

HOUSE ORGAN

Trump's Electoral Triumph: Class, Race, Gender, and the Hegemony of the Polluter-Industrial Complex

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But what of the concerns of those, like my own family, who have also suffered dispossession as a result of an ailing coal industry on which their lives depend? In an inclusive and progressive environmental movement, should there not also be compassion for their plight despite their unsympathetic perspective on the movement itself? Galvanizing change requires that we see the humanity and suffering of each and every person—including those who do not share our own political values. They are not the 'other,' they are us, and we are them – we are all connected on this planet.

– Jennifer Lawrence, Boston Editorial Group of *CNS*

In one of the biggest political upsets in recent American history, Republican candidate Donald Trump stunned the pundits to win the 2016 Presidential election. With 54 percent of eligible citizens voting, he lost the November popular election to Democrat Hillary Clinton by over 2.8 million votes. Nevertheless, he scored a decisive victory in the Electoral College (304 to 227) on December 19, 2016. In addition to Trump's triumph, the Republican Party secured majority control over both the House and Senate. Given the appointment of a conservative Justice to the Supreme Court, conservatives are assured of controlling all three branches of the federal (or national) government.

To say that these election results are “disappointing” would be a gross understatement. Trump's election represents a profound threat to America's democratic institutions, and no doubt is the beginning of an unparalleled assault on the hard-fought policy achievements of all progressive social movements and the Left. Trumpism now embodies the merger of the pro-corporate, anti-regulatory agenda of economic neoliberals and the neofascist racism, bigotry, misogyny, and xenophobia of social ultra-conservatives that will reshape the fabric of American life and the global environment for years to come.

So, how did this happen? How can we make sense of this election? Although there are many factors at work, Trump's ascendancy must be seen as part of the general crisis of

neoliberal capitalism. Corporate-led globalization is continuing to inflict pain on the U.S. working class in the new millennium, exacerbating income inequality, poverty, and economic insecurity. Free trade agreements and the increased mobility of capital, technological innovation and automation, the tertiarization of work, and the imposition of greater labor market flexibility are undermining the ability of a growing number of workers to secure and maintain full-time employment status, higher (or any) wages, and better (or any) benefits (like health care coverage) to which they are traditionally accustomed. Precariousness is becoming the new normality for more and more U.S. workers, moving in and out of temporary jobs that offer little opportunity for social mobility and fulfillment. Once largely restricted to women, African-Americans and Latinos, ever-larger segments of white working class males, college graduates, and the salariat are becoming part of the new precariat (Standing 2014). Meanwhile, health care costs continue to skyrocket. As a result, the living standards of the American working class and precariat are declining precipitously (Gordon 2016). For the first time in decades, life expectancy is falling for both men and women nationwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Xu et al. 2016).

The rapid growth of the precariat is not restricted to the United States, and is creating political instabilities in other capitalist countries. The lack of an occupational identity and internal divisions among the precariat are leading to the villainization of immigrants and the spread of political extremism throughout much of Europe (Standing 2014). In the United States Donald Trump has also been able to seize upon these economic anxieties and popular anger with the American government. As a political outsider he railed against the corporate media and the corrupt “elite establishments” in both parties, openly ridiculing both Democratic and Republican challengers along the way. Trump became the first president-elect without any experience in elective office since Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s. As a Right-wing economic populist, Trump positioned himself as a voice of the people, and promised to take on plutocracy by “draining the swamp” in Washington, D.C. of lobbyists for the special interests. He identified the failings of American capitalism as deriving from “bad” trade deals negotiated by “inept” politicians that gave away manufacturing jobs to “opportunistic” foreign governments. Trump promised to utilize his bargaining skills as a businessman to bring back good-paying jobs and “Make America Great Again” by scrapping and/or renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and ending currency manipulations by China and other countries.

