

# Absolutism of Power and the Self-Righteousness of Environmental Activism



# Self-righteous, misinformed environmental activism leaves California, sweltering and in the dark.

Rolling blackouts plagued California last week as a heatwave instigated electricity demand that pushed the grid to the limits and exceeded California's power capacity. It was a direct result of California's absolute agenda of eliminating natural gas power.

On August 14, 2020, grid operator CAISO issued a [Flex Alert](#) asking customers to reduce electricity consumption during the late afternoon and evening. In a plea to the public, Anne Gonzales, CASIO spokesperson, intreated, "we don't call on consumers to conserve unless it's imminent that there could be an energy shortfall."

As California grabbles with this heatwave and the rolling blackouts, we have to examine how this came to be and the implications of self-righteous environmental activism.



We are most acquainted with Absolutism as a political theory. A form of government in which unlimited, full power is held by a centralized sovereign individual, with no checks or balances from any other part of the nation or government. The ruling individual has absolute power, with no legal, electoral, or other challenges to that power.

The most common

theory used to underpin the absolutist monarchs was "the divine right of kings," derived from medieval ideas of kingship. This theory claimed that rulers held their authority directly from God. That the king in his kingdom was as God in his creation, enabling the absolutist monarchs to challenge the power of the church, effectively removing it as a rival to the sovereigns and making their power more absolute. It also gave them an extra layer of legitimacy.

We live in an era when energy accessibility and reliability are as abundant as the avocado orchards in California. Last week the same vanished as quickly as falling leaves – it's time to ask ourselves how we meet energy demand cleanly and reliably.

Many activists portray solar and wind-generated electricity as an absolute remedy. When they say we want clean energy, they mean we don't want-fossil fuel. The state's local community might be devastated by rolling blackouts and budget shortfalls, reduced jobs, and

# “we can embrace a pragmatic vision of energy”

plant closings. Residents might be shouldering crushing prices. Still, they say, “ban fossil fuel.” One has to wonder why banning fossil fuel is the measure of success.

The oddity of it all is veiled by the chant of a single, magical word: protect. Because environmentalists say they “love” the earth, they are permitted to command policy. What an extraordinary word; protect. It arouses emotion, under the guise of righteousness.

Lycophron, an ancient Greek philosopher, said, “the splendor of noble birth is imaginary. its prerogatives are based upon a mere word: a small word, yet the source of extremism and policy.

The problem is not the desire for clean energy and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but the strategy to arrive at a clean, sustainable energy system. It’s essential to separate these two concepts as we have been brainwashed to equate “clean” as necessitating the exclusion of all fossil fuel, including natural gas. The artificial overvaluation of wind and solar energy and the devaluation of natural gas is dysfunctional and dragging a concrete clean energy policy down.

We can embrace a new pragmatic vision

of energy, not as a system for clean, but a system of clean—a system in which we employ all energy sources to deliver reduced greenhouse gas, reliable, affordable, efficient energy.

Suppose the activists influencing government policy are aristocrats. In that case, they function like the monarchs that we call dictators functioned—attempting to reproduce aspects of privilege relished in a previous era. Rulers largely failed because they lacked the sustaining myth of the divine right of kings. As fallen dictators from Mussolini to Duvalier to Maduro showed the world, power without myth does not endure.

Myths take many forms. In their essence, they are stories we tell ourselves, like the story that divesting based on fund ownership is virtuous, even mandatory. This story is built into policy, which decrees that states must abolish fossil fuel while increasing wind and solar. It’s a story based on the premise that the interests of some persons are naturally higher than others because they are closer to God.

The activist aristocracy today clings to its sustaining myth of environmental harm. It provides the base of the activist’s legitimacy, without which the absolute exclusion of fossil fuel begins



to seem indefensible. The core myth—that fossil fuel harms the environment must be maximized and is thus considered unchallengeable. We might call it today’s version of the divine right of kings. Activist primacy is a form of power. And entitlement has no place in a clean energy solution.

Now let’s return to California. According to state grid operator CAISO and Wood Mackenzie analysts, the blackouts were a side effect of the state’s increasing shift to solar power and away from natural-gas-fired generators. California was without sufficient dispatchable power. The trend toward electrifying vehicles and buildings will further increase demand on the grid in the coming years, potentially raising the stakes on future heatwave events.

