

THE GREEN NEW DEAL CHALLENGES THE DOMINATION OF CAPITAL

The Green New Deal is an overarching statement of political goals for the Democratic Party, something the party has not had for decades. It lays out a vision of a future inspired by the best the party has to offer, Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, which he laid out in January 1941 as the US stared at the unfolding crisis in Europe. In this post I called for just such a statement, and this is everything I could have hoped for. It is a combination of Roosevelt's unfinished goals and the massive work done by liberals to expand the reach of the Constitution to previously disfavored groups. It offers hope and possibility as we confront the crisis of environmental disaster.

It also offers a stunning contrast to the closed and frightened Republican/MAGA plutocratic vision for this nation. Their hounds immediately attacked the messenger, the message and anyone who might want to consider the message with their usual childish insults and trollish memes, their version of political discussion. A few conservatives recognize the seriousness of the problem of climate change, but have nothing to offer, as reported by Emily Atkin in The New Republic.

Here is the text of H.R. 109. I encourage everyone to take a few minutes and read it. The summaries I've seen are insufficient to convey the brilliance of the document.

The Green New Deal acknowledges that meeting the challenge of impending climate disaster will be enormously disruptive. It's most important virtue is that it doesn't assume that the entire burden of the disruption will be borne by working people. Instead, it insures that workers

are protected from disruption, not with some phony job training program, but with real protection. Equally important, it insures that capital will not be able to grab vast profits or control adaptation for their cash benefit.

Capitalism has brought staggering social and environmental changes in this country. Frequently, the technology that has produced those changes was the product of government research and development. Capitalists imposed all the costs of those social and environmental changes on working people and the poor while sucking up all the benefits for themselves. You don't see the rich living next door to petroleum processing plants or airports or gravel pits or trash dumps. You don't see their kids suffering from asthma caused by factory pollution or heavy truck traffic or worse. You don't see them unable to pay medical bills or take their kids for needed medical attention. That's for the little people.

The Green New Deal says that's over. When the price of natural gas dropped, capitalists stopped using coal, and coal miners lost their jobs, their insurance, their homes and their futures. Under the Green New Deal, when natural gas is phased out every displaced worker will have a job and health care, because the Green New Deal offers a job guarantee and insists on universal access to health care. Communities, especially marginalized people, will participate in decisions about location of new manufacturing facilities and other issues affecting them, and that participation will enable all of us to protect ourselves from the costs capitalists impose on us today.

The Green New Deal recognizes that a substantial research and development program will be needed to create new technology to meet its goals. That's going to be funded by the government. But this time there is no free ride for the capitalists. Section 4.1 requires the government to provide and leverage

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receives appropriate ownership stakes and returns on investment, adequate capital (including through community grants, public banks, and other public financing), technical expertise, supporting policies, and other forms of assistance to communities, organizations, Federal, State, and local government agencies, and businesses working on the Green New Deal mobilization

The entire document is designed to rebalance power in deciding the future of the nation. It is explicitly small-d democratic. It explicitly favors the interests of the vast majority. It explicitly slashes the power of the rich to dictate what, if any, response will be made to the threat of climate change.

This rebalancing is a serious challenge not just to capital and the rich, it is a serious challenge to both parties. Democrats claim to be the party of the people. The Green New Deal forces them to prove it. The Republicans represent the interests of the rich against the interests of working people. The Green New Deal makes this contradiction concrete. Both parties claim to want the best for the future of the country. The Green New Deal forces them to come up with positive programs or to do nothing in the face of mounting inequality, a zero-sum political economy, and impending environmental catastrophe.

There's an even more direct assault on the dominance of capital in the Green New Deal. It calls for decarbonization of the economy. That directly threatens the wealth and power of a number of rich people, for example, the Koch family, whose fortunes are grounded on petroleum. The value of their fortunes will fall as oil becomes a mere feedstock for chemical processing. So will the fortunes of others, Russian oligarchs, Saudi princes, and African kleptocrats. The finances of a number of regimes of varying degrees of hostility to the US,

including Russia, Saudi Arabia, the oil emirates, Iran, Iraq, and maybe ISIS. Their power will drop as the value of their natural resources falls. These are ruthless people with no interest in planetary survival. They will fight to the death to prevent the loss of power and wealth.

Meanwhile the media focuses on the horse-race and the cost. Can the Green New Deal pass? How could we ever pay for it? Every single article I've read makes a point of saying it's politically impossible and almost all whine about the money. No one thinks the Senate with its piratical crew of Republican science deniers and Trumpists will ever pass it. And costs are not an issue until we agree to move it forward, and when it becomes real, brilliant economists like Stephanie Kelton will lead the way.

Right now every Democratic politicians opposed to the idea has to explain why their tweaks to neoliberal capitalism will accomplish something without crushing their voters. Republicans will continue to deny until the evidence overwhelms even their astonishing capacity for self-delusion. The rest of us have a planning document, something we can turn into legislation, something we can actually do that will make a difference. We'll be working on it while the brain-dead bitch about the impertinence of the youngs, and politicians pour perfume on their campaign treasuries to hide the stench of raw petroleum.