in the ground. “We’re not going to be able to burn it all,” Obama said.

There’s just one problem: Big Oil doesn’t agree. On the contrary, Big Oil wants to burn all of the fossil fuel it has found, and then some. It doesn’t want anyone telling it what it can and cannot do. Indeed, there is increasingly a sense that the latest efforts of the environmentalists—including the worldwide People’s Climate March in September—are desperate ones, reflecting political impotence in the face of an intransigent Congress. “The climate movement is choosing these narratives not because they are objectively the best way to describe the problem,” said Steve Coll, the author of Private Empire, the definitive book on the history of ExxonMobil. “It’s because they are the best way to describe the problem in the absence of comprehensive legislation to actually fix the problem, which they can’t achieve in the United States.”
That political reality just got a whole lot worse, too, in the wake of the midterm elections, when lawmakers deep inside Big Oil’s pockets swept further into power. Caught in a moment of seeming ennui a few days later, Bill McKibben, the Middlebury College professor and 350.org leader, was at something of a loss to describe exactly how the movement presses on from here. “My guess is [the election] means we need to really push outside the formal political system, so things like divestment become even more critical,” he wrote in an e-mail. “That said, we’re already working as hard on it as we know how to.” On December 2, McKibben resigned as the chair of 350.org. His interim successor, K.C. Golden, reached by phone, acknowledged there is “a yawning gap” between what is morally and ethically the right thing to do on the environment and “what the political system is able to deliver.” Nevertheless, he argues that “a lot of things are moving in the right direction.” Divestiture, he says, is one of them: “It’s one step at a time. Divestment gives every person, every institution, every pension fund the opportunity to take control and do something positive.”

* * *

Big oil companies have made no secret of their belief that they can have it all: both a huge market valuation and a planet that suffers no catastrophic effects from climate change. For the record, ExxonMobil is the world’s second-most-valuable company (trailing distantly behind Apple), and its AAA-rated bonds are yielding only slightly more than similar-duration Treasury securities, suggesting that creditors are not the slightest bit worried about a default or a write-down of the value of the so-called stranded assets—oil and gas that ExxonMobil has found but that environmentalists hope will never be sold. “They’re some of the biggest political players on Earth, and they have enormous clout,” McKibben said of Big Oil. “So they will use that clout to try and ensure that they’re allowed to burn everything they’ve got, and there’s all this stuff they continue to look for every day.”

In truth, Big Oil seems more or less indifferent to the political and media commotion. It’s as if Big Oil is from Mars and the scientists, environmentalists and enlightened politicians are from Venus. ExxonMobil is busy spending $40 billion this year searching in the remotest parts of the globe—Banyu Urip, anyone?—for new sources of fossil fuel. And it continues to rake in the dough: in 2014, ExxonMobil is expected to generate EBITDA (Wall Street jargon for the amount of cash a company generates annually) of around $80 billion, enjoying a whopping 19 percent profit margin (based on a consensus revenue estimate of around $430 billion) and an astounding annualized return on equity of nearly 20 percent. In other words, Big Oil remains incredibly profitable. For Big Oil, it’s simply business as usual. In late September, Rosneft, the Russian oil giant, announced that its joint venture with ExxonMobil in the Arctic has discovered a major cache of oil and gas.

* * *
Like Lee Raymond, his hard-charging predecessor, ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson has become the embodiment of Big Oil. Tillerson grew up in rural Texas and Oklahoma. He is a proud Eagle Scout, and Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged* is his favorite book. After receiving his civil-engineering degree from the University of Texas, Tillerson joined Exxon and never left. In 2006, at 53, he became CEO. According to *Private Empire*, he brought to the top job a more nuanced view of climate change. Whereas Raymond was essentially a climate-change denier, Tillerson has been willing to throw Exxon’s considerable financial resources into studying the issue, lobbying Congress and trying to communicate more diplomatically. “But the essential convictions and the business model haven’t changed,” Coll said. In fact, Tillerson has made few concessions on the subject of climate change.

Tillerson rarely grants one-on-one interviews with journalists—he declined my repeated requests—but occasionally he will appear in a comfortable forum. One such moment occurred in June 2012 at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in Manhattan. Tillerson came ostensibly to trumpet that, thanks to the newly rediscovered wonders of hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” the country was awash in natural gas, of which ExxonMobil was the largest domestic producer (owing to the $35 billion acquisition of XTO Energy that Tillerson engineered in 2010). This was before the world had been clued in fully that the United States was on the verge, as Tillerson described it, of “energy security.” It was, he said, “nothing short of extraordinary.” (In October, the United States passed Saudi Arabia as the world’s largest producer of liquid petroleum, and that new dynamic has sent OPEC into some unexpected turmoil.)

