

FOSSIL FUELS: THE NEW TOBACCO?

We are witnessing a historic moment: The End of the Fossil Fuel Age.

The **International Energy Agency**, a body of energy experts and economists, put out a landmark report in May laying out a roadmap to get to Net Zero by 2050, to meet the goal set forth in the Paris Agreement. To do so, the report spells out that **there must be no new investments in fossil fuel development.** *"If governments are serious about the climate crisis, there can be no new investments in oil, gas and coal, from now — from this year,"* said Fatih Birol, the IEA's executive director.

The big three oil giants, Shell, Exxon and Chevron, have all taken some pretty significant blows. In May a Dutch court found that Shell's contribution to climate change to be criminal, threatening human rights through its investments in fossil fuels and ordered it to reduce its emissions by 45 percent by 2030.

This is an incredible precedent:

A government has finally declared that being in the business of wrecking the planet is a crime.

A senior lobbyist for Exxon's Washington DC government affairs team, Keith McCoy, told an undercover reporter for **Unearthed**, a Greenpeace UK project, that the company had been working to weaken key aspects of President Joe Biden's flagship initiative on climate change, the American Jobs Plan.

He described Biden's new plan to slash US greenhouse gas emissions as **"insane"** and admitted that the company had aggressively fought early climate science through **"shadow groups"** to protect its investments. — He told the undercover reporter that he is speaking to the office of influential Democratic senator Joe Manchin every week, with the aim of drastically reducing the scope of Biden's climate plan so that **"negative stuff"**, such as rules limiting greenhouse gas emissions and taxes on oil companies, are removed.

A second Exxon lobbyist, Dan Easley — who left the company in January after working as its chief White House lobbyist throughout the Trump administration — laughed when asked by an undercover reporter if the company had achieved many policy wins under Trump, before outlining victories on fossil fuel permitting and the renegotiation of the NAFTA trade agreement.

"The wins are such that it would be difficult to categorize them all," he said, adding that the biggest victory was Trump's reduction in the corporate tax rate, which was **"probably worth billions to Exxon"**.

Exxon now has three seats on its board occupied by climate activist investors, thanks to some clever activism and investors, *From Black Rock to State Street to Vanguard voting against the company, in an effort to take the reins and steer the ship towards climate sanity.* While 61% of Chevron shareholders voted to reduce emissions of the products it sells. That's the latest news. But how's the industry doing over a longer period?

Over the past decade the fossil fuel industry lost \$123 billion — underperforming by 52% compared to a baseline world equities index. There is not a regulated coal plant in the country

that is economic to operate today, labor and regulatory actions hamper operation as insolvency become more common.

Natural gas is falling out of favor with investors and utilities faster than coal, risking \$100 billion in stranded assets, due to its inability to compete with declining clean energy costs.

Solar energy is now the cheapest electricity in history and it's only getting cheaper.

And as more car companies make commitments to selling emissions-free vehicles, and our biggest utilities like Xcel Energy commit to 100% carbon-free energy, you're not likely to see these trends change direction any time soon. Last year over 80% of all new electricity generating capacity built around the world was clean energy, 91% of which was solar and wind.

The ship has sailed.

But it's not all economics, although that helps. It's also about social license. For decades, the tobacco industry sought to cast doubt in the public's mind about the studies that linked smoking cigarettes to cancer. They hired fancy marketing consultants to craft clever messages to make it seem to the public like the science was uncertain.

Of course, they knew their product was killing people. Instead of stopping, they just lied about it.

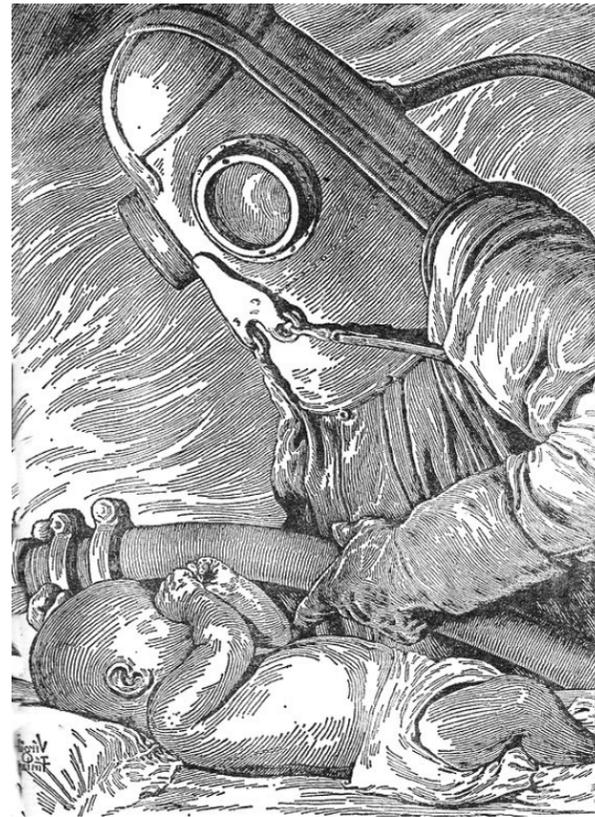
So, when the public found out burning fossil fuels caused climate change, the fossil fuel industry followed the tobacco industry's example. They literally hired the same consultants who worked for the tobacco companies to run the same playbook. Of course, they had been doing their own research on climate change since the 1960s and knew very well about their product's impact on the planet. While this bought them some time, the truth has caught up with them.

Between 1998 and 2014, Exxon spent at least \$30 million funding climate denial groups, such as the **Heartland Institute, Competitive Enterprise Institute, and Heritage Foundation.** This network played a critical role in shifting the Republican Party from a position of support for action to cut emissions in the 1980s to its near-total opposition to tackling climate change from the mid-1990s to today.