On foreign policy matters Trump criticized both former President George Bush and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for their roles in orchestrating disastrous U.S. military interventions in Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere. Nevertheless, as a pro-imperialist hawk, he promised a decisive all-out war on radical Islamic terrorist organizations such as ISIS, which would include the use of torture and killing the families of suspected terrorists (a war crime under the Geneva Convention). As an anti-Muslim militarist, he engaged in fear mongering,

pointing to Middle Eastern and Mexican immigrants as a profound security threat to the American people. Once elected, he would build a wall on the border with Mexico. As an anti-environmental capitalist, he said that climate change was a hoax created by the Chinese, and that he would roll back environmental regulations that were hurting energy development and the profitability of American companies. And as a hyper-masculinist white nationalist, he won the White House by waging one of the most divisive and polarizing campaigns in American political history by baiting people of color, ethnic minorities, and women (Gaughan 2016). The ugliness of the campaign and the extreme unpopularity of both candidates resulted in the lowest voter turnout in nearly twenty years (Wallace 2016). Some 90 million eligible voters did not vote (Levine 2016). But it was enough for him to win. In fact, Trump won the election not in spite of his bigotry, but precisely because of his open disdain for people of color, immigrants, women and ethnic and religious minorities. Such disdain served to mobilize a base of reactionary white voters to embrace his candidacy. The Trump era has begun, and it is going to be ugly.

Here we will argue that it is immigration rather than inequality, racism more than class-consciousness, segregation rather than assimilation, and the desire for security and stability rather than diversity and change that energized a conservative base behind Donald Trump and the Republican Party. Moreover, the unpopularity of Hillary Clinton's neoliberal policy approaches de-energized the base of the Democratic Party (especially white working class families in the Rustbelt) and caused many potential supporters to sit out the election, which allowed Trump to win the Electoral College. As we shall see, now that he is President, Donald Trump is poised to lead an all-out assault on sound climate policy and the liberal regime of environmental regulation—all in the name of economic growth and energy independence. The war of American capitalism against nature is about to heat up.

Trumpism and the White Working Class

So, who voted for Trump, and why? First and foremost, it was a broad coalition of white voters from virtually every demographic background—sex, age, education, and income—that gave Trump a series of narrow victories in several key states. White voters comprised 69 percent of the total electorate. Some 58 percent of the white voters surveyed in exit polling opted for Trump, compared to 37 percent for Clinton (Henley 2016). Trump received just 8 percent of the black vote, and 29 percent of the Latino vote. However, blacks and Latinos comprised only 31 percent of the total eligible electorate and did not turn out in enough numbers to damage his candidacy (Henley, 2016). As expected, Trump and the Republican Party enjoyed their strongest level of support from their traditional base of conservative white rural voters and middle class and affluent suburban whites (Sasson 2016). According to exit polls conducted in 23 states, the median family income of Trump supporters was \$72,000, compared to \$61,000 for Clinton (Silver 2016). Trump did especially well among college-educated whites. Just 39 percent of

college-educated men and 51 percent of college-educated women voted for Hillary Clinton (Sasson 2016).

And what of Trump's performance among working class voters? One of the dominant narratives in the corporate mass media is that a "Rustbelt Rebellion" by the white working class catapulted Trump into the White House (Street 2016). Trump was promising to restore the American dream for these economically threatened white workers. He was also appealing to their latent bigotry. So, is it true? Did the white working class switch from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party and Donald Trump in the 2016 election?

Fueled by growing dissatisfaction with the neoliberal economic policies of the Obama administration, Trump was able to seize the Electoral College by winning key battleground states in the Rustbelt with very sizable working class populations. Nevertheless, the notion of a "Rustbelt revolt" by the white working class is largely a myth, though one with important qualifications. Analyzing data from exit polls, Kilibarda and Roithmayr (2016, 1-2) found that relative to the 2012 election,

Democratic support in the Rust Belt collapsed as a huge number of Democrats stayed home (or to a lesser extent) voted for a third party. Trump did not really flip white working-class voters in the Rust Belt. Mostly, Democrats lost them.

Furthermore, compared to the Obama campaign in 2012, Clinton underperformed with black and Latino voters, winning just 88 percent of the black vote overall, compared to Obama's 94 percent, and only 65 percent of the Latino vote, compared to Obama's 71 percent (Henley 2016). Nationwide, one out of every three Americans earns less than \$50,000 per year, and 52 percent voted for Clinton in 2016. Just 41 percent voted for Trump (Henley 2016).

