

Moore blasts mining, too

The new Michael Moore film, 'Planet of the Humans', is an attack on the human race not just the renewable energy industry.

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Executive producer Michael Moore and his writer, director, editor and narrator Jeff Gibbs have confounded fellow left-leaning political activists by hitting out at the renewable energy industry.

Miners may be tempted to cite the film in support of their economic importance. All forms of renewable energy rely, one way or another, on a mined product, Gibbs says.

Unfortunately, the film was not intended as an endorsement of the mining industry. Miners blast the tops off mountains. Wind farmers blast the tops off mountains. They are equally repugnant. That is the Moore and Gibbs message.

Shifting to renewable energy permits miners to do dastardly things in new ways, according to the film. As a result, the amount of renewable energy being generated is less than the amount of fossil fuel used in its production.

Early in the film, Gibbs records a visit to a music festival promoting renewable energy use. Behind the stage, he finds a connection to the local power grid. Those attending, it seems, do not want to take a chance on a dodgy power supply, however green.

Gibbs uses the apparent dishonesty of the concert promoters as the stepping stone to a wide-ranging barrage against the renewable energy industry.

As a source of motivation, his concert experience is validly highlighted. That does not stop it being one of many misleading and potentially duplicitous uses of old film to manufacture an anti-growth story line.

Examples of industry practices and progress toward decarbonising the US economy are drawn repeatedly from what was happening five, 10 or more years earlier. In many respects, this is a film made about 2010 which just happens to have been released in 2020. It is not a contemporary account of today's renewable energy industry. Nor does it need to be for Gibbs' purposes.

The film deftly weaves old footage, dog whistling, ambush interviews and pregnant pauses to throw doubt on peoples' motivations, without exploring arguments in any detail. Environmental campaigners

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Al Gore and Bill McKibben, in particular, come out looking sullied for having sold out to commercial interests.

Gore's 2013 sale of his US television business to a subsidiary of Al Jazeera, founded by the fossil fuel rich state of Qatar, is highlighted. A succession of clips lasting barely a few seconds, removing any vestige of context, shows Gore repeatedly trying to weasel out of the apparent hypocrisy.

Gore's linguistic squirming might entertain some. Whether his financial good fortune has any bearing on how people should react to climate change is another matter.

Those on the left of politics regard the ultra wealthy Koch brothers and funds management firms, especially ones registered in the Cayman Islands, as close to pure evil. Moore and Gibbs know which emotional buttons to press as they slyly husband support for their attack on the renewable energy industry.

So merely mentioning that a Koch-owned business supplies parts to a solar energy array is supposed to be enough to instantly discredit the entire endeavour. Saying that Gore and McKibben are involved in funds management is enough to call into question the renewables shift which they support.

The film spends a good deal of time attacking the use of biomass to inflate renewable energy production numbers. Biomass-sourced energy is characterised by Gibbs as simply destroying forests. Biomass energy generators use potentially toxic chemicals and cavalierly emit pollutants, according to the film.

Gibbs attributes 70% of worldwide renewable energy production to biomass then darts back to his US-centric storyline. The US government Energy Information Administration has estimated that biomass accounted for 44% of renewable energy production in 2019 and 43% of the increase in renewable energy output since 1980. The US data are ignored.

As well as reeking of dishonesty, Planet of the Humans contains more veiled prejudices than one can easily recount.

Mining of rare earth elements needed to support renewable energy production is linked sneakily to unfettered radioactivity. A ticking Geiger counter is deployed to emphasise the imminent danger.

Ninety percent of what rare earth miners pull out of the ground contains uranium, thorium and radioactive waste which is turned into a paste and spread over the desert floor, says one of the movie's producers, pretending to be an independent expert.

According to Moore and Gibbs, the green energy movement is a sham. It is simply a vehicle used by corporate interests with suspect motives to reinvent themselves. The bad guys connive with corruptible climate activists.

Gibbs contends that industrial activity, consumerism, pursuit of wealth and corporate power are the climate change drivers. The shift to renewable energy is simply feeding the monster, not solving the problem.

The film dwells on only one solution. Anthropologist Nina Jablonski from Penn State University describes population growth as the herd of elephants in the room. We have to have our abilities to consume reined in, says the expert on the evolution of human skin.

Another interviewed anthropologist and authority on the causes of Neanderthal extinction asserts that without a major die-off in the modern human population there is no turning back. Discredited 1970s catastrophist Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, would be nodding vigorous assent.

The film commends reducing industrial activity, cutting the world's growth rate and learning to live with fewer resources. Moore has needed little prompting since the film's release to link its warnings of humankind misbehaviour and its anti-growth message to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on *Planet of the Humans*, the destruction of global economic activity over the past two months needs to become a permanent feature of human life.

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