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Environment

Protesting Trumps threat to the planet – Marches for Science and Earth

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Alan Thornett looks at the destruction Trump is wreaking and the resistance that is growing.

There are many reactionary aspects to the Trump administration: racism, misogyny, homophobia, islamophobia, and the destruction of health care that are competing neck and neck.

Two things stand out, however, in terms of direct planetary threats. One is his militarism with his finger on the nuclear button following his intervention in Syria and his use of the biggest non-nuclear bomb in the US arsenal in Afghanistan and his naval flotilla heading for the Korean peninsula.

The other is his attitude to the environment, which is less dramatic, and is getting less attention, but is equally a planetary threat. Here too the threat from the Trump regime reaches planetary proportions; not just because it affects everyone on the planet but that it is a direct threat to the ability of the planet to support life itself, including that of human beings.

Trump is a climate change denier. He has called the notion of man-made climate change “a hoax”, and vowed to reverse the (rather minimal) environmental policies put in place by Obama. On November 6 2016 he tweeted: “the concept of global warming was created by the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive”.

One of his campaign slogans was: “Trump digs coal.” He is pledged to reopen and expand coal production. He wants to open vast new areas to oil and gas exploration and boost the exploitation of tar sands and shale gas and build more pipelines. This is a phenomenal potential regression, and a huge step towards unstoppable global warming.

He is threatening to dismantle parts of the federal government’s repository of scientific data on everything from rising sea levels to the number of wildfires in the country. Alarmed scientists have begun a feverish attempt to copy reams of government data onto independent servers in hopes of safeguarding it from political interference.

Cabinet of fossil fuel extractors

On climate change, as on other issues, some of those that Trump is surrounding himself with are at least as dangerous as him. His administration is stacked out with direct representatives of fossil fuel extractors.

Vice President Pence, as well as being a born again Christian and anti-abortionist is an outspoken supporter of the coal industry. As governor of Indiana he opposed and rolled back renewable energy and energy efficiency programmes. Although he does not openly deny climate change he is opposed to anything being done about it.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, was the long-time Chair and Chief Executive of ExxonMobil. Exxon is under investigation by New York’s attorney general for misleading investors on the risks of climate change. It has consistently lobbied against proposals to mitigate climate change and pushed to open the Arctic up for drilling.

Scott Pruitt, heading up the Environmental Protection Agency has been a long time opponent of the Agency and a close friend of the fossil fuel industry. He helped lead a lawsuit from 28 states against the agency’s clean power plan, an initiative to cut carbon pollution from coal power plants by Obama’s administration. Pruitt has stated that he believes that “the climate is changing, and human activity contributes to that in some manner”, but questions whether

carbon dioxide “is a primary contributor to the global warming”. [\[1\]](#)

Rick Perry the former Texas governor who has taken over the Energy Agency famously wanted to abolish it but could not name it during his presidential bid in 2012. In 2011, Perry said that global warming was an unproven scientific theory.

Other people, with similar background and views populate every corner of the administration.

This certainly has the potential to revitalise climate denial. The Paris COP in December 2015 unanimously agreed that global warming is a result of human activity: mainly as a result of the burning of fossil fuel. This was a historic statement and indicated that climate deniers had been marginalised. Now they have been thrown a lifeline by the election of Trump.

And although the United States currently contributes only about 15 per cent of global carbon-dioxide emissions, a failure on its part to act to reduce emissions would push the world more decisively toward the 2°C tipping point. Trump has not announced the withdrawal of the US from the Paris agreement, but in a sense this does not matter because he is already going in the other direction...

In the event that the principal per-capita global emitter and the hegemonic global power bows out, any worldwide effort to reduce carbon emissions will be severely jeopardized. For this reason, climate scientists are increasingly turning from the United States to China as the main hope for leadership in combatting climate change.