Tillerson then addressed his critics. “Ours is an industry that is built on technology, it’s built on science, it’s built on engineering, and because we have a society that by and large is illiterate in these areas—science, math and engineering—what we do is a mystery to them, and they find it scary,” he said. “And because of that, it creates easy opportunities for opponents of development—activist organizations—to manufacture fear. And so as these technologies emerge, we know the immediate response from certain…interested parties out there is going to be to manufacture fear, because that’s how you slow this down. And nowhere is it more effective than in the United States.”

During the question period, David Fenton, the founder of the public relations firm Fenton Communications, asked Tillerson about the effects of burning fossil fuels on the environment. “The seas will rise, the coastlines will be unstable for generations, the price of food will go crazy,” Fenton said. “This is what we face, and we all know it…. [If] we burn all these reserves that you talked about, you can kiss future generations goodbye.”

Tillerson was unimpressed. He said the scientific models that spit out such conclusions were flawed, so the ability to predict “with any accuracy” the impact of carbon emissions on the climate
“is really pretty limited.” He did concede that continuing to burn carbon would “have a warming impact” on the planet, but he didn’t believe anyone could say how much. Then he added something extraordinary: the solution to the unknown impact of climate change was merely one of “adapting” to new circumstances. “As human beings…we have spent our entire existence adapting, OK? So we will adapt to this,” he said. “It’s an engineering problem, and it has engineering solutions. The fear factor that people want to throw out there, to say ‘We just have to stop this,’ I do not accept.”

Six months after Tillerson spoke at the CFR, John Watson, the chairman and CEO of Chevron, showed up there, too. Much of the East Coast was still reeling from the near-catastrophic consequences of Hurricane Sandy, the size and scope of which many environmentalists blamed on climate change. Indeed, a new World Meteorological Organization report found that in the 2000s, there were nearly 3,500 natural disasters from floods, storms, droughts and extreme temperatures—almost five times the number of such disasters reported in the 1970s. Watson echoed Tillerson’s observation that the United States was increasingly energy-secure and called it a “once-in-a-generation opportunity.”

Watson said the “best estimates” for the next “twenty or thirty years” were that “we’re still going to be deriving 70 percent to 80 percent of our energy from fossil fuels,” despite the remarkable progress made in the use of renewables. Was there nothing that could be done? moderator Alan Murray wondered. “There’s nothing you can do about it if you want light, heat, mobility and affordable energy,” Watson replied.

Fenton was in the audience that day, too. Again he asked what a Big Oil CEO intended to do to slow the warming of the planet. Like Tillerson, Watson was unmoved. “We have a long way to go before we can replace the current forms of energy that we have today with affordable versions that are less carbon-intensive,” Watson said.

* * *

If there was any remaining doubt that Big Oil cannot be shamed into reducing the hunt for, and burning of, fossil fuels, it was pretty much erased with the recent release—courtesy of *The New York Times*—of a transcript made of a private speech given by Richard Berman, an influential political consultant, to the Western Energy Alliance’s annual meeting this past June in Colorado Springs. Berman, the founder and CEO of the Washington-based Berman and Co., was hoping Big Oil would help fund a $3 million public-relations campaign against what he called “Big Green Radicals.” The subject of his presentation was “Big Green Radicals: Exposing Environmental Groups.”
In his talk, Berman described the fight against environmentalists as “an endless war” that could only be won by appealing to people’s emotions—fear, love, anger, greed and sympathy—rather than to their rational thought. (“FLAGS” is Berman’s self-styled acronym for this strategy.) “Fear and anger have to be part of this campaign,” he told his audience. “If you want to win, that’s what we’re going to do. We’re not going to get people to like the oil and gas industry over the next few months…. What you got to do is get people fearful of what is on the table, and then you got to get people angry over the fact that they are being misled. No one likes being lied to. No one likes being told, ‘Oh, this won’t hurt.’ And so that is central to the messaging campaign going forward.” Berman said that green groups are well funded and are not going away anytime soon. “They are in the business to change laws,” he continued. “And you change laws by changing people’s behavior. You change laws by changing people’s attitudes, which in turn is followed by legislators changing their opinion. So think of it as an endless war. And you have to budget for it.”