Clinton's inability to speak to the economic insecurities of working class whites was damaging to her bid for the White House. Support from traditionally Democratic white working-class voters in the Rustbelt is especially important to winning the Electoral College. Instead, she ceded the spotlight on economic issues to Donald Trump. Opposition to global trade and currency manipulations by the Chinese government were a strong theme of Donald Trump, but received little attention from the Clinton campaign (she was formerly a supporter of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and only later opposed it after the campaign of Democratic challenger Bernie Sanders gained traction with the issue). In campaign rallies in these states, Trump spoke directly to their concerns as workers, particularly around the issue of bad trade deals and jobs, and threatened to impose tariffs on Chinese goods. On the eve of the election, at a rally in the old industrial manufacturing town of Manchester, New Hampshire, he stated: "The corrupt special interests have stolen your jobs and shipped your wealth to other countries. Tomorrow, the American working class will strike back. It's about time."¹

¹ For a video recording of that segment of the speech, see

But the white working class did not strike back. They mostly refused to participate. From the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania to the older industrial manufacturing centers along the shores of Lake Erie, areas of blue-collar workers that voted overwhelmingly for Obama in 2012 went for Trump in 2016 (often by double-digit margins) because Democratic working class voters stayed home. Aided by Republican-led voter-suppression efforts that overwhelmingly targeted Democratic constituencies (Wallis 2016), Clinton's loss was also related to the unpopularity of her stance on trade and other issues among white working class voters. As a result, the decline of Democratic voters among the working class in 2016 (compared to 2012) was significantly larger than the increase in Republican voters during those two elections. Of those earning less than \$50,000 a year, the decline in Democratic voting from 2012 to 2016 was 3.5 times greater than the rise in Republican voting. Similarly, among white voters in general, the decline in Democratic voting was 2.1 times greater than the growth in Republican voting (Kilibarda and Roithmayr 2016). If just 100,000 traditional working class voters in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin had voted for the Democratic Party, Hillary Clinton would have won the Electoral College (Sasson 2016).

As noted by DiMaggio (2016, 10), this election outcome was “more about growing working class and white voter disgust with the Democratic status quo than it was about being enamored with the Trump candidacy.” Some 1.4 million manufacturing jobs were lost between 2007 and 2014 during the Democratic administration of Barack Obama, primarily as a result of growing trade deficits (Scott 2015). Swing states such as Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin suffered some of the greatest losses of manufacturing jobs due to trade policy. Obama and the Clintons' traditional support for free trade undoubtedly played a profound role in many white working class voters' refusal to participate in the election. It was no doubt also a major factor in Senator Bernie Sanders' victories in the Michigan, Wisconsin, and Indiana Democratic Party primaries over Hillary Clinton, given his equally critical stance towards neoliberal trade policy.² Trump also won decisively among rural whites in these swing states and across much of the Midwest and New England (such as in Iowa, where Obama had won easily in 2012). This support extended throughout the small towns, farm-belts, timberlands, and former coalfields of the Appalachian region into the Deep South. Under the Obama administration rural white working class communities experienced unprecedented social disintegration, breeding additional resentment against the Democratic Party (Isenberg 2016; Vance 2016). Unemployment and poverty rates are now much more prevalent in America's

http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2016/11/08/trump_the_american_working_class_will_strike_back.html.

² At this point it is interesting to speculate how Sanders would have fared against Trump as the Democratic nominee for President. Supported by millions of small donations and drawing massive crowds at his campaign events, Sanders tapped into the white working class and progressive middle-class whites. His extraordinary support among young people gives reason for hope that a movement for democratic socialism can take root in America. The dynamism of his campaign stands in stark contrast to the stiff and uninspiring campaigns of Party insiders Al Gore, John Kerry, and Hillary Clinton. Some pollsters believe Sanders would have won. See <http://usuncut.com/politics/bernie-sanders-would-have-crushed-trump/>.

rural areas than in the cities and suburbs. White workers who lost their jobs to automation and cheap foreign imports have been pushed over the edge the last decade and more. Virtually every relevant statistic says social breakdown and despair are on the rise. Mortality rates are increasing sharply, driven primarily by growing drug abuse, alcoholism, depression, and suicide among middle-aged whites (Case and Deaton 2015). In fact, a 1% increase in unemployment now correlates with an 11% increase in suicides among white workers (Pierce and Schott 2016).

