

# Drax the Destroyer

by Merrick

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It is difficult to overstate the case with climate change. There is no bigger issue. Calm and informed voices - even David Attenborough's - are saying it is the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced. Indeed, it could even be the last.

Next month, the Camp for Climate Action plans to kickstart a campaign of radical protest on climate change with direct action against Drax power station (which, hilariously and aptly, has a namesake in Marvel Comics' Drax The Destroyer).

Drax produces over 20 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year. There are more than 100 countries that produce less.

Knowing there is no way they can defend their position positively, Drax try to downplay it. They say they 'take our environmental responsibilities very seriously', explaining how they are a clean and efficient coal-burner.

Coal generates far more CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of electricity than any other fuel; proudly being the least polluting coal power station is like proudly being the least murderous serial killer. This might sound like overstating the case, but as climate change extends deserts, submerges or dries up fertile lands and provides new opportunities for epidemics, willful climate change is indeed akin to mass murder.

Drax burns 13 million tons of coal a year. There's nothing 'clean' about that. Burning coal has no place in a society that wants to avoid catastrophic climate change.

They trumpet their mixing coal with biomass fuels to cut down on their emissions. What they don't mention is that their use of biofuels peaked at a mere 2.5%. Despite saying Drax uses biomass as part of 'continually looking for ways to improve its business and environmental performance', in March 2006 they slashed their biomass use by 90%. So it's now 99.75% coal. Cutting your green fuel in favour of the most CO<sub>2</sub>-intensive is not improving your environmental performance.

More to the point, there isn't enough land to replace coal with biofuels. As oil and gas become more expensive, so the agri-chemicals they provide become uneconomical for many farmers. This decreases the yields whilst the global population rises.

Furthermore, climate change is already affecting irrigation for farmland, and this is set to get far worse. If we are to feed everyone then we can't afford to set aside vast areas for plants for electricity on the scale Western society currently requires. We're already losing tropical forests to plantations for supposedly green biofuels. That has to stop. Rather than seeking such inequitable and seemingly impossible solutions, we need to reduce consumption and stop burning fossil fuels.

Drax coo their concern for climate change. Yet they are taking legal action against the European Union to get an increase in their already massive emissions allowances. This, also, is not the action of people who want to decrease emissions.

Responding to the Camp for Climate Action's plans, Drax said they 'share the objectives of these people,' which is odd, given that the protesters want to see Drax shut down; if the spokesperson did share the objectives they wouldn't have been at work to give the statement. They went on to say that as the protesters share the same objectives, Drax 'would like their help in getting government changes to help us' before they act.

It's absurd to say 'we know we shouldn't do this thing, but we will continue to do it until someone forces us not to'. As a FTSE100 company, Drax could easily afford to invest in cleaner technology

without waiting for a new regulatory framework, if such technology existed. The fact that they don't shows their claims to responsibility are spin and lies.

The Yorkshire Post has come out against the Camp for Climate Action and in favour of Drax as they are a major local employer. Yet more people would be employed implementing sustainable energy and energy efficiency measures that could reduce our demand by more than Drax generates. Jobs that result in mass extinction and the deaths of millions are jobs that should end today.

Drax say that 'We need a diverse mix of power sources'. Coal is already the largest source of electricity (around half). Increasing the largest source is not about increasing diversity but reducing it. We do indeed need a diverse mix of power sources. But all of them sustainable, most of them decentralised, and none of them fossil fuels that threaten the continuation of life on this planet.

