

Peter Fink

If you're told you're an alcoholic and you need to quit or it will kill you, you don't go out and buy a bunch of drinks to stock your liquor cabinet—even if the alcohol content is lower than something else. Why not? Because why pay all that money for a bunch of drinks you know you shouldn't drink and will have to toss soon after? And perhaps more importantly, so long as that bottle of wine is there it will tempt you, and you'll want to get your money's worth.

We have been told we have 20 years before the worst of the climate emergency's wrath will be fully inflicted. The cause? A terrible dependency on fossil fuels which with each ton burned will worsen the situation. In those 20 years every ton burned will bring flooding to Southeast Asia, and the American South, drought to the Sahel and California, and fires there and in Australia, the Amazon, and the Congo Basin. Millions will be displaced, sickened, or killed; thousands of species will go extinct. So if the prognosis is to quit fossil fuels the last thing we should be doing is investing in that infrastructure. It is a waste of money if we get our act together and decide to never use it just a few years after it's built. It's a waste of money if we use it for 30 years and have to spend trillions curing the climate harm with Band-Aid fixes, and restoration and relief efforts. It doesn't matter that this fossil fuel infrastructure will be less damaging, less toxic, lower emitting. We have other options even for an energy-intensive economy: the solar and wind capacity is logarithmically approaching demand. To fulfill an immoral, unnecessary need with the most efficient method doesn't make it moral or necessary. To choose to kill someone with a slow drip of drugs instead of a burning at the stake shouldn't be tolerable.

And the few jobs this project will bring? What about the fastest growing job sector: renewable energy? Do jobs and profits from producing clean energy to distribute or convert not compare with the glory of industrial plastics or fuels sustaining a pollution indulgence?

Our liver is giving out but as it goes it's taking the kidney, the heart, and the lungs down with it. From an economic standpoint we need to reject anything remotely long term that only has viability in the short term. From a land rights standpoint we must reject a project that further degrades the land, dismisses the traditional custodians' council and appeals, and pollutes the industrialized section that through affordability subjects the most vulnerable to the greatest risks from emissions. From a global justice standpoint we must reject a project that accepts a climate regime where the greatest polluters are allowed to pollute (even if it's to a lesser degree) for their "economic stability" and "growth" while the least emitting are forced to bear the most unbearable of the consequences. From a human standpoint we must reject the utter surrender to the ails of dependency. We have the will and the power to get clean, we can quit, we might need help, but this addiction WILL be overcome one day.