
Chill A Bit

Canada’s new Liberal government can hardly be accused of being soft on climate change: at the recent Paris Summit it endorsed a target of holding global warming to 1.5 Degrees Celsius over historic levels. So when you hear this from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, listen:

> Most recently in Davos on Wednesday, [Leonardo] DiCaprio used a major speech on climate change to rail against what he described as the “corporate greed” of the energy sector and called for an end to fossil-fuel use.…
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> A senior Liberal official said that Trudeau told DiCaprio during a dinner on Wednesday that the award-winning actor’s comments were causing more harm than good.…
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> ‘The prime minister said there’s a new (federal) government, there’s a new government in Edmonton, and they’re both working hard to do something serious about this issue that you care about,’ the official said. He said Trudeau told DiCaprio ‘making statements like that to the media, at a time when a lot of people **who are not making the kind of money you’re making and are losing their jobs**, is not helpful.’

Trudeau has a point. It’s great that DiCaprio is such a warrior on climate, but there is always a risk when Hollywood gets on its high horse. And that’s especially true given Hollywood’s not-so-great record about, say, racial minorities and the Oscars.


Not King of the World

Yes, we must end dependence on fossil fuels. But millions of people depend on that industry for their jobs, and when you have a government like Canada’s (or the socialist government in Alberta) that are working hard on the issue, maybe it’s time to tone it down. And that’s particularly true when you are a multi-millionaire. Yes, yes: the burgeoning renewal industry could eventually provide millions of high-paying jobs, more than the ones that the fossil fuel industry provides. But it’s easy to say that from a podium at Davos (or even a professor’s office).

It poses a real political organizing difficulty. It is necessary to call out the people and industries that are melting the planet. Social movements are better galvanized around *opposition* to something rather than a general hope for change (see, e.g., Keystone XL). But Hollywood stars probably are not the best messenger: they should be spending more time raising and giving money to political organizers (like the Environmental Voter Project). Even DiCaprio, who puts his money where his mouth is and is a generous philathropist, focuses more on a high profile projects than long-term funding of environmental political infrastructure.

Climate change is the overarching and searing human issue of our time. But that doesn't mean you can't be smart about it.