



John Muir, They Ain't

Trying to be fair and balanced, [Dan says that we should be at least a little heartened](#) by Bain Capital's environmental posture. I try to be fair, but in modern politics that rarely means being balanced (cue joke here), and I am somewhat less impressed.

Look, I like recycling as much as the next guy (although maybe not as much as [the next gal](#)), and I think it's great that Bain says it wants to be carbon-neutral in its own operations. If there are some firms that want to reduce their carbon footprint, and Bain can come up with some ideas to help them do that (for a very high fee, of course), then more power to them (so to speak). But let's remember what Bain does. It invests in companies, and tries to restructure them in order to make a profit for its shareholders.

The real test for Bain's environmental friendliness is not whether it builds a fancy new green building for itself, but whether it decides to forego certain profit opportunities in order to help preserve the planet. I see no evidence that it would do so, in the same way that it would not try to preserve jobs if doing so would reduce its profit margin. Does that mean that Bain is some sort of environmental villain? Not necessarily. It is playing by the rules established by the government. (If it lobbied to make those rules less environmentally-friendly, then that *would* make it a villain, but I have no evidence of that, either). But none of this mean in the least that Bain is helping the planet. It makes profits for its investors — no more, no less.

Part of the perversity of contemporary conservative ideology is that we are not only supposed to see big businesses as profit centers, but as representing the best and the brightest of the American Dream, the savior of American jobs, the avatar of the American spirit, the generator of All That Is Good And True. That is why, of course, we can never, ever, ever interfere with the workings of the Free Market (except to bail out banks, of course).

This is nonsense. Businesses exist to make money for their shareholders. Sometimes that is good for the rest of the country and *sometimes that is not good for the rest of the country*. Let's not get confused by vague claims crafted by PR professionals that leaving them unregulated will somehow also magically preserve the environment. Because it won't.