The administrative order signed by Trump at the end of March has begun the process of rescinding the EPA's Clean Power Plan as well as rescinding a 2016 moratorium on coal leases on federal lands. Meanwhile a permit for the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, which would connect Alberta's oil sands to refineries in Texas, has been signed by the State Department, while Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the \$3.7 billion Dakota Access Pipeline, notified a federal court that it has pumped oil into the pipeline. [\[2\]](#)

Trump's attention on the environmental stage therefore is focused on delivering at home to the fossil fuel industry. And there is an ideological link between climate denial and many of the other anti-scientific positions taken by many of his followers, such as the rejection of evolution.

Resistance

But the environmental movement like other opponents of Trump's presidency are not taking any of this lying down. There were remarkable responses such as the return of 1,000 US military veterans of the Vietnam and Iraq wars in December 2016 to defend the indigenous people opposing the Standing Rock North Dakota access pipeline the pipe line from a militarised police force after Trump had signed an executive order allowing work to resume after it was closed down by campaigners.

Another such reaction is the March for Science called in January following the threats from the Trump administration to close down scientific research on climate change and destroy the vital data that has been gathered on global warming by US scientists over many decades, and which is crucial for the protection of the planet.

Trump's policy changes have caused heightened worry among scientists, and the incredible and immediate

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outpouring of support has made clear that these concerns are also shared by hundreds of thousands of people around the world. The mischaracterization of science as a partisan issue, which has given policymakers permission to reject overwhelming evidence, is a critical and urgent matter. Scientists in the US are calling for everyone who supports scientific research and evidence-based policies to take a public stand and be counted.

Over 600 marches for science were held around the world, in events that coincided with international Earth Day, as a part of a coordinated response to Donald Trump's attack on climate science and the 'post truth' ideology that he has promoted. Marches took place in Australia, the USA and across Europe with big turnouts in Sydney, Brisbane, Washington DC, London and Edinburgh.

2,000 marched in Edinburgh and between 3,000 and 4,000 assembled outside the Science Museum in London to march to Parliament Square Westminster.

The London march was a completely new constituency of people entering the political arena. The left was completely absent, as was (surprisingly) the regular climate campaigners. It was very much the science community in all its diversity, with large numbers of students and young people.

The banners and placards were individually made, and there were large numbers of them, but with a bit more of a cerebral tone than the average demo. My favourites were: 'The oceans are rising and so are we!' 'Evidence not ignorance' and 'What do we want? evidence based policy! When do we want it? after peer review!' I tried not to think about those written in Latin or were comprised mainly of mathematical equations.

It all gave a good flavour of the depth of the impact of Trumpism and the potential for mobilising against it.

The press release for the London march explains why these campaigners are protesting: At a time when fake news is rife and independent experts face challenges in getting their message heard, the March for Science is a celebration of the vital role that science plays in each of our lives and the need to respect and encourage research that gives us insight into the world. The March for Science champions science and the cross-border collaborations that are vital in enabling progress.

London has long been a global centre for the advancement of scientific thinking and The London March for Science is part of an international movement that recognises the need to preserve the productive and diverse research partnerships in the UK and around the world. We understand that the most effective way to protect science is to encourage the public to value and engage with it.

One week later we will see the People's Climate March in Washington, with sister marches across the country. Called for the 100th day of Trump's presidency.

The marches will

• Advance solutions to the climate crisis rooted in racial, social and economic justice, and committed to protecting front-line communities and workers.

• Protect our right to clean air, water, land, healthy communities and a world at peace.

- Immediately stop attacks on immigrants, communities of color, indigenous and tribal people and lands and workers.

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• Ensure public funds and investments create good paying jobs that provide a family-sustaining wage and benefits and preserve workers' rights, including the right to unionize.

• Fund investments in our communities, people and environment to transition to a new clean and renewable energy economy that works for all, not an economy that feeds the machinery of war.

• Protect our basic rights to a free press, protest and free speech.

Updated from [Socialist Resistance](#)

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[1] DiChristopher, Tom. "EPA chief Scott Pruitt says carbon dioxide is not a primary contributor to global warming". CNBC. NBC Universal.

[2] <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/...>