How do we move forward and begin to change such an entrenched and self-righteous view on energy? We start by seeing it for what it is and naming it as illegitimate. The era of Enlightenment, in which America was founded, didn’t begin with crafting policy and regulations. The era of energy enlightenment begins with challenging the myths of activists and articulating new principles for a clean energy future. Our focus must be on enlightenment, public good, and evolution. We need to strive for a collective agreement on the core problem. The innovation of our energy system is our mutual aim. Unfortunately, activists are fighting a war on social media, the press, the legislatures, and the courts.

Our ideal path to change should be innovative and conservative. By any rational evaluation, the



increased use of natural gas has been a net positive for the environment, the economy, and our energy security. We need to examine our energy system, and its future build-out from a practical, not an ideological perspective. When it comes to addressing climate change, we must pursue the many diverse approaches for reducing carbon emissions.

The natural gas industry continues to develop, store, and transmit renewable energy. Renewable energy that is carbon negative, something wind and solar can't provide.

Renewable natural gas is one of the most overlooked opportunities in our clean energy arsenal today.

Derived from processing raw biogas, RNG is produced from industry, agriculture, and waste management. SGA members are capturing waste

as a baseload resource when solar and wind simply cannot. It also contributes to energy security by providing an enhanced diversity of supply.

A study by Navigant Consulting found that replacing 16% of California's natural gas supply with RNG would cut greenhouse gas emissions as much as converting all state buildings to electric-only energy by 2030. Additionally, it would provide dispatchable power that would ensure reliability. Yet activists in their self-righteousness, attack renewable natural gas despite its environmental benefits.

It's time we move past the pivotal emotions of fear and anger in climate activism and focus on pragmatic solutions. Activists recruit and motivate the public using fear – marketing the threat of climate catastrophe and mediating the paralyzing potential of despair with hope that propels collective action and influences policy.



methane and processing it to make RNG, thereby avoiding the negatives effects of methane at farms, wastewater treatment plants, and landfills. Operators are repurposing what already exists, creating a “green gas” that is interchangeable with traditional pipeline-quality natural gas. There is an advantage of this renewable; RNG acts

It is time that the natural gas industry did the same. Harness emotion to educate and manage the public's acute fear. Conquering the self-righteous environmental activism that left California, sweltering, and in the dark will require that the natural gas industry embraces the role of emotion in social movements. To bridge the gap, we must

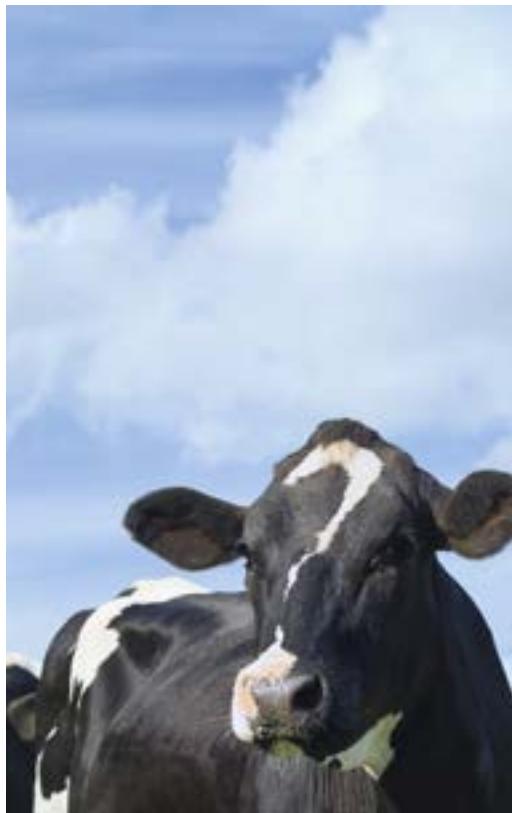
motivate with a realistic understanding of the current limitations of solar and wind while cultivating hope through innovative clean energy solutions. Only then will we bridge the ideological divide between desire and pragmatism.

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