

One of Trump’s iconic campaign photos showed him with a sign saying “Trump Digs Coal.” He vowed to bring back the coal industry. Even after his election, he delighted in photo ops with coal miners (many of whom turned out to be coal company executives) wearing their helmets. But those days are gone.

I couldn’t remember the last time Trump had referred to coal. A Google search didn’t turn up much, though I did learn he had failed to mention coal in his 2019 and 2020 State of the Union speeches.

In search of some more systematic evidence, I turned to the Washington Post’s [searchable database](#) of 18,000 false and misleading statements that Trump has made in office. I was pretty sure that almost anything Trump said about coal would be considered false or misleading by the Post (and by me, for that matter). The results were really interesting, especially in contrast to Trump’s mention of oil.

Trump talked about the war on beautiful clean coal three times in 2017, twelve in 2018, twice in 2019, and only once so far in 2020. In contrast, he said that the U.S. was the #1 oil and gas producer nine times in 2018, forty-six times in 2019, and eleven times so far in 2020 (last on February 28). In case you’re interested, there’s barely any reference to solar in the Post’s database. Trump’s attacks on wind power tend to get attention because of their wackiness (remember “windmill cancer”?). But he really doesn’t talk about that much either.

I think there are two reasons why Trump’s love affair with coal has snuffed out. One is that the coal industry is a Loser. Coal companies keep going into bankruptcy. Coal’s share of electricity production has fallen consistently throughout Trump’s presidency. In the first quarter of 2020, renewables [topped](#) coal as a source of power. In contrast, until the coronavirus hit, the oil industry was a Winner. Trump loves winners; losers not so much.

The other reason why Trump doesn’t talk about coal much is that he doesn’t have to. Trump may have fallen out of love with coal, but there’s no reason to think that coal country has fallen out of love with him. Despite the fact that he hasn’t done anything for coal mining communities, he really doesn’t have to worry about whether he’s going to carry West Virginia.

Many of Trump’s underlings are still pursuing the pro-coal agenda — particularly Andrew Wheeler at EPA, a former coal lobbyist. Much of that agenda overlaps with promoting natural gas, and Trump remains dedicated to erasing the Obama Administration. Consequently, he’s not likely to halt deregulation even though he no longer cares about

coal..

There are a lot of songs about love going cold. Maybe someone will compose the ballad of Trump and Beautiful Clean Coal, abandoned for a sleeker, wealthier fossil fuel industry. Sad, really.