Again, Trump's rhetoric of protecting American jobs resonated in these regions, particularly in coal country. Although most rural voters generally lean Republican, it is clear that many of those who had backed Obama before, this time stayed home or voted for Trump. And although rural voters only make up 17 percent of this year's electorate, they played a significant role in determining the outcome in the Electoral College (Sasson 2016). White rural voters have disproportionate power in the presidential election because the Electoral College is rigged to give low-population, rural white states more power. For instance, the people of Wyoming (one vote per 186,000 people) have nearly four times the power of the people of California (one vote per 670,000 people) in the Electoral College (Cohen 2016). In Appalachia, Hillary Clinton only won 21 out of 490 counties. Of these 21 counties, most contained college campuses or were in major metropolitan areas such as Pittsburgh. In fact, Trump's margin of victory among whites without a college degree is the largest among any candidate since 1980. Two-thirds of voting whites with no college education went for Trump, giving him a 39-point advantage over Clinton (Tyson and Maniam 2016).

Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and the Crisis of Identity Politics

During the Presidential campaign Trump shocked much of the nation by amplifying racist, bigoted, misogynist, and other intolerant remarks. At the press conference announcing his candidacy he referred to Mexican immigrants as "criminals" and "rapists," and said that he would build a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border to keep them out. He smeared federal judge Gonzalo Curiel, questioning his ability as a Hispanic to preside over class-action lawsuits brought by students against Trump around the now-defunct Trump University. He proposed a registry and a ban on Muslims immigrating to the United States. He insulted the Muslim parents of U.S. Army Captain Humayun Khan, who had died in Iraq and won the Gold Star. He projected a hegemonic masculinity, continuously denigrating strong and popular women figures. He liked to warn white America, and white women in particular, that they were in danger. Only he, the authoritarian Great White Male, could protect them from people of color, immigrants, terrorists, Muslims, and the Chinese. He said that, if elected, he would put Hillary Clinton in jail. He refused to disavow supportive remarks about his campaign from former Klu Klux Klan leader David Duke. He called out for the punishment of the black and Latino teenagers that made up the Central Park Five, even though they had been exonerated by DNA evidence (Kruse and Gee 2016).

Such racist and sexist comments are nothing new for Trump (Lopez 2016), or to US elections, and the difference is one of degree. After the 2008 election he invented a conspiracy theory that questioned the citizenship of Barack Obama, demanding that he should produce his American birth certificate. In fact, it was the racist act of challenging the legitimacy of the nation's first black president that served as his gateway into the national political spotlight. These remarks should not be seen as accidental, but rather as the revitalization of the "Southern strategy" successfully developed by Lee Atwater for the Reagan campaign and Republican Party in the 1980 election. Atwater sought to gain political support in the South (and elsewhere) by using covert or "coded" racist remarks as a way of cultivating the bigotry held by many white voters against people of color. In the 2016 election Trump was not attempting to draw his primary support from the same type of Republicans (including big corporate donors) that determined the party's winners in the past. Instead, he was attempting to solidify a Republican coalition predicated on white voters from all demographic backgrounds whose primary political motivations are rooted in prejudice. And although it remains unclear exactly how many whites voted for Trump because they are racist, bigoted, or misogynist, and are part of what Van Jones has called a "white-lash" against a "changing country" and black president (see Wheaton 2016, 1), there is no doubt that Trump successfully mobilized the politics of hate and fear to his political advantage.

As noted by DiMaggio (2016), numerous surveys show that a significant base of Trump supporters embrace a perverse fusion of economic discontent and hateful, Right-wing bigotry and white nationalism. Trump's success among this reactionary base of the Republican Party is inextricably linked to an imagined historical greatness that is deeply interwoven into the psyche of many Americans. The scapegoating and bigotry that has been fueled for decades by mean-spirited media propagandists such as Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly serves to deflect potential anger and criticism away from the failings of neoliberal capitalism, and is a core element of the identity of tens of millions of Trump voting social conservatives (DiMaggio 2016). Arlie Hochschild's extensive fieldwork and research on Trump supporters in the state of Louisiana shows that "increased competition for good, steady jobs in the era of a shrinking middle class has put unrelenting pressure on a white working class already bravely struggling with family disruption, lowered wages, and a grim move...from a life of marriage and employment to that of marriageability and employability" (Hochschild 2016, 685). There is a fear among these whites that such stresses common to the black underclass "could hit them next," and that belief is exacerbating a pre-existing disdain for non-whites and non-Christians (especially Mexicans and Muslims). For them, Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" means re-establishing the cultural and economic privileges of conservative white Christians.

