



Opinion

## Opinion: Stop the Killingly fracked gas plant

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The climate strikes on Sept. 20 were terrific. Millions of young people came out in 150 countries. There was even a demonstration in Antarctica. All this was organized on a shoestring.

So, let's put this people power to work and overturn a very bad tendency by Connecticut politicians and "experts" to embrace natural gas and pipelines. Gov. Ned Lamont had a "climate transition" team and talked about a Green New Deal, but pretty much nothing was produced in the legislature. Lamont himself went to Bridgeport and "cut the ribbon" on a new power plant that produces electricity and 1.6 million tons of carbon dioxide a year, five times more than the old coal plant was spewing.

Up in the rural northeast of Connecticut the movers and shakers have approved the building of a fracked gas plant in Killingly. If it isn't stopped, construction could start in October. The town already hosts the Lakeville Road Generating Co., which poured 2.3 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the air in 2018. If it's built the new natural gas power plant will send another 2 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the air yearly.

The term "natural gas" is misleading. All the fossil fuels come from nature. Natural gas is almost entirely the substance called methane, CH<sub>4</sub>, and methane has an interesting property. It's a much worse global warming gas than CO<sub>2</sub>. Over a hundred years it's 25 times worse. The problem is we don't have 100 years. We have to go to zero on global warming gas emissions by 2050. In the short run, methane traps heat 84 times as does carbon dioxide.

Yes, the power plants are burning the methane, not releasing it into the air, and burning methane produces less CO2 than burning coal or oil. However, there's another problem. It's the enormous amount of methane that leaks into the air during the production (fracking) and transport process. An article in the Wall Street Journal tells us that "2.3 percent of the natural gas produced in the U.S. escapes directly into the atmosphere due in part to leaky equipment or intentional discharges." It's the equivalent of burning 355 billion pounds of coal.

So natural gas plants pollute directly by producing CO2 and indirectly by getting their fuel from a system that leaks methane enormously. There's also the lesser effect of the warming of the 50,000 to 400,000 gallons of water the Killingly plant will use a day for cooling.

But isn't the Killingly's NTE Energy plant a done deal? Sure, it has passed all the regulatory agencies, but in an emergency that can be reversed by the governor. The global warming gas crisis is an emergency. The kids are right. The science says we have less than a dozen years to cut carbon dioxide output in half before we hit tipping points that could be catastrophic. **The ball is in the governor's court.** Let's use the people power unleashed by Connecticut youth to convince him to cancel the Killingly methane burning plant.

*Stanley Heller, of West Haven, is administrator of Promoting Enduring Peace a peace/environmental organization founded in Connecticut in 1952. He can be reached at [office.pepeace@gmail.com](mailto:office.pepeace@gmail.com)*

Promoting Enduring Peace

[www.PEPeace.org](http://www.PEPeace.org)

[office.pepeace@gmail.com](mailto:office.pepeace@gmail.com) 202-573-7322