

There is one enormously striking thing about [the New York Times article](#) that [Dan references](#) in the post below. The article details how virtually all the Republican candidates have essentially declared war on the Environmental Protection Agency, claiming that environmental regulation is responsible for job losses and sluggish growth. It also quotes people from [Republicans for Environmental Protection](#) attacking the party's current view. (One wonders whether the members of this organization previously created Trotskyists for Stalin, but I digress.).

Notice something missing?

That's right: *at no time does the article attempt to lay out whether any of the criticisms of EPA have any basis in fact.* Positions are reported; other people criticize them; then there is some discussion of how this will play politically; but there is no discussion of whether the position is, you know, true.

It's even worse than that, because the article completely leaves out the possibility that environmental regulation actually *increases* GDP because a cleaner environment reduces health care costs, or prevents lost workdays due to health problems, or protects ecosystems that supply the economy with needed services.

Obviously, there is a healthy debate on the issue of the economic impacts, both positive and negative, of environmental regulation, and of course it can get complicated. But at some point or another, the job of the nation's Newspaper Of Record is to try to inform the engaged citizen of the merits of the issue. Otherwise, it's just "he said/she said."

Over the long run, this posture represents an insidious capitulation to the right wing. In a brilliant piece a few years ago, [Josh Marshall compared the Bush Administration to postmodern literary theorists](#) in its outlook. Everything was about ideology; facts did not exist. Shortly thereafter, [in a now-famous article](#), Ron Suskind quoted an unnamed senior White House official dismissing the administration's critics for being too "reality-based."

But when it comes to environmental policy (as well as most of the policies that actually matter), facts are stubborn things. Things aren't true just because you want them to be. Climate change is happening, whether we want to acknowledge it or not. Freedom is *not* slavery, war is *not* peace, and ignorance is *not* strength. When the New York Times feels that it can cover presidential candidates' position on the environment without giving people some indication of the truth of their views, then it, too, is sinking into the right-wing postmodern morass.