Environmentalists are waging their side of this war with vastly fewer resources than Big Oil commands, but with an increasingly diverse arsenal of tactics. As Berman implicitly concedes, climate campaigners have had some impact on public awareness, even though that has not translated yet into political gains. And for activists like Marcie Smith of the Responsible Endowments Coalition, divestment is more about turning fossil-fuel companies into social pariahs than it is about depressing their stock price. “It’s about sending a political signal that the fossil-fuel industry’s environmentally destructive and politically corrupt business practices are no longer tolerated,” she said.

Taking on Big Oil also requires venturing onto its economic terrain. One environmentalist who has done so is Mark Campanale, a former money manager and the founder of the Carbon Tracker Initiative, a London-based nonprofit. To get Big Oil to ‘fess up about the magnitude of its “stranded assets,” Campanale has encouraged activist investors to put resolutions on shareholder ballots during the spring corporate proxy season. It’s a clever tactic born of Campanale’s finance background. But like the “stranded assets” argument generally, it has met with only modest success.

In October 2013, with Campanale’s help, Ceres, a nonprofit environmental and shareholder activist organization, corralled seventy institutional investors with some $3 trillion of assets under management to demand that Big Oil come clean about the fossil-fuel assets that it might never be able to turn into cash. “We would like to understand ExxonMobil’s reserve exposure to the risks associated with current and probable future policies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050,” the investors wrote to Tillerson. The activists wanted a resolution in ExxonMobil’s May 2014 proxy requiring the company to prepare a report, by September 2014, to address the “stranded assets” dilemma.
That's the last thing Tillerson wanted, of course. And thus began an arduous negotiation. On March 20, the two sides announced a compromise: ExxonMobil would release its first-ever public assessment of the risks to its balance sheet of the “stranded assets,” and the activists would withdraw their resolution. The environmentalists crowed. “I think Exxon coming to the table…was incredibly important because, just a few short years ago, Exxon had been a climate denier,” explained Danielle Fugere, the president and chief counsel of As You Sow, an environmental activist organization.

But it seemed like a Pyrrhic victory, at best. Some would say that Tillerson snookered them. ExxonMobil's thirty-page report was nothing more than a defense of the status quo and a rehash of much of what Tillerson had said two years earlier at the CFR. The company did not believe it was sitting on any stranded “hydrocarbon reserves,” nor did it believe any would become stranded. On the contrary, Tillerson argued, burning as much fossil fuel as possible was the key to lifting billions of people out of economic hardship and helping them achieve a better life.

To accompany this narrative, the report had two sets of photos: one contrasted a man plowing a field using yoked oxen with a farmer driving a big industrial tractor; the other contrasted a bent-over woman, dressed in primitive garb and feeding sticks into a wood fire outside her mud hut, with an Asian woman and her daughter heating a meal in stainless-steel pots on a stove in a spotless kitchen.

ExxonMobil did acknowledge that there was “always the possibility that government action”—in the form of a carbon tax, a “cap and trade” regulation or a “carbon capture” plan where carbon emissions are buried underground—“may impact the company,” but it dismissed as “highly unlikely” any chance of new laws or regulations that would prevent its proven reserves from being burned. That kind of reform seems even less likely to happen in the 114th Congress, which begins in January. The company cited its own studies as finding that the “world will require all the carbon-based energy that ExxonMobil plans to produce”—35 percent more in 2040 than in 2010—and that it did not “anticipate society being able to supplant traditional carbon-based forms of energy with other energy forms, such as renewables, to the extent needed to meet this carbon budget.”

ExxonMobil is not alone in this view. Also in response to activist pressure, Royal Dutch Shell on May 16 produced a twenty-page letter that managed the intellectual jujitsu of seeming to acknowledge the climate conundrum while making it clear that Shell—like Exxon—would have no stranded assets, adding: “There is a risk that focusing on ‘stranded assets’ or the concept of the ‘carbon bubble’ distracts attention away from the reality of a growing population, increasing prosperity and growing energy demand.” The message from Big Oil seemed to be, in the words of
environmental writer Mark Hertsgaard, “You don’t think we’re going to burn this? Just watch us.”

