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SHOULD FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES BE INCLUDED IN CLIMATE POLICYMAKING?

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ABSTRACT----------
The fossil fuel industry has historically been a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, causing severe social and environmental consequences. Despite this, the sector remains a crucial component of the global economy, raising debates about its role in climate policymaking. Advocates for inclusion highlight the industry's expertise, infrastructure, and potential contributions to a low-carbon transition. Opponents argue that its history of public deception, lobbying against regulations, and prioritization of profits undermines genuine climate action. This paper explores both sides of the debate, analyzing the risks and benefits of involving fossil fuel corporations in climate policy formulation. It concludes that excluding these entities is essential for ensuring unbiased and effective policies to address the climate crisis and prioritize planetary and human well-being.

KEYWORDS: *Climate Policy, Fossil Fuel Industry, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Sustainable Energy Transition, Climate Change Mitigation----------*

INTRODUCTION

The fossil fuel industry is responsible for no less than two-thirds of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Despite this, the industry has occasionally shown a lack of genuine dedication to addressing the challenge of climate change and has even strongly hindered efforts to address and adapt to the issue (Bach, 2017; McCarthy, 2019). Although several sector participants are actively pursuing admirable endeavors to decrease emissions, significant change is still needed (Bach, 2017). According to reports, only 90 entities including 56 oil and gas companies were responsible for 63% of the methane and carbon dioxide emissions between 1751 and 2010 (Heede, 2014). Most of these emissions have occurred since 1986.

However, despite this, it is undeniable that the fossil fuel sector remains the cornerstone of our prosperous developed civilizations. According to certain predictions, this sector may continue to hold substantial importance and remain significant at least until 2040 (IEA, 2015).

As such, we are somewhat caught between two options: either downplay the adverse social and environmental consequences that fossil fuel companies are causing or refuse to acknowledge our reliance on them. As a result, some legislators have suggested that fossil fuel companies be removed from the decision-making process regarding climate change, while others believe they should be involved.

The Argument for Including Fossil Fuel Companies in Climate Policymaking

Gross, S. (2020), in her article "The United States can take climate change seriously while leading the world in oil and gas production" argued that rather than demonizing firms in the energy sector during the low-carbon transition, we should instead include them in decision-making. Doing so will likely make fossil fuel companies counterproductive. According to the report, some businesses are undoubtedly more proactive than others when it comes to their climate change initiatives. Like how certain businesses stand to earn or lose more in the future with lower carbon emissions. Though numerous firms that are into fossil fuel recognize how climate change

poses an inherent threat to their business framework, they nevertheless wish to continue operating successfully as the world transitions to an energy economy with reduced carbon emissions. The article went on to advise against drawing comparisons between fossil fuel and cigarette industries. This is because, unlike the tobacco industry, the

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contemporary economy was founded on fossil fuels. Considering that doing away with them, and the related infrastructure, would take years and cost trillions of dollars, it is necessary to include them when developing climate policy.

The article claimed that it is not advocating that we hand over climate policy to companies, but rather that we acknowledge that energy corporations should be included in decision-making since they play a significant part in the shift towards sustainable energy. Examples include the utilization of offshore construction expertise for offshore wind energy, as well as the application of subsurface knowledge to geothermal energy production and carbon storage. Some technologies and abilities gained in the oil and gas sector are equally valuable in renewable energy. The ability to run and maintain an electrical grid will be more crucial than ever as the amount of intermittent renewable energy sources rises. Financing and development of major, long-lasting projects is an area in which the energy sector excels. Eliminating energy corporations from the process because of an erroneous idea of "purity" might be more detrimental than helpful because they are repositories of vital information required to facilitate a shift towards clean energy.

The Case Against Including Fossil Fuel Companies in Climate Policymaking

Powell (2021) contrasts this by examining the PR war of major oil corporations aimed at delaying efforts to address climate change. According to the Harvard Gazette, fossil fuel firms should not participate in the development of climate policies since they have purposefully deceived the public about the issue by telling them one thing in public while saying and doing otherwise behind closed doors. As a result, Powell's research: Analysis of ExxonMobil's 40-year history of climate change communications, revealed systematic differences between what the company's scientists privately and in academic circles they talked about climate science and what they told the general populace via The New York Times as well as other publications. ExxonMobil deceived the general population about fundamental climate science and the associated ramifications, according to this investigation. They achieved this by quietly advancing climate research and vocally spreading disbelief in that knowledge.

