Obama's War on Coal

by Phyllis Schlafly

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Campaigning for the 2008 Democratic nomination for President in Oregon (a must-win state in the Democratic primaries), Barack Obama toadied to environmentally conscious voters. He said on May 17, 2008, "We can't drive our SUVs and eat as much as we want and keep our homes on 72 degrees at all times — and then just expect that other countries are going to say OK."

In one of those "other countries," Australia, a political earthquake has just ended the six-year reign of the leftist Labor party, which had imposed a steep "carbon tax" on electricity bills. In September, Australians elected a new government pledged to ax that tax.

U.S. voters should learn a political lesson from the stunning Australian victory of Tony Abbott, a Christian conservative, whom the media predicted was unelectable because he is "a right-wing throwback to a bygone era." His first act as prime minister was to abolish the tax-funded Climate Commission, and the Climate Change Authority will soon be disbanded.

On this side of the Pacific, Obama has not gotten the message and has escalated his war on coal. His new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator, Gina McCarthy, announced Obama's plan to use executive power to bypass Congress and limit new coal plants to 1,100 pounds of carbon dioxide (an unattainable reduction from current emissions of about 1,800 pounds) per megawatt-hour.

Ms. McCarthy also announced a schedule to establish emissions limits on existing power plants to become effective within three years. She based the new rules on her assertion that "climate change — caused by carbon pollution — is one of the most significant public health threats of our time."

That 2008 primary campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination was very revealing about Obama's plans to "fundamentally transform the United States." On January 17, 2008, he told the San Francisco Chronicle that he would put an aggressive cap and trade system in place, "more aggressive than anybody else's out there," and that he is willing to let the coal industry go bankrupt.

Here are Obama's words: "So if somebody wants to build a coal-powered plant, they can; it's just that it will bankrupt them because they're going to be charged a huge sum for all that greenhouse gas that's being emitted. That will also generate billions of dollars that we can invest in solar, wind, biodiesel and other alternative energy approaches." If he were serious about generating power without carbon emissions, he would promote nuclear energy instead of killing it.

Obama made clear his animosity against America's high standard of living based on low-cost electricity. Continuing his revealing interview with the San Francisco Chronicle, he said, "under

my plan of a cap and trade system, electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket … because I'm capping greenhouse gases, coal power plants, natural gas…. Whatever the plants were, whatever the industry was, they would have to retro-fit their operations. That will cost money."

We did, indeed, pay more. USA Today reported in December 2011 that "Electric bills have skyrocketed in the last five years, a sharp reversal from a quarter-century when Americans enjoyed stable power bills even as they used more electricity." And electricity rates have continued to rise steadily since then.

Ms. McCarthy admitted to the House Energy and Commerce Committee that her agency is not able to determine whether or not its policies have affected the 26 indicators of global warning that the agency lists on its website. She claimed the new rules will "provide certainty" to the coal industry, but others are saying that the only "certainty" of Obama's war on coal is that thousands of jobs will be lost.

Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) summed up the cost of Ms. McCarthy's announcement: "If these regulations go into effect, American jobs will be lost, electricity prices will soar and economic uncertainty will grow."

All sides agree that lawsuits are coming and that Obama's emissions rules will be decided in court. If we are a self-governing republic, how come judges can choose the victor in Obama's war on coal instead of our elected representatives?

Obama's standards are not achievable, emerging technology is too costly to capture all the carbon emissions, and the technology isn't adequate to meet the Clean Air Act rules. Obama's war on coal is only the start of his radical plan to reduce the U.S. standard of living by raising electricity costs, and a war on oil will probably be next.

And I can't resist mentioning that Tony Abbott was not intimidated by any phony war-on-women rhetoric and said he personally would handle women's issues. His enemies dug up Abbott's comments from earlier years about virginity, abortion, and men and women having different abilities, but they didn't bother the voters who like Abbott's common-sense policies about global warming, immigration, and big government.