Even though it sure seemed that ExxonMobil had extended a large middle finger to the environmental activists, they did not necessarily see it. “This is a behemoth corporation and, at the very least, they’ve acknowledged the issue of climate-change risk,” said Natasha Lamb at Arjuna Capital. “In my estimation, ExxonMobil was not giving us the finger. It was giving global government the finger [by] saying, ‘You’re not going to do anything about this risk, so we can sit pat.’” Fugere, at As You Sow, said she found the proxy exercise illuminating, if only to prove definitively that ExxonMobil will not be swayed. “They believe that the demand for fossil fuel will increase; that’s an incredibly important perspective,” she said. “They are creating a fiction.” Undaunted, Lamb and Fugere proposed a new resolution for ExxonMobil’s 2015 proxy: that the company commit to increasing the amount of capital it returns to shareholders through stock buy-backs and dividends, instead of spending the money on increasingly costly fossil-fuel exploration.

Of course, divestiture is the easiest step for an investor if he or she no longer believes a stock will make money; just sell the stock and be done. McKibben and former vice president Al Gore have been leading advocates of large endowments and pension funds divesting themselves of Big Oil stocks. In September, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund—built, in part, on the wealth of the heirs of John D. Rockefeller, the founder of what has become ExxonMobil—said it would begin immediately divesting the stocks it owns in coal and tar-sands companies and then, eventually, in all fossil-fuel companies. “The divestment movement will continue to grow very, very quickly,” McKibben said, “and I think as it does, it’ll be one of the several things that’s putting pressure on the political system to shift.” He is particularly heartened by the University of Dayton’s June announcement that it would eliminate fossil-fuel stocks from its $670 million endowment. “It’s a good indication, I think, of which way the world is going,” he said. In Stockholm to accept an award on December 1, McKibben asked the city to sell its fossil-fuel stocks.

But there are big hurdles for the divestiture movement. For starters, at a price equal to just less than five times its estimated 2014 EBITDA of $80 billion, ExxonMobil’s stock is cheap, making it attractive to institutional investors, particularly in an overheated market. Google, by contrast, trades at around fourteen times its estimated 2014 EBITDA. None of the twenty-four research analysts who cover ExxonMobil have “sell” recommendations on its stock—about par for the course on Wall Street, where the big banks depend on corporations for fees and are loath to urge investors to dump their securities, especially when they appear to be cheap. And this is despite a 40 percent drop since June in the market price of a barrel of crude oil.

At ExxonMobil’s annual research analysts’ meeting, held in March at the New York Stock Exchange, there was not a single mention of the words “stranded assets” or “carbon bubble.” One questioner noted that many of the company’s new capital expenditures seem to be for projects
that are getting harder to do. But Tillerson swatted away this concern deftly.

Still, the activists remain hopeful their divestiture message is gaining traction. McKibben and others point to Stanford University’s decision in May to sell off the coal stocks in its $18 billion endowment. But, in truth, this was a minor concession on Stanford’s part, amounting to a couple of million dollars. (Stanford made no mention of divesting oil and gas stocks, or of ExxonMobil’s 2002 pledge of $100 million—out of a projected $225 million budget—to create the Global Climate and Energy Project at the university.) And the mighty Harvard, with an endowment of $36 billion, won’t even go that far. In a statement issued in October 2013, Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust said she preferred “engagement” with the Big Oil companies to divestment. “We should think about how we might use our voice not to ostracize such companies but to encourage them to be a positive force both in meeting society’s long-term energy needs while addressing pressing environmental imperatives,” she wrote, in delicious corporate-speak.

Campanale, at Carbon Tracker, said he understands the dilemma supposedly faced by large institutional investors, which insist that divestiture, for them, is not as simple as just selling stock. So-called passive fund managers feel constrained to buy fossil-fuel stocks because these companies are a big part of the world economy, and it can be unwise, professionally, to leave them out of a portfolio. “If you do, you’ll ultimately lose your investors’ money, so it’s better just to run with the herd,” he said of their thinking. But while Campanale is sympathetic to these concerns, he remains unbowed: “It’s irrational to invest in more fossil fuels, knowing that we’ve got enough already invested to burn the planet.”

