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January 12, 2015

[Truth Out](#)

by Michael T. Klare, TomDispatch

[Environment & Climate](#), [Organic Transitions](#)

Around the world, carbon-based fuels are under attack. Increasingly grim economic pressures, growing popular resistance, and the efforts of government regulators have all shocked the energy industry. Oil prices are [falling](#), colleges and universities are [divesting](#) from their carbon stocks, voters are [instituting curbs](#) on hydro-fracking, and delegates at the UN climate conference in Peru have [agreed](#) to impose substantial restrictions on global carbon emissions at a conference in Paris later in the year. All this has been accompanied by what might be viewed as a moral assault on the very act of extracting carbon-based fuels from the earth, in which the major oil, gas, and coal companies find themselves [portrayed](#) as the enemies of humankind.

Under such pressures, you might assume that Big Energy would react defensively, perhaps apologizing for its role in spurring climate change while assuming a leadership position in planning for the transition to a post-carbon economy. But you would be wrong: instead of retreating, the major companies have gone on

the offensive, extolling their contributions to human progress and minimizing the potential for renewables to replace fossil fuels in just about any imaginable future.

That the big carbon outfits would seek to perpetuate their privileged market position in the global economy is, of course, hardly surprising. After all, oil is the the most valuable commodity in international commerce and major producing firms like ExxonMobil, Chevron, and Shell regularly [top](#) lists of the world's most profitable enterprises.

Still, these companies are not just employing conventional legal and corporate tactics to protect their position, they're mounting a moral assault of their own, claiming that fossil fuels are an essential factor in eradicating poverty and achieving a decent life on this planet.

Improbable as such claims may seem, they are being echoed by powerful officials around the world -- typically, the leaders of carbon-producing nations like Russia and Saudi Arabia or the representatives of American energy-producing states like Texas and Kentucky. Count on one thing: this crew of fossil fuel enthusiasts is intent on ensuring that any path to a carbon-free future will, at best, be long and arduous. While you're at it, add top Congressional leadersto this crew, since many of the Republican victors in the 2014 midterm election are from oil and coal-producing states and regularly [laud](#) carbon production for its contribution to local prosperity, while [pocketing contributions](#) by Big Oil and other energy firms.

Unless directly challenged, this pro-carbon offensive --backed by copious Big Energy advertising --is likely to attract at least as much favor as the claims of anti-carbon activists. At this point, of course, the moral arguments against carbon consumption are -- or at least should be -- well known. The oil, gas, and coal companies, it is claimed, are selfishly pursuing mega-profits at the expense of the climate, the environment, our children and grandchildren, and even possibly a future of any reasonable sort for humanity as a whole. "Basically [the big energy companies have] said, we're going to wreck the planet, we don't care what you say, we think we can, and we dare you to stop us," [observed](#) climate activist and [350.org](#) cofounder Bill McKibben in a recent interview. This outlook was reflected in many of the signs carried by the estimated [400,000 demonstrators](#) who participated in the People's Climate March in New York City last September.



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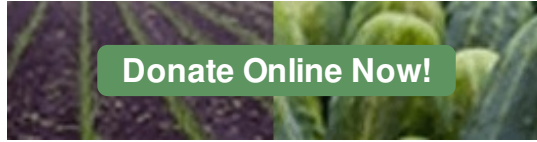
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