Exxon also helped to found and lead a powerful cross-industry group, the **Global Climate Coalition**, which spent tens of millions of dollars campaigning against a binding global climate agreement ahead of the 1997 UN climate summit in Kyoto. The organization spent \$13 million dollars on one advertising campaign alone, aiming to weaken US support for an agreement in Kyoto. The efforts were successful: the US Congress refused to ratify Kyoto and Exxon later lobbied the Bush administration to pull out of the protocol altogether. This left global efforts to rein in greenhouse gas emissions in tatters.

Fighting science

Exxon continues to deny having misled the public on climate change, and no serving Exxon executive has ever admitted that the company fought climate science to protect the company's financial interests — until now. Over the past decade, diverse coalitions of activists have protested oil and gas pipelines being built around the world like the Dakota Access Pipeline fight at Standing Rock, the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline being



protested right now in Minnesota, and the TransCanada Keystone XL pipeline, which after a decade of delays has finally been put to rest by the Biden administration revoking its permit. And while these fights didn't stop the oil giants in their path, they made each new pipeline that much harder to get approved, delayed the oil from flowing, sometimes indefinitely, and posed financial risks to these companies that are now too great for many investors to stomach. Coupled with the fossil fuel divestment movement that appealed to the conscience of investors around the world resulting in nearly \$15 trillion flowing out of fossil fuel investments, you can see that the fossil fuel industry's social license to operate is being revoked.

In the absence of major legislation limiting US emissions — such as the cap-and-trade system proposed during the Obama administration — Biden has moved to accelerate the transition to clean energy and transport through government spending. The proposals, the most ambitious clean energy legislation ever put forward by a US President, included more than \$100 billion in subsidies for electric vehicles alone and would have been paid for by higher taxes on corporations like Exxon.

But last week Biden endorsed an alternative plan, which eliminates the vast majority of spending on climate change after being forced into a compromise by "moderate" Democratic senators, including Joe Manchin, senator for West Virginia.

On July 14th The European Union's regulatory arm, The European Commission, detailed a plan that will remove cars with internal combustion engines from European showrooms by 2035. This will further require the EU boost the share of power the bloc gets from renewable energy to 40 percent from the current 32 percent by the end of this decade. Steel producers and cement makers will pay for every ton of carbon dioxide their factories emit. Cargo ships may not be able to dock in ports like Rotterdam or Hamburg unless they run on cleaner fuels. Commercial airliners will be required to fill up with synthetic fuel produced with green energy.

*The writing is on the wall.
Despite industry resistance to reality—
The end of the fossil fuel age looms.*

A Greenfuse Radical Remix with reporting from

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BIG BROTHER AS MAN-IN-THE-MIDDLE

ORGANIZED CRIME 'SNOWDENED'

The **FBI** and **Australian Federal Police** ran an encrypted chat platform and intercepted secret messages between criminal gang members from all over the world for more than three years.

Named **Operation Ironside (AFP) / Trojan Shield (FBI, Interpol)** June 7th, law enforcement agencies from Australia, Europe, and the US conducted house searches and arrested thousands of suspects across a wide spectrum of criminal groups, from biker gangs in Australia to drug cartels across Asia and South America, and weapons and human traffickers in Europe.

In a press conference, Australian police said the sting operation got underway in 2018 after the FBI successfully seized encrypted chat platform Phantom Secure.

Knowing that the criminal underworld would move to a new platform, US and Australian officials decided to run their own service on top of An0m (also stylized as AN0M), an encrypted chat platform that the FBI had secretly gained access to through an insider.

Just like Phantom Secure, the new service consisted of secure smartphones that were configured to run only the An0m app and nothing else.

The app, advertised through word of mouth and via the anom.io website, allowed phone owners to send encrypted text and voice messages between devices and prevented them from running other services or installing other apps that would leak their identities.

All data on the device was encrypted, and no phone number was required to use the app, which relayed all its messages via An0m's central platform.

But according to investigators and court documents, the An0m insider provided access to the FBI, which was able to set up a man-in-the-middle scheme that allowed it to receive copies of all messages sent through the platform since October 2018.



Per the court documents, all An0m devices located outside the US were configured to send a blind carbon copy (BCC) of all their messages to a third-party XMPP bot, which the FBI called iBot.

Here, the bot would decrypt the messages and then re-encrypt them using encryption keys managed by the FBI.

This design allowed the FBI to intercept the messages and decrypt texts sent by gang members to each other, many of which included details of drug movements or murder plots.

But while the FBI had set up the scheme, it was mostly Australian authorities who reviewed these messages, due to jurisdiction issues, as it was easier for AFP officials to obtain all the necessary paperwork, and then pass the information to the US three times a week. Per court documents, the scheme was so successful that a third unnamed country, believed to be in the EU, hosted another iBot server and helped sift through more than 26 million encrypted messages.

Officials initially relied on undercover agents to promote the An0m devices, but as law enforcement agencies shut down competing platforms, such as **EncroChat** and **Sky ECC**, criminal gangs found refuge on the network, which eventually amassed more than 12,000 users from 300+ criminal syndicates across 100+ countries.

All in all, investigators described Operation Ironside as one of the largest sting operations in law enforcement history.

Per court documents, investigators shut down the sting operation after their interception warrant expired on June 7, but it appears that some criminal groups caught on that the An0m app was leaking their conversations to third party XMPP servers earlier this year. On 21st March 2021, a (now deleted) blog post correctly identified that An0m @anomsecure was in fact sending all the user messages to US-based law enforcement. Criminals were already catching onto the game as the arrests began.

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