

The Wall Street Journal, 21 avril

On Green Energy, Now They Tell Us

Emissions are growing faster than ever, and more pollution may be the answer to global warming.



A 2023 Ford Mustang Mach-E charges at an electric vehicle charging station in London, Ohio, March 8, 2024. PHOTO: JOSHUA A. BICKEL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Full text:

If driving a Tesla saves gasoline, shouldn't you rush out right now and drive yours around the block 50 times and save a lot of gas?

I'm joking but not really. Exactly nobody [advised](#) the Obama administration that subsidizing green energy was a way to reduce emissions or substitute for a carbon tax. But it turns out reality can't be suppressed forever. In the very bible of the blob, *Foreign Affairs* magazine, a peak Obamaist, former White House budget chief Peter Orszag, discovers the [truth](#), aided by co-authors including the energy sage Daniel Yergin: An "energy transition," in the sense of displacing fossil fuels, isn't happening. "Energy addition" is happening.

"Rather than replacing conventional energy sources," they write, "the growth of renewables is coming on top of that of conventional sources."

Yawn, say regular readers of this column. Total energy output is growing and so are emissions even as renewables are also growing.

In one way the authors pull their punches. The only force working to moderate emissions is the age-old human quest for efficiency. That quest is undermined by green-energy subsidies for a simple reason: When you subsidize something—say, energy consumption—you get more of it.

Example: Ford is expected to lose over a two-year period [at least](#) \$50,000 for every electric vehicle it sells. Not included is thousands more in direct taxpayer handouts to car buyers. The combined sum not only is a giant subsidy to mine the necessary battery minerals, creating emissions that otherwise wouldn't be created. It's also a whopping subsidy to every other user in the global economy to consume the gasoline American EV drivers are being paid not to consume. Assuming average driving over a four-year period, it calculates out to \$200 per gallon of gasoline saved (but not really saved).

Where Barack Obama led, Angela Merkel and China followed, though China mainly to replace imported oil with domestic coal for national-security purposes. Last year emissions reached an all-time high of 40 billion tons. This CO₂ is expected to have a 100-plus-year half-life in the atmosphere, so whatever the climate effects may be, yes, we'll experience them.

There's only one option now. Retired NASA scientist James Hansen, in a new [paper](#), warns—catnip for reporters—that warming has lately speeded up. By a side door he and coauthors slip in the role of particulates. Ironically, a recent global agreement to reduce ocean-shipping pollution is allowing more sunlight to reach the surface, accounting for almost half the warming since 2020.

The real lesson is between the lines: Only deliberate injections of such particulates can alter the climate future we face, whatever that future may be given the vagaries of climate forecasting. (One of Mr. Hansen's virtues is a plain-English exposition of the role of speculation and supposition in the elaboration of climate models.)

The natural climate may yet have surprises for us, good or bad, not apparent in our highly imperfect computer simulations. But a political outcome is clear. Our politicians massaged away the one sound but impolitic policy prescription (carbon taxes) because it was unpopular with voters. Instead they inflicted billions in direct and indirect costs on taxpayers, car buyers and auto shareholders to subsidize the creation of, among other outputs, a domestic EV industry dependent on subsidies.

That industry now functions as a fiscal and political sinkhole, most recently requiring tariffs to protect it from cheaper, better EVs from China. The net effect on emissions? At least somewhat worse than they would otherwise be.

So ignore what you read in the press. When [Donald Trump](#) took the oath of office he joined a 47-way tie among presidents who had no meaningful impact on the rate of climate change.

[Elon Musk](#), whose car company is the one EV maker that shows promise without government handouts, asks if we live in a simulation. He means inside a computer program created by super-advanced aliens. We already live in one kind of simulation where the effects of government policy, as advertised in a subservient press, bear no relation to the actual effects.

This points to the great conundrum of our times, the phenomenal inability of our politicians to produce any useful outcome from the billions we hand them. The EV miscarriage is a resounding example, with no end in sight.