Case 13: The Green New Deal

Global warming is happening, there’s no good argument against it. The Green New Deal bill was introduced in February 2019 by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Ed Markely (D Mass.). The purpose of the bill is to achieve “net-zero” greenhouse gas emissions (i.e., 100% renewable energy) by 2030. Renewable energy is attainable. Technologies such as wind, solar, and hydro-electric have been becoming more popular over the past twenty years and are expected to be key factors in achieving net-zero emissions. The proponents of the bill claim that the transition from fossil-fuels to renewable energy will protect the environment, create jobs, and boost the economy.

There are many parts of the American life that would have to change in order to achieve this goal. One thing in particular that would be needed is the elimination of internal combustion engines (those that run on gasoline and diesel fuel). Automobile manufacturers such as Nissan, Chevrolet, Kia, and BMW have been producing a wide variety of hybrid and electric vehicles in anticipation of regulatory change.

Electric vehicles require regular maintenance and recharging just as any internal combustion engine would. Many large business, retail shopping centers, and health care facilities are adding recharging stations to their parking structures to meet growing customer demand. Residential charging options are available, both solar and electric. But this requires equipping one’s home with the necessary technology and equipment, which is not included in the price of the vehicle. Additionally, regular maintenance needs to be completed by a certified technician, which means the vehicle needs to be taken to a dealership with the proper tools and know-how. This may not seem like a big deal to middle-class or upper-class city dwellers, but what about those who live in rural areas or to the roughly thirty-nine million people living at, or below, the poverty level? Internal combustion engines have been around for a long time. Many people who are not “automotive technicians” have learned how to repair their vehicles, enabling them to both keep driving and save money.

The problem is this bill would disproportionately burden those with the lowest incomes, since the total cost of owning, operating, and maintaining an electric vehicle is much greater than that of an internal combustion vehicle.

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