Open letter against coal-fired power stations

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Energy Companies, stop while you still can

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Open letter scientists against coal-fired power stations

By constructing five coal-fired power stations, the government and energy companies are opting for additional CO2 emissions, as many as nine million cars. Coal and other fossil fuels are not the choice of the future. It is time to make the choice for a new economy around sustainable energy. If the Netherlands now commits to coal-fired power stations, we will eventually fall behind. Scientists call on the companies (E.ON (Uniper), Essent (RWE), Electrabel (GDF SUEZ), NUON (Vattenfall) and C.GEN) and the shareholders to stop their plans for coal-fired power plants. If politicians take appropriate measures, we can really switch to a sustainable economy.

Coal is the most polluting fuel used to generate energy and contributes the most to climate change. The Netherlands will become the dirty man in Europe by opting for polluting coal-fired power stations. While society and science increasingly agree on the risks of climate change and the need to prevent them, our country is becoming trapped in polluting energy generation with these additional coal-fired power plants.

Coal-fired power plants are pushing renewable energy options out of the market because coal-fired power plants are inflexible, seriously delaying the necessary transition to a sustainable energy supply. Coal-fired power plants will last at least thirty years. That means that our country is committed to a technology that we already know will be obsolete in the future and that we will be stuck with for decades to come. The coal-fired power stations are not needed for the Dutch power supply: most of the power will be exported.

The need for change is becoming increasingly apparent. Climate change is already causing $ 125 billion in damage per year, according to the Global Humanitarian Forum. They predict that by 2030, heat waves, floods, storms and forest fires will potentially cause half a million victims a year. While the rich countries have caused the climate crisis, almost all victims are in developing countries, because people are much more vulnerable there.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), industrialized countries should have reduced their combined emissions by 25 to 40 percent by 2020. However, our country is going completely in the other direction when it comes to the most important greenhouse gas, CO2. Total CO2 emissions in the Netherlands have increased since 1990 from 159 million tons to 170 million tons last year. Actual CO2 emissions from the energy sector in the Netherlands increased from 42 million tons to 52 million tons in the same period. That's an increase of 24 percent! It can be different.

It is possible to have our power supply run entirely on sustainable energy by 2050. We can save a lot on future energy bills through an innovative climate policy. If we stick to fossil fuels, our energy costs will rise significantly in the coming decades due to increasing scarcity and therefore higher prices. In fifteen years' time, a large part of the housing costs could consist of energy costs: this mainly affects the less well-off in society. Besides an economic and environmental problem, fuel costs are also a social problem.

Source (NL): https://web.archive.org/web/20101216012748/https://drift.eur.nl/2010/12/11/energiebedrijven-keer-terug-nu-het-nog-kan

An investment in sustainable energy generation means costs in the short term, but in the longer term it will lead to less dependence and the costs of sustainable energy will fall sharply as the technology is further developed. Investing in renewable energy is beneficial from both a macro and a business economic point of view. Citizens will benefit in the long run.

With an energetic climate policy, the Netherlands and the European Union can develop into innovative pioneers. Climate policy not only provides costs, but also benefits. Denmark generates 25 percent of its electricity from wind farms and exports the knowledge worldwide. In China, 600,000 people already work in the solar energy sector and in Germany, the promotion of renewable energy has created more than 340,000 new jobs. A choice for sustainability provides opportunities for new sectors.

Nuclear power plants are not part of renewable energy with current knowledge. Nuclear power is displacing renewable energy and generating life-threatening waste, for thousands of years, for which no satisfactory solution has yet been found. In addition, there are many problems in the uranium mining chain relating to the health of local residents and mine workers and environmental pollution.

If the government actually opts for the 'polluter pays' principle, energy companies will pay for the costs of pollution and climate change. It is now the other way around: the government subsidizes fossil energy generation by exempting energy companies from tax. Nuclear energy is also supported by guarantees from the government. Renewable energy is hindered by this. A level playing field can be achieved by gradually shifting from taxation on income to taxation on the consumption of polluting fuels.

Within Europe, a floor price can be agreed for emission allowances to be auctioned, so that companies have clarity about the future price of CO2. The Dutch government should then not agree with the energy-intensive industry to pay the costs of emission rights. Instead, energy saving can be stimulated within the Netherlands by charging large consumers the normal electricity tariff and not a reduced tariff.

With strict standards on how much CO2 devices, cars and homes are allowed to emit, a great deal can still be made. If the energy companies also gain clarity about the future standards and costs of emissions, it will be clear that the construction of coal-fired power stations is not profitable. By starting the construction of coal-fired power stations, the Netherlands is making itself particularly vulnerable to future climate policy.

In order to run our power supply on sustainable energy in 2050, we now have to make the right choices. Energy companies and government, take your responsibility. Choose the future and not solutions from a previous era.

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