Hochschild relays a common story emanating from her interviews of Christian, native, and mostly white male Trump supporters. They perceive of themselves as patiently standing in line waiting their turn to achieve the American Dream, but with the line actually moving

backwards because “people are coming from behind and cutting in line” ahead of them (Hochschild 2016, 686-687). And for these Trump supporters, those unfairly breaking in line are people of color and career-driven women, helped by liberal Affirmative Action programs. Many of Trump’s most vocal supporters express special anxiety around immigration and the country’s growing racial diversity. Eric Kaufman (2016) found that people living in areas with a large Latino influx were far more likely to express strong support for Trump. Along with concerns about the state of the economy, Trump supporters saw immigration and terrorism—deeply tied to racial, ethnic, and national identity—as America’s top issues.

During the campaign, Hillary Clinton spoke positively to the importance of respecting and celebrating America’s diversity, supporting the rights of women, people of color, immigrants, and the LGBT community. However, what she often presented was narrow neoliberal-oriented identity politics, one that celebrated “equal opportunities” to rise (and therefore fall) in a capitalist system of stratification. She spoke too little to the economic anxieties of rural, suburban, and urban working-class whites, and the system of stratification itself. As a result, many whites felt excluded by her campaign, or alienated, especially after she called Trump supporters a “basket of deplorables” because of their supposed bigotry and prejudices. Clinton could not reach these voters because she could not synthesize issues of class, race, gender, and ethnicity into a unifying political discourse and program for radical economic reform. As a neoliberal Democrat, and as the first lady in Bill Clinton’s administration that imposed significant hardships on people of color, women, and working class whites, she was not capable of forging such a unity. She could not point out how welfare reform, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Omnibus Counterterrorism Act (the precursor to the Patriot Act), and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act—all signed off by her husband President Bill Clinton—had devastating impacts on women, people of color, and working class whites. She could not speak convincingly to the commonality of economic insecurities and social injustices that these neoliberal policies created because she actively supported such policies.

Trump filled the political vacuum, serving to (partially) de-stigmatize and co-opt a type of white identity politics for his own political purposes. In contrast to Clinton’s presentation of a classless liberal identity politics in the campaign (equal opportunity for people of color, women, and ethnic minorities, and immigrant path to citizenship), Trump invoked a masculine, class-based reactionary white identity politics, i.e., white nationalism and the protection of white male privileges. Trump borrowed from the oldest trick in the book, pitting the economic interests of whites against people of color and working women (especially women of color). The reality of the election is that for legions of white women there are other components of their identity that receive greater priority than their gender. Hillary Clinton’s brand of feminism failed to resonate with white working class women, and many withdrew from the voting process (Friedman-Rudovsky 2016). Trump successfully stoked white fears and prejudices

(including the economic fears of white women), activating a latent racism that had been considered illegitimate in the past, but was now playing a prominent role in shaping the political mobilization of conservative white voters. With the small exception of college-educated white women, who were no doubt dissuaded by Trump's overt sexism, every possible demographic subset of white voters (young, old, women, and especially men) voted for Trump over Clinton. Too many Left-liberal whites and people of color jumped off the Democratic Party bandwagon (especially after Bernie Sanders lost the Democratic Party primary).

Hence, one possible paradox of neoliberal multiculturalism is that it appears to not only lack sufficient political inspiration for working class whites, but is also utilized by Trump and the ultra-Right to cultivate "tribal" warfare against "political correctness" among his conservative Tea Party base—a grassroots network of mostly middle-class whites opposed to liberal welfare state policies for the "undeserving" poor and racial minorities (Skocpol and Williamson 2016). Such a sensibility takes the form of "if I am not in your 'tribe,' why should I care? Or worse, your 'tribe' is gaining privileges at my expense, and you are now my enemy." And he was successful: in 2016, non-college whites swung to the GOP by a 15-point margin relative to 2012. Still, it must be remembered that only 25 percent of eligible voters went for Trump, and given the lack of a Left alternative in the general election, his mass appeal (especially among the white working class) should not be overstated. This is a time of great peril, but also of opportunity for the Left.