* * *

After the November 2014 election, Ceres, the environmental group that works with Carbon Tracker, lamented that while GOP control of Congress “will certainly have consequences,” the more important development from the group’s perspective was the release of a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that demanded “substantial emissions reductions over the next few decades and near zero emissions of CO2 and other long-lived [greenhouse gases] by the end of the century” and urged a complete phasing out of fossil fuels in favor of “clean energy.” Ceres sees a huge opportunity for investors. “The inevitable and necessary shift… will unleash innovation and create multitrillion-dollar investment opportunities,” wrote Christopher Fox, director of special projects, in a recent blog post. “At the same time, this essential shift will create risks for any current and future investments in fossil fuels.”

There’s no denying anymore that we have been thoroughly warned about the dangers of continuing to burn fossil fuels. The problem is that it’s increasingly hard to believe that Big Oil won’t get its way. “The Exxons of the world have all the money,” McKibben allows. “But that
doesn’t mean I don’t think we’re going to win.” He worries that we’re running out of time, though, and points to the “massive and irrevocable” melting of the West Antarctic ice sheet. “That’s Exxon’s gift so far to the planet,” he says. “I don’t know whether we can stop them in time or not, but we’re definitely putting a dent in everyone’s understanding of the future.”

Mark Hertsgaard believes that winning this fight requires raw political power. Every one of the successful social movements in this country started with political protest. Mere resolutions on corporate proxy statements are insufficient. “It’s not like we don’t have enough policy proposals,” he concludes. “It’s not like we don’t have enough legal advocates or inside players in Washington, DC. That is not the problem. The problem is that there is no political power behind that, and in order to get the government to make Exxon leave that stuff in the ground, to really leave two-thirds in the ground—that’s going to take political power and not a bunch of shiny reports.”

Read Next: Dan Zegart has an idea. “Want to Stop Climate Change? Take the Fossil Fuel Industry to Court.”

William D. Cohan

December 10, 2014

Fire boat response crews battle the blazing remnants of the offshore oil rig Deepwater Horizon. Photograph: Reuters

Jordan Hoffman

Thursday 30 October 2014 18.00 EDT

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“This is what you call Hard Luck City,” says a man delivering groceries to families displaced to makeshift trailers in the aftermath of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. He’s a warm, elderly, bon mot-spewing African American with a thick Alabama accent, and the fact that his name is Roosevelt is a biting irony. These citizens, whose local oyster shucking economy has been destroyed by the negligence of enormous corporations inexorably tied to our government, are getting no New Deal.

As news cycles spin in seemingly ever-increasing velocity, public outrage is like a chef at an
enormous range, placing roiling pots on backburners as the latest crisis comes along demanding attention. In early 2010 the nation was stunned, saddened and furious at BP and its subcontractors after an accident killed 11 workers and spilled over 200m gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. “Something must be done!” shouted our politicians and pundits. It probably won’t surprise you to learn that nothing has been done. The Great Invisible is a reminder that the problem of offshore drilling, and our energy policy in general, is still a bubbling pot.

A brown pelican coated in heavy oil off the coast of East Grand Terre Island, Louisiana, after the 2010 oil spill. Photograph: Win McNamee/Getty Images

The last thing we need is another shoddily produced, finger-pointin’ issue-oriented documentary animated solely by indignation. Thankfully, director Margaret Brown understands this. Despite a few talking heads and the occasional reliance on graphics and maps, The Great Invisible is a rebuke to the Alex Gibney factory-style, information-dump doc. Shots are edited and composed. Scenes play out, with subjects artistically lit and the camera mounted on a tripod. It isn’t an immersion experience like, say, Leviathan, but shooting with good lenses, hiring a composer like David Wingo and approaching editing like a storyteller, not a pamphleteer, goes a long way in giving a signal boost to your activist film.

Avoiding a direct A to B storyline, Brown offers a series of tableaux, checking in on different strata of people touched by this tragedy in different ways. She has a knack for finding fascinating subjects, like the gabby shrimp peeler, an immigrant from Vietnam who has lived long enough in bayou country to have the most unique accent you’ll hear in a movie this year.

The Great Invisible is, at its heart, a work of advocacy. No one who owns stock in BP or any of the profits-thirsty, corner-cutting third parties will feel too good about themselves while watching grieving fathers talk about their dead sons. Or images of oil-drenched pelicans. Or wealthy conventioneers literally laughing and smoking cigars as they talk wistfully of the old days of even less government oversight.

