

I posted a few weeks about Gary Johnson's embrace of a carbon fee, which seemed like an appealing sign of new ideas. Apparently, however, stale ideas are more politically salable. As it turns out, under pressure from horrified conservatives, Johnson waved the white flag and surrendered only a few days later. Here's his explanation:

"If any of you heard me say I support a carbon tax...Look, I haven't raised a penny of taxes in my political career and neither has Bill [Weld]. We were looking at—I was looking at—what I heard was a carbon fee which from a free-market standpoint would actually address the issue and cost less. I have determined that, you know what, it's a great theory but I don't think it can work, and I've worked my way through that."

In short, he was for it until he was against it. "I've worked my way through that" may become the go-to phrase for politicians, to be used when the circumstances aren't dire enough to require "mistakes were made" or "I've decided to spend more time with my family." Still, once a politician is suspected of having a trace of independent thinking, that can be a hard thing to come back from these days.