

Inside Divestment: The Illiberal Movement to Turn a Generation Against Fossil Fuels

National Association of Scholars

www.nas.org/divestment (will go live November 10)

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The fossil fuel divestment movement (FFDM) is raging on America's college campuses. On the surface, it is an effort to get colleges to sell off their investments in coal, oil, and gas. Its real goal is to radicalize students and stoke public support for drastic political and economic transformations.

- There are more than 1,000 campus-based fossil fuel divestment campaigns.
- 30 American colleges and universities, including Stanford and Georgetown, have divested.
- 72 percent of Harvard undergraduates voted to support fossil fuel divestment.

FFDM is Astroturf. It presents itself as student-led. In fact it is managed by professional activists.

- 350.org pays students to be activists, arranges summer training for activists, and offers paid internships for activists.
- The movement's themes, Twitter hashtags, and "days of action" are determined top-down.
- Professors have given college credit for working on divestment campaigns and taught entire classes focused on fossil fuel divestment. Nearly 4,000 American professors have signed petitions or voted for fossil fuel divestment.

FFDM is elitist. It is driven by wealthy donors and deep-pocketed foundations and serves the material interests of Solyndra-style eco-cronyism.

- FFDM is most fervent at wealthy colleges such as Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Swarthmore.
- Tom Steyer (net worth \$1.6 billion; largest contributor to Democratic Party 2014; Stanford trustee) bankrolls Bill McKibben's 350.org.
- Schumann Media Center (assets \$31 million) funds McKibben's Middlebury College position and funded 350.org's founding.
- Al Gore (net worth \$173 million), founder of Generation Investment Management (\$12 billion), called on Harvard and all other colleges to divest from fossil fuels.

FFDM is puppetry. The organizers are using the students and the colleges to advance their agenda at the Paris Climate talks.

- Activists say they plan to use universities as political pawns to drive popular support for an onerous climate pact at the UN climate summit this December.
- Student activists report that the purpose of divestment is to "politicize and radicalize students," not to defund the fossil fuel industry.

FFDM is phony. Many of the claims of the organizers and supporters are hollow.

- Only 34 percent of “divested” colleges have fully shed their fossil fuel investments.
- Four of these are “DINOs”—divestments in name only. These four, including Oxford University, have sold *no investments at all* since their divestment decisions.
- Organizers admit that divestment has no net effect on fossil fuel companies. Their goal is student recruitment, not divestment per se.

FFDM is irrational. Divestment is sold to students as an answer to global warming, but taken on its own terms, divesting would have no meaningful effect on the Earth’s temperature.

- Advocates of divestment, including Bill McKibben, acknowledge that divestment will not decrease the share prices of fossil fuel companies or appreciably shrink their profits and access to capital.
- The two most popular reasons colleges give for divesting are to stop climate change (72 percent) and to support “sustainability” (69 percent). But fossil fuel investments affected by divestment decisions comprise only about 1 percent of the total college endowment.
- Many well-respected environmentalists dismiss divestment as a distraction from effective policies. These include Frank Wolak (director, Program on Energy and Sustainable Development, Stanford), Steven Cohen (executive director, Earth Institute, Columbia), Robert Stavins (lead author, three IPCC reports; professor of business and government, Harvard Kennedy School), and Mike Hulme (professor of climate change, University of East Anglia).

FFDM is political. Divestment turns the university endowment into a billboard for virtue signaling. It turns trustees and donors into political operatives rather than patrons of higher education.

- 83 percent of all divested colleges and universities in the United States are located in states that the Gallup Poll ranks as either “solid” or “leaning” toward the Democratic party. No state that is “solid” or “leaning” Republican has any divested colleges or universities.
- One-third of colleges and universities that reject divestment say that divestment would entangle the endowment in political battles and destroy the university’s political neutrality.

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