

In an airport, I recently saw a sign above the moving walkway advising us to face in the direction we were traveling. That's sound advice for life in general and policy making in particular. It's a recipe for failure to try to restore the past rather than looking toward the future. Unfortunately, rather than embracing the future, the Trump Administration has its eyes firmly locked on an imagined 1950s golden age.

Trump notoriously favors the old energy sector over the new — coal, oil, and gas, not solar or wind. His plan for prosperity is based on massive expansions in fossil fuel production. This includes repudiating the Paris Agreement, expanding oil and gas drilling into new areas, including opening new places to offshore drilling, expanding mining and drilling on public lands, opening up the Alaska Natural Wildlife Reservation, and eliminating protections for lands set aside as national monuments. And to encourage greater use of fuels, Trump seeks to roll back limits on pollution from coal-fired power plants, at a real cost to public health, while axing all federal programs dealing with climate change.

On a broader scale, his vision of prosperity is based on restoring the manufacturing sector of a half century ago, rather than looking to new industries and opportunities. This has been his rationale for reducing environmental regulations and allowing increased pollution. In signing the executive order to begin a rollback of the Obama Administration's signature climate change regulation, he [said](#):

The action I'm taking today will . . . allow our companies and our workers to thrive, compete, and succeed on a level playing field for the first time in a long time, fellas. It's been a long time. I'm not just talking about eight years; we're talking about a lot longer than eight years. You people know it maybe better than anybody. . . .

That is what this is all about: bringing back our jobs, bringing back our dreams — and making America wealthy again.

In signing this executive order, he surrounded himself with coal miners. But today, the solar industry employs more people — and unlike coal, it's growing, not shrinking.

Refusal to deal with climate change is the most important and most striking example of this backward orientation. Besides being unwilling to take steps to reduce emissions, the Administration is also refusing to deal with rising sea levels and other effects of climate change. Trump simply refuses to acknowledge that the world is changing. Like King

Canute, he seems to think he can turn back the rising waters through royal fiat.

Similarly, the GOP platform had an entirely backward-looking vision of the American West. It stressed old industries — mining, logging, oil, and ranching — while [ignoring](#) the burgeoning New West economy completely — an economy stressing tourism, recreation, and technology.

Inability to look forward is also apparent in Trump's proposed budget cuts to research. These include gutting major research programs on climate change and renewable energy at EPA, the Department of Energy, NOAA, and NASA. More broadly, Trump's budget proposes \$1 billion in cuts to biomedical research at NIH and a \$776 million cut at NSF. Scientific research is all about new knowledge — not a priority for this Administration.

It's no wonder that California has aligned itself against Trump. True or not, California likes to think of itself as "the place where the future happens first." But Trump's Washington seeks to restore the past, not embrace the future. It's also little wonder that his greatest appeal is to the elderly, while the young are repelled. The elderly imagine that the world was far more glorious when they were starting out; the young realize they are facing the challenges of a changing world.

The airport sign had the right idea. If you don't look in the direction you're traveling, you're likely to stumble or risk a collision. Let's hope the country doesn't learn that lesson the hard way.