

Rep. Scott Campbell
April 23, 2022

To the Editor:

Rob Roper finds much to criticize about the Clean Heat Standard ("Senators Admit Clean Heat Standard Is A Carbon Tax," Caledonian-Record commentary, April 22, 2022, among many other commentaries).

He trots out that tired old hobbyhorse "Carbon Tax," as though that's 'nuff said: guaranteed to provoke anger and fear in the land. No one in their right mind would want to "transform not just our economy but our entire way of life" without knowing everything in advance!

But nowhere, in this commentary or others by him and his colleagues at Ethan Allen Institute, is there any constructive suggestion about what measures they think we should take to confront the climate crisis that is finally flooding the world's consciousness — and soon will be flooding its coastal cities.

Do they suppose the climate crisis itself doesn't have costs? Do they deny there is a crisis? If so, we have a bigger problem, a gaping disconnect from reality.

The reality of the crisis is in the news every day, quite literally: record-breaking heat, floods, drought, pest infestations, economic disruption. Russia's fossil-fuel exports are powering Putin's monstrous war of aggression in Ukraine. Does anyone think this is an isolated event, that destabilization of the climate will not lead to conflicts over resources (especially water) and territory (especially arable land), and mass migrations of desperate people? What should we do, Rob, pretend that's not happening?

Further, the global economy is beginning to transition away from near-complete reliance on fossil fuel — very slowly, far too slowly, but unmistakably. The world's automobile manufacturers have finally committed to electrification, which is a bellwether for the rest of the economy. Vermont's small economy must undertake this transformative transition in a planned, deliberate way, or we will be left behind.

The climate crisis for us in Vermont is not just about more ticks and less snow. It is about the threat to our community and our prosperity. We can't reconfigure our grid, build out broadband, re-pave roads, dig deeper ditches and install larger culverts, and electrify transportation and buildings — we can't do all that overnight, or even over a few years. We must take steps. Stoking fear with relentless negativity is no help.

In fact, the energy transformation offers incredible opportunities. Like the automobile, the computer, the internet — perhaps even like the industrial revolution — the technological disruption now at hand will reorganize the economy. It's a challenge we dare not ignore.

It would be far more productive if Mr. Roper and his colleagues would focus their considerable energies on what we can do rather than what we can't.