Democratic eco-socialists must articulate an alternative to the "classless" neoliberal identity politics of Clinton and the "class reductionism" identity politics still embraced by much of the Left (including some of Sanders supporters). The Left must offer an analysis and popular discourse of the multiple forms of cultural (racial-gender) oppression, political domination, and economic exploitation that people experience in their daily lives. To do so will require the sublation of a more radical identity politics with a socialist politics focused on class interests, and radical democratic politics focused on human/citizen rights (Faber 2008, 238-239). Such is the precondition for creating a mass movement capable of challenging the intersectionality of power relations in a racialized capitalist patriarchy (Wallis 2015).

Trumpism and the Hegemony of the Polluter-Industrial Complex

The election of Donald Trump promises to bring about an assault on the policy gains achieved by movements for immigration reform, racial justice, labor and women's rights, consumer product safety, and economic justice. But an equally grave and urgent threat is posed with respect to the environment. Acting on the perception that strong environmental regulations are detrimental to the competitiveness of U.S. capital in the new global economy, Trump is preparing to unleash an unprecedented assault on the environmental, climate change, and environmental justice policy regimes. In fact, the American power structure under President Trump is now controlled by what Faber (2009) calls the polluter-industrial complex, or those

sectors of American business and transnational capital that would stand to profit the most from a weakening of the liberal regime of environmental regulation. These sectors include chemical companies and agribusiness firms seeking to relax rules governing the use of pesticides; timber and mining interests looking to open up protected areas to resource exploitation; auto manufacturers and big utilities seeking exemptions for clean air regulations; and especially the oil, gas, coal industries looking to beat back controls on greenhouse gas emissions and greatly expand the production of fossil fuels.

Together, these segments of the polluter-industrial complex have come together to create a coordinated and sophisticated infrastructure of interlocking think tanks, policy institutes, research centers, foundations, public relations firms, and astro-turf industry front groups (organizations that appear to be green but are anti-environmental in substance) for the purpose of containing and rolling back environmental/climate policy. Trump is drawing heavily upon this infrastructure to make key appointments to his administration, and is elevating the power of the polluter-industrial complex over the state apparatus—of not only the Executive Branch but also the halls of Congress and state governments across the country. The hegemony of the polluter-industrial complex in the United States is now on full display to the world.

Trump's planned assault on environmental policy is predicated on the ability of the polluter-industrial complex to gain positional control of the state, especially in terms of achieving decision-making authority over key governmental agencies and offices. In what our Boston Editorial Group member Joni Seager calls a "petro-bromance," Trump has nominated men who have spent their professional careers seeking to dismantle or circumvent environmental rules on behalf of the polluter-industrial complex to be in charge of the nation's most powerful governmental agencies, including the State Department and Environmental Protection Agency. As he recently stated, American energy dominance will be declared a strategic economic and foreign policy goal of the United States by his administration, and is seen the centerpiece of his economic agenda to restore the vitality of the U.S. economy.

To implement this vision, Trump nominated Rex Tillerson, the chief executive of ExxonMobil, as his Secretary of State. Enough said. He also selected former Governor Rick Perry as Secretary of Energy, an agency that Perry once said he wanted to eliminate. Perry has called the established science of human-caused climate change a "contrived, phony mess" (Davenport 2016, A2). Both will be entrusted to fulfill Trump's campaign promise to "unleash America's \$50 trillion in untapped shale, oil, and natural gas reserves, plus hundreds of years in clean coal reserves."³

Trump's energy agenda will require the obliteration of any environmental rule that stands in the way, and we will likely see a substantial dismantling of the EPA. To carry out this object, Trump has nominated Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, a longtime ally of the oil and gas industry, to lead the EPA. Pruitt has run efforts on behalf of the industry to overturn

³ <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/policies/energy>.

EPA rules that address climate change, and as State Attorney General, was caught sending a letter to regulators drafted by lobbyists working for Devon Energy. Harold Hamm, the multi-billionaire owner of Continental Resources, an oil and gas company, served as the co-chair of Pruitt's 2013 election campaign.