According to the report, their findings and those of others show that ExxonMobil has a lengthy track record of criticizing scientific findings and scientists in an effort to impede and postpone climate action. ExxonMobil continues to use language in subtle, systematic manners that are frequently deceptive to influence how the public views climate change. That study showed how the corporation has consistently avoided particular phrases and subjects in public while accentuating others. The report said that its most recent research demonstrates that while ExxonMobil's strategies have changed from overt, obvious climate denial to employing covert methods of influencing and propaganda, its ultimate objective has remained the same, which is to halt climate change initiatives. This is why firms that produce fossil fuels shouldn't be engaged in determining climate policy.

The Role of Fossil Fuel Companies in Shaping Climate Policy

I have always believed that all parties should be included in decision-making since, among other things, the policies that are chosen would have an impact on their enterprises. This was a point that the motion's supporting essay addressed quite persuasively. However, I now believe that the gravity of the problem at hand should dictate whether and how many specific stakeholders participate. Serious issues that pose risks to human health and safety should not be underestimated. Instead, government officials should leverage their authority to establish regulations aimed at safeguarding both human lives and the environment, with minimal involvement from the companies whose activities are subject to control. When industries such as fossil fuel corporations,

whose financial interests are strongly affected by regulatory measures, are included in the decision-making process, there is a risk that their pursuit of profits will lead them to advocate for actions and inactions that undermine the development and execution of these policies (Revkin, 2009; McCarthy, 2019). For instance, the top five oil and gas firms in the world, that are publicly traded, annually invest over $200 million in lobbying efforts to limit, postpone, or thwart legally mandated climate policies (McCarthy, 2019). BP allocates the highest annual expenditure on climate lobbying, with a budget of $53 million, followed by Shell, which spends $49 million, and ExxonMobil, with an annual spending of $41 million. Annually, Chevron and Total also commit approximately $29 million to a similar cause (McCarthy, 2019). This situation has posed a challenge for nations in implementing the necessary policies aligned with the Paris Agreement, which are vital for reaching climate change mitigation objectives. We may argue that, unlike

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cigarettes, climate change does not directly cause death, so why make the comparison? However, the use of fossil fuels is a major factor in climate change, which has negative implications on people's quality of life and the well-being of both humans and animals. These effects include extreme heat waves, droughts, and floods.

It is disappointing that certain politicians, decision-makers, and fossil fuel companies have placed monetary gain above the welfare of others and the environment. Hence, policies that will aid in resolving the climate change issue are hampered. These firms have established a structure that releases them from responsibility while being aware of the issue and continues to pour billions of dollars into preventing government initiatives (Monbiot, 2019). They support think tanks and give money to individuals and entities to disparage climate science. They also sponsor politicians, especially those in the US Congress, intending to thwart efforts at reducing emissions on a global scale (Revkin, 2009). Since they believe that initiatives to combat climate change are part of a larger plot to destroy the fossil fuel industry, fossil fuel companies have consistently opposed them for many years (Revkin 2009). With this mindset, I do not believe it is advisable to involve them in the formulation of climate policy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the debate surrounding the inclusion of fossil fuel corporations in climate policy features valid arguments on both sides. On one hand, there is a valid argument for engaging these industry giants in the transition to a low-carbon future, recognizing their expertise, resources, and the critical role they have played in shaping modern society. However, on the other hand, there are compelling reasons to be cautious about their involvement, given their historical record of misleading the public, lobbying against climate action, and prioritizing profit over environmental and human well-being.

After considering the analysis from both sides, I maintain the stance that fossil fuel companies should not be included in climate policymaking. This is due to the urgency of addressing climate change which cannot be overstated, as its impact on our planet and its inhabitants are already evident. The fossil fuel industry contributes at least two-thirds of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Their persistent lack of genuine dedication to addressing the challenge of climate change makes it abundantly clear that involving them in the formulation of climate policy might just be a grave mistake. It is of utmost importance that we prioritize the urgency of the climate crisis over the interests of such profit-driven entities. Thus, my position to exclude them from the decision-making processes is not only justified but essential for the sake of humanity and the planet.

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