

# GRENOBLE ECOLE DE MANAGEMENT

## CONCOURS HEC SESSION 2015

### EPREUVE ORALE D'ANGLAIS

#### Script n°13

#### **Climate fight won't wait for Paris: vive la résistance!**

By Bill McKibben

*theguardian.com*, March 10, 2015

The official view: all eyes are on Paris, where negotiators will meet in December for a climate conference that will be described as “the most important diplomatic gathering ever” and “a last chance for humanity.” Heads of state will jet in, tense closed-door meetings will be held, newspapers will report that negotiations are near a breaking point, and at the last minute some kind of agreement will emerge, hailed as “a start for serious action”.

The actual story: what happens at Paris will be, at best, one small part of the climate story, one more skirmish in the long, hard-fought road to climate sanity. What comes before and after will count more. And to the extent Paris matters, its success will depend not on the character of our leaders but on how much a resurgent climate movement has softened up the fossil fuel industry, and how much pressure the politicians feel to deliver something.

The good news is, that pressure is growing. In fact, that relentless climate movement is starting to win big, unprecedented victories around the world, victories which are quickly reshaping the consensus view – including among investors – about how fast a clean energy future could come.

Triumph is not certain – in fact, as the steadily rising toll of floods and droughts and melting glaciers makes clear, major losses are guaranteed. But for the first time in the quarter-century since global warming became a major public issue the advantage in this struggle has begun to tilt away from the Exxons and the BPs and towards the ragtag and spread-out fossil fuel resistance, which is led by indigenous people, young people, people breathing the impossible air in front-line communities. The fight won't wait for Paris – the fight is on every day, and on every continent.

Indian peasants are powering their cellphones with the extra power generated by the solar panels that runs the cellphone towers themselves. And Apple is building giant data centres in California, Denmark, and Ireland that run entirely on renewables. Investors see where the growth will come: Tesla, which produced 2,500 cars a month last year, now carries half the valuation of General Motors, which produced 300 times as many. As the electric car fleet expands, the demand for oil will start to dwindle, and there will be an ever-larger number of four-wheeled batteries to rejigger the grid.

Polls show that even people who doubt the climate is changing instinctively understand the pleasure of controlling their own energy destiny. Even large elements of the labour movement

are coming to understand the appeal of renewable energy, where jobs are growing far faster than in the economy as a whole.

The best news, of course, is that the new renewables make the most sense in the developing world, where whole nations are poised to leapfrog past coal just as they went straight to mobile phones. They'll need money to make that happen – which is why the most crucial decisions at Paris may be about providing financing for poor nations – but they've got the crucial ingredient: sunshine.

And so the race is fully, finally on. There are three teams. Team one, in the green: that's the climate justice activists and the solar engineers, working together, scrappy but gaining. Team two, in the red as the price of oil drops: that's the fossil fuel industry. It has a big lead, but it is tiring fast. And the third? That's physics, the most mysterious of the contestants, and arguably the most important. So far physics has meant that a single degree of global warming was enough to melt most Arctic ice. The world's sea levels are now rising inexorably, turning every storm and high tide into peril.

Had we acted a quarter century ago, physics would be working on our side by now. We could have acted from a sense of justice, since global warming's inherent unfairness has been obvious from the start. Or we could have acted rationally: every economist, left, right and centre, has said for a generation that it makes no sense to let the fossil fuel companies pour their carbon out for free, and that the economic mess we're creating far outweighs the cost of preventing it.