For his EPA transition (or "landing") team, Trump selected individuals almost universally dismissive of climate science and highly critical of the need for environmental regulation.

- Myron Ebell is Director of the Center for Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), which is funded by the Koch foundations (owners of the largest private petrochemical company in the U.S.), ExxonMobil and other Big Oil companies, coal companies, and the auto industry. Ebell is also Chairman of the Cooler Heads Foundation, which includes the Heartland Institute and other climate-denial organizations, and whose purpose is "to dispel the myths of global warming." Ebell also runs a pro-chemical industry front group from the website [saferchemicalpolicy.org](http://www.saferchemicalpolicy.org), where you can read about the "life-enhancing value of chemicals" and how "man-made toxic chemicals cannot possibly cause cancer."⁴
- George Sugiyma is a former lobbyist for the National Mining Association and served as chief counsel for Sen. James Inhofe, the powerful Chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee, and a top recipient of campaign contributions from corporate polluters, especially the oil and gas industry. Inhofe has called climate change "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people" (Inhofe 2012).
- David Krutzer is a climate denier and senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, which is heavily funded by Koch Industries and major corporate polluters. A strong opponent of carbon dioxide caps, solar power, and fuel efficiency standards, Krutzer once testified that the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska should be opened up to the oil industry.
- Austin Lipari is with the Federalist Society, and is heavily funded by Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund, major conduits of money from the oil and gas industry to climate science denial groups, including the Competitive Enterprise Institute.
- David Schnare is general counsel and Director at the Energy and Environment Legal Institute (E&E Legal) and Director of the George Mason Environmental Law Clinic, and spearheaded multiple harassment efforts against climate scientists and government administrators working at the EPA.

And the list goes on.

⁴ <http://www.globalwarming.org/about/>, and <http://www.saferchemicalpolicy.org/>.

Now in control of the White House and the Congress, the polluter-industrial complex and their Congressional allies will likely use the Congressional Review Act to overturn a variety of Obama administration initiatives, including rules to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental problems. Designed by Republican Newt Gingrich (now a close Trump advisor) in 2001, the Act provides a fast-track mechanism to overturn rules that frequently took years to write and approve. A Senate Republican policy group has drawn up a hit list called “Reining in Obama Regulatory Overreach,”⁵ as has the conservative think American Action Forum. And once Congress successfully overturns these regulations, the EPA or any other related government agency is prohibited from ever again issuing rules that closely match what was overturned (unless Congress passes new legislation that permits it).

In terms of developing their own legislative strategy in place of what is being dismantled, Ebell and Pruitt are most likely to adopt the Competitive Enterprise Institute’s blueprint called “Free to Prosper” (Osorio and Conko 2016). The plan is a frightening preview of the attacks that are to come. The report calls for a repudiation of the Paris Climate Agreement, the defunding the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, overturning or at least defunding the EPA Clean Power Plan, repealing the EPA’s carbon dioxide standards for new fossil-fuel power plants, and removing climate planning from federal land policy. It also calls for selling off federal lands to energy and natural resource industries, immunizing genetically modified foods from health and safety regulations, lifting restrictions on toxic chemicals, defunding the National Institute of Environmental Health Services research on endocrine disrupting chemicals, ending the current restrictions on phthalates in kids products, and rolling back the power of the Fish and Wildlife Service to protect endangered species. It should be noted that ExxonMobil, whose CEO is Trump’s choice to serve as Secretary of State, manufactures phthalates and opposed the government ban. ExxonMobil is also a funder of CEI.

The Inherent Contradictions of Trumpism and Ecosocialist Ways Forward

The contradictions created by Trump’s energy, environmental, and economic policies are numerous and likely to unravel in an epic reckoning of monumental proportions. First of all, his “America First Energy Plan,” proudly displayed on his website, promises to promote a fossil-fuel energy renaissance and to “streamline the permitting process of all energy projects.”⁶ He has made claims that accelerating extraction of fossil fuels will create millions of new high-paying jobs. He has focused primarily on fossil fuels, with plans to reduce regulations for shale gas extraction and advancing clean coal. On the campaign trail he promised the coal miners of Appalachia that he would put them back to work by scrapping the Clean Power Plan, whose carbon pollution reduction mandates supposedly discourage the use of coal to generate electricity.