But Brown puts some spin on the ball. She holds the scene (and it really does feel like a scene, not fly-on-the-wall cinema vérité) until the boozing oil men begin to deviate a bit from the script. These aren’t pig caricatures from Eisenstein’s Strike – these are intelligent men who are well aware that their work can have lasting environmental effects, but is also
fundamental to the US and therefore world economy. It may be face-saving, but the
implication is that they, too, would like to see change but don’t really have the ability – and
certainly not the incentive – to make it happen.

A similarly difficult moment comes early in the film, as we root around the Gulf communities
reliant on offshore drilling for employment. Audio of President Obama calling for a moratorium
on new drilling – which common sense says would seem welcome as poison is actively
spewing into the sea around them – is viewed as a malign government overreach. A sign on
the road says that Obama only wants to drill when it’s into your wallet. The litigator hired
by BP to oversee a $20bn payment fund (a northerner by the name of Kenneth Feinberg)
discusses how many refused to file a claim due to mistrust, while others had no tax returns to
prove their work in fishing or other related industries was stunted by the spill. “We do things
with a handshake down here” is a cultural leap the suits aren’t ready to take.

Another direction the film looks is right in the lens. How reliant are you on fossil fuels? The
Great Invisible isn’t so naïve as to think we should all just abandon our cars, nor expect
Americans suddenly to start paying European rates without uprooting the economy. Without
giving away the ending, and for a movie about a policy in limbo it actually has something of an
ending, it does conclude with something concrete to get angry about. No spoilers, but it’s the
government, stupid.

Characters weave in and out Brown’s film, and most striking is the old volunteer Roosevelt.
“Mr Rosie,” some call him, as he’s stretching every dollar to boil cheap spaghetti and tomato
sauce for 350 people. As the corporations scheme to maximize profits from of the earth, the
pesky inhabitants still find a way to get by.

Noam Chomsky Slams Canada’s Shale Gas Energy Plans

Martin Lukacs, Guardian UK 02 November 13 AM

Lukacs reports: "Canada’s rush to exploit its tar sands and shale gas resources will destroy
the environment 'as fast as possible,’ according to Noam Chomsky. In an interview with the
Guardian, the linguist and author criticised the energy policies of the Canadian government
under Prime Minister Stephen Harper."

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What’s missing to solve climate change? Political Will

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About CCL

[OMNI collaborates with CCL. Our strong committee is headed by Shelley Buonaiuto (goodhelp@cybermesa.com) with Dr. Robert McAfee, Gladys Tiffany, et al.]

— What is Carbon Fee and Dividend? —

Citizens’ Climate Lobby proposes that a fee be placed on fossil fuels, based on the CO2 content of those fuels. Revenue from that fee would be returned to the public as a monthly dividend to protect households from rising costs associated with the carbon fee.

Learn more about Carbon Fee and Dividend

Citopel-domeWant to know more about Citizens’ Climate Lobby?

Join our intro call

Our Next International Call

Jan. 10: David Hone, Climate Change Advisor for Shell

David Hone, Climate Advisor for Shell On our January call, we’ll discuss why businesses should embrace carbon pricing with our guest David Hone, Climate Change Advisor for Shell. He is also a board member of the International Emissions Trading Association and also the Washington-based Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES). Check out David’s blog, which includes recent posts about the COP20 meeting in Lima.

Join our next International Call
Latest Tweets from Citizens' Climate Lobby

The beef with beef: New diet guidelines might reflect environment cost
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Respect is the most effective strategy for building up the possibility of effective outcomes in regards to climate negotiations.

December 29, 2014

Gardner should back revenue-neutral carbon fee

Gardner should back revenue-neutral carbon fee

As someone who prides himself on empowering people by getting government out of the way and letting innovation and creativity thrive, Senator-elect Cory Gardner should be solidly behind a revenue-neutral carbon fee.
December 26, 2014
Climate Hike 2015: Spend time in a natural wonder while fundraising for CCL
The first time I saw Glacier National Park (GNP), I thought to myself, “This must be where nature goes to show off.”

December 22, 2014
In June 2014, 600 volunteers went to Washington, DC to ask Congress to take action on climate change.
See what happened

What Others Are Saying

"The Citizens' Climate Lobby has identified the issue of pricing carbon as a vitally important lever in promoting dialog and action on climate protection. If you've been looking for that one group to join, you can stop looking now."

Dr. Daniel Kammen
Professor – University of California, Berkeley

"Most impressive is the work of Citizens' Climate Lobby...If you want to join the fight to save the planet, to save creation for your grandchildren, there is no more effective step you could take than becoming an active member of this group."

