Net-Zero Carbon Emissions; How Feasible Is This Goal?

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What Exactly is the Green New Deal?

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The Green New Deal calls for net-zero carbon emissions in the US within 10 years and globally by 2050. How feasible is this?

In the Green New Deal, two of the resolutions directly involve carbon and greenhouse gas emissions:

…. (A) to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers; ….

… (D) to secure for all people of the United States for generations to come—

(i) clean air and water;

(ii) climate and community resiliency;

(iii) healthy food;

(iv) access to nature; and

(v) a sustainable environment; …..

And these goals “should be” accomplished within 10 years, or by approximately 2030. And we need to push for the world to be Net-Zero by 2050 if we want the planet livable.

First, I want to register that I am a supporter of the Green New Deal, and I would like to see it implemented completely and successfully within 10 years. But I was asked to examine whether it is feasible. I would like to make four points.

**STRONG, UNITED POLTICAL WILL**

1. A strong, united political will is needed in the States to make the Green New Deal happen. The first “New Deal” was enacted in 1930s by Franklin D Roosevelt in the depths of the Depression. The economy was devastated, many people lived in tent cities and were marching on Washington, so the ground was fertile for new programs to improve the economy and benefit the populace.

The same united political will and determination will be necessary to implement a Green New Deal. And according to [2018 data from Yale opinion polls tabulated and made available through maps](http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2018/?est=happening&type=value&geo=county) at the National, Congressional District and County levels

* + 1. 70% of adults think that Global Warming is happening
    2. 49% think that most scientists think global warming is happening
    3. 58% think Global Warming will harm people in the US
    4. 41% think it will harm them

So in general, people believe something should be done but at the national level. People are less likely to believe that actions should be taken at the state or county levels.

**ECONOMY CHANGES TO NET-ZERO CARBON EMISSIONS**

1. The change to a net-zero economy will be huge. Net-zero means that greenhouse-gas-emitting fuels will be replaced with renewable energy (water/sun/wind/other). How will the move to new technologies go? This involves labor, education, training and new businesses. There are many ways to skin a cat, change behavior and encourage business and civilians to reduce their carbon footprint. Mitigation instruments such as a carbon market and carbon taxes have been under development and implemented in many parts of the world to varying degrees of success. But the US is behind in this area and there is a lot of work to do. To move from an economy powered by fossil fuels to an economy powered by renewable energies will involve a whole range of technologies, new businesses and new jobs. I think it will be difficult to accomplish in 10 years.

**NEEDED INVESTMENTS**

1. How will the investment in the economy be decided and implemented? Will it tend towards a free market or will some sort of central planning committee be needed? What policy instruments will be used? Taxes, subsidies, rules, regulations, laws? All of the above. And there will be winners and losers in the process. Are laws at the federal level enough? Can the EPA or Department of Transportation fairly implement new Green New Deal policies and invest wisely?

In the current atmosphere of lobby-controlled Congress and partisanship, I am skeptical that sound decisions can be made. Will a central decision-making body be necessary? I am skeptical of decisions being made by a “central committee,” and I am also skeptical of a “free market” approach, letting the lobbyist go wild. The policy implementation will be complicated.

**REST OF WORLD AND US CONSUMPTION**

1. What will the Green New Deal impact be on other countries? A US domestic program to get to net-zero might push all the dirty production into other countries/economies. And even mitigation efforts such as sequestration of carbon may negatively harm communities in developing countries. An important element in the US is consumption. US households are accustomed to comfort, conveniences and hobbies. Per capita consumption in terms of energy is high. If the US gets to net zero, will this also include working with other countries and moving them to net-zero?

**The New Green Deal is a Good Step Forward**

While I am a pessimist for the near future, I believe the world can achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. We must take steps and we must inspire the new generations of young people to solve the problem of global warming. So I ask myself, what can I do?

1. Support the Green New Deal. With a lot of support by the US populace, it will result in important incremental steps forward and resolution of important questions such as the best technologies and methods of implementation.
2. Support carbon taxes and support cap & trade efforts at the national and international levels. They are not the final fix, but they lead toward an emission free future and are immediate mitigation instruments.
3. Write about the changes needed, volunteer time and listen to people.