⁵ <http://www.rpc.senate.gov/policy-papers/reining-in-obama-regulatory-overreach>.

⁶ <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/trump-outlines-plan-for-american-energy-renaissance>.

However, as Michael Klare (2016) has pointed out, if all of Trump's energy policies are successfully enacted, many sectors of the U.S. fossil-fuel industry are likely to be annihilated by the lower prices resulting from an oversupply of energy. Already, the dramatic expansion of hydraulic fracturing technology over the last decade has significantly lowered the price of natural gas in comparison to coal. Utilities across the country are switching to this cheaper fuel source. Short of offering massive federal subsidies, no amount of environmental de-regulation can render the coal industry competitive. In fact, the current glut of fossil fuels on the world market is already driving down prices and profits for U.S. producers of all fossil fuels. Trump's "America-first" energy program will only make this worse, especially if his administration approves the Keystone XL pipeline and assists with shale oil production in Canada. The partial dismantling of the EPA and roll-back of environmental regulations in other areas of the economy is also unlikely to increase employment to any significant degree. In fact, unemployment in the coalfields of Appalachia is only going to exacerbate pre-existing unemployment because of mechanization over the past decades. And resulting damage to the environment and public health is likely to stimulate public outrage and a surge in support for the environmental movement.

In terms of international commerce, Trump maintains that by cracking down on unfair trade practices and renegotiating trade deals, he'll bring back manufacturing jobs. But aside from dealing with the very real problem of currency manipulation by China, Trump's approach is unlikely to stem the decline of manufacturing jobs induced by automation and corporate-led globalization. In terms of healthcare, Trump and the Republican Congress are preparing to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare). If this is fully carried out, the results will likely end health care for millions of low-income Americans, and end subsidies that millions of middle-class workers use to buy coverage on the exchanges. With no mandatory cost controls over Big Pharma (Trump proposed keeping prices down by promoting greater competition) and the insurance companies, premiums will soar.

In terms of budgetary policy, Trump has pledged a huge tax cut (primarily for the wealthy) and a balanced budget, a major expansion of the military budget, and the payoff of the \$19 trillion national debt over eight years. These are mutually contradictory economic policy aims. While his economic plan to spend a trillion dollars on infrastructure improvements could provide a type of Keynesian stimulus to the economy and delay the reappearance of a recession, the Republican-controlled Congress is unlikely to go along. Furthermore, spending vast sums of money on the construction of a wall on the border with Mexico will provide little lasting benefit to the U.S. economy.

These economic and ecological contradictions are going to become manifest in short order, and will create new possibilities for political activism. But unless activism and popular revolts against Trumpism can lead to meaningful electoral reforms and coordinated actions

around a larger political agenda and strategic vision, the power structure of American capitalism will remain unchanged. However, as demonstrated by the climate march in New York that drew well over 300,000 people, there are signs that a radical environmental politics is beginning to develop in response to the failures of neoliberalism. Actions of resistance to fossil fuel expansion, including the Standing Rock protests of the Dakota Access Pipeline and the fossil fuel divestment movement are growing in number and significance. New coalitions of environmental justice advocates, labor, climate change and environmental activists are coming together to offer more comprehensive approaches to overcoming the ecological crisis. These approaches include the adoption of the precautionary approach over risk management of toxic chemicals, pollution prevention over pollution control strategies, a renewable energy economy over a fossil fuel economy, a “just transition” and a “superfund” for workers displaced out of polluting industries by improved environmental regulations, and a Green New Deal that offers jobs to disadvantaged workers and marginalized communities (see also Schwartzman 2011). These new coalitions engaged in the struggle for a more transformative environmental politics are a precondition for the advent of a vibrant socialist ecology movement (Faber 2008). They will become even more of a necessity in the Trump era. We know that it is possible. As stated by Gar Alperovitz (2016, 2), “millions of Americans are open to-and responsive to a politics of ‘democratic socialism’ is an important lesson of the Sanders campaign.” It is our goal and obligation as members of the Boston Editorial Group of *CNS* to provide a positive vision of the ecosocialist alternative that can inspire such a mobilization.

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