Dr. James Hansen
Climate scientist and former head of the NASA Goddard Institute

"With all the negative news on climate and Congress it's understandable to feel discouraged. But hopelessness is not a strategy for making a difference and neither is acting alone. Citizens' Climate Lobby is the antidote, the missing link, the Harvard of citizen activism."

Sam Daley-Harris
Founder, RESULTS, Microcredit Summit Campaign, and the Center for Citizen Empowerment and Transformation

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About

We are adults, part of the ruling generation, and we care about ...

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Moyers & Company, The Children's Climate Crusade, Mary Christina Wood, Nature’s Trust |

BillMoyers.com - 2 days ago

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Monday, November 17, 2014 democracynow.org

Naomi Klein: Reject Keystone XL Pipeline, We Need Radical Change to Prevent Catastrophic Warming

Democracy Now! Daily Digest

A Daily Independent Global News Hour with Amy Goodman & Juan González

House lawmakers passed legislation Friday to approve the Keystone XL oil pipeline to bring carbon-intensive tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, to the Texas Gulf Coast. The Senate is ... Read More →
Students Rise Up to Fight Climate Change With National Divestment Network

*Dinah DeWald, Common Dreams*

"The fossil fuel divestment movement is powerful, and marks a new phase in environmental and climate justice struggles ... Together, students have decided to fight this industry in our school communities, and support the work of others fighting this industry on all fronts."

350.0RG DIVESTMENT CAMPAIGN: MASS ACTIONS PETITIONS

Off to a great start!

\Dear friends,

Last week, we launched a new platform to help people organize fossil fuel divestment campaigns in their communities.

**We’ve been blown away by the response: there are already almost 100 new divestment campaigns up and running across the country!** And that’s on top of the over 300 college and university campaigns currently underway.

We’re off to a great start, but if we’re going to make a real impact on the fossil fuel industry, we need this campaign to grow even larger.

**Click here to find or start a local divestment petition: [www.GoFossilFree.org/start](http://www.GoFossilFree.org/start)**

Getting started on a local campaign is simple:

- Get a petition started so you can build your local group and start showing your city, state, or religious institution that there’s public support for divestment.
- Set up a local meeting and email petition signers, your friends, and local groups to get them involved.
- Plan your campaign: we’ve got some great resources on the website and our crew will be on hand to provide support every step of the way.
Your fellow organizers are already racking up some impressive wins: the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee voted to divest this week, Vermont state-senators are hearing testimony in favor of a divestment bill, and big moves are underway in San Francisco, Seattle, and elsewhere.

Together, we’ve also started an exciting discussion about the potential for sustainable reinvestment to help revitalize our economy while protecting our environment (the $200 million your city might have invested in the fossil fuel industry is a lot of money that could go towards energy efficiency, new industries, and more).

And our local efforts are making a national impact. Politicians have talked about divestment on the Senate floor, the New York Times ran a front-page Business Section story on the campaign, and think-tanks and big banks like HSBC are talking about downgrading fossil fuel stocks.

I just joined 350.org two months ago, and I’m amazed at how much we’ve accomplished already. Now, we need to keep up the momentum. Your local divestment campaign will make a big difference.

Click here to get started.

Onward,

Jay

350.org is building a global movement to solve the climate crisis. Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter, and sign up for email alerts. You can help power our work by getting involved locally, sharing your story, and donating here.

To stop receiving emails from 350.org, click here.
Representatives in Congress will be pressing forward on the Keystone XL pipeline this coming week. (Please try to contain your shock and surprise…)

We’ve got some surprises planned for them though, so it should be an interesting week. More soon. Stay tuned by visiting our website, liking us on Facebook, or following us on Twitter.

Buckle up. :-)  

Best,
Steve Kretzmann
Executive Director
Oil Change International

Oil Change International campaigns to expose the true costs of fossil fuels and facilitate the coming transition towards clean energy dedicated to identifying and overcoming barriers to that transition.

We are a 501c3 organization and all donations are fully tax deductible.

Check out our blog at PriceOfOil.org and find out how much oil and coal money your Representatives take at DirtyEnergyMoney.com

LINKS Newsletters, Reports http://omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

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END OIL NEWSLETTER #3

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Dick Bennett

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http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
jbennet@uark.edu
Blog
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

j.dick.bennett@gmail.com
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703