

“Frackers own Congress,” read the headline of a February 10, 2012, column in the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle in which Sharon Guynap presented evidence of campaign donations to members of the U.S. Congress. She found the information in a report, “Deep Drilling, Deep Pockets in Congress,” by Common Cause. Top recipients included James Inhofe of Oklahoma, who claimed that the EPA Wyoming study was “not based on sound science but rather on political science.” From 2001 to 2011, the natural-gas industry spent \$726 million on lobbying alone, Ms. Guynap found. She also listed the campaign contributions from “the fracking industry” to the three members of the Wyoming delegation, Sen. John Barasso, Sen. Mike Enzi, and Rep. Cynthia Lummis, who are among the top 100 recipients, according to her sources. In addition, Ms. Guynap commented favorably on the EPA Pavillion study released last December.

The column provoked an angry response from Bruce Evertson, CEO of Evertson Oil Company in Kimball, Nebraska, whose letter to the editor accused Ms. Guynap of “jump[ing] on the environmentalist / obstructionist bandwagon” with the aim of “scar[ing] the hell out of people” and “trashing good people who serve the state of Wyoming.” Evertson has been in the oil and gas industry for nearly fifty years and has executed “thousands of fracking jobs” which, he believes, allows him to “set the record straight.”

“The damage to Pavillion’s water supply in Western Wyoming was not caused by fracking,” he asserts. “Pavillion has a well-documented history of bad water that dates back prior to wells ever being drilled there.” He also reiterates long-held industry claims that so-called hazardous chemicals used in fracking fluid are present “in household products found under your kitchen sink.” It follows that, writes Mr. Evertson, “According to Ms. Guynap, every kitchen in America is ‘hazardous’.” He concludes with the charge that “With new oil and gas plays taking place on private lands, the greens have had to find another roadblock for oil and gas, and that’s why there’s such a stink over fracking.” In his opinion, “anyone who is anti-oil and gas, Ms. Guynap included, should have to take cold showers, walk to work, and sit in the dark until their precious ‘green energy’ can replace what they’re using now.”

Evertson does not dispute the donations raked in by the “good people who serve the state of Wyoming,” much less does he acknowledge the health- and environmental hazards exposed by the EPA study. Instead, he resorts to name-calling and hyperbole. He derides the efforts of a struggling renewable-energy industry that, unlike his own, is not on the receiving end of government subsidies. He feels beleaguered by “greens” and “environmentalists” whose views he deems “obstructionist.”

What about finding common ground? With energy demands rising worldwide, the renewable-energy industry is worthy of encouragement. Why dismiss is off-hand?

Not many Wyomingites, I imagine, will disagree with Evertson; indeed, our current legislature has put together a resolution calling on the U.S. Congress to open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas exploration and production. And Gov. Mead wants Wyoming to take to the U.S. Supreme Court its challenge to a 2001 federal rule pertaining to roadless lands because the rule bars development of nearly fifty million acres in national forests. Gov. Mead is quoted in the February 25 WTE edition as stating that the rule “has seriously impacted our people, our industries, and the health of our forests.” Does the Governor mean to

say that trees in roadless areas are in danger because no industrial development has happened around them—yet?

On the other end of the spectrum is Dr. James Hansen, Director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and one of this country's—indeed, the world's—most prominent climatologists, who has warned for three decades that Spaceship Earth is cruising in self-destruct mode unless and until we reduce greenhouse-gas emissions produced by the extracting and burning of fossil fuels. He has testified repeatedly before the U.S. Congress, pointing out that, apart from subsidies to the industry that render the burning of fossil fuels the “cheap” option, these fuels are unrealistically cheap because climate-disruption costs are not borne by the industry, neither are human- and environmental health costs.

Under the “business as usual” scenario, Hansen says, we only prolong and intensify a dependency on fossil fuels that, sooner or later, must come crashing down. No wonder our House of Representatives has thrashed out a “doomsday bill” in its current session, HB 85, that envisions a state-government task force to study and prepare Wyoming for a number of potential catastrophes.

Raising a Wyoming standing army, alas, won't address the disasters that Dr. Hansen sees happening for our children and their offspring, not just in a few decades down the road but in the present day. He recently released a study documenting that the mega-drought in Texas and Oklahoma, which has been identified as the most costly drought ever and is predicted to last well into next year, would not be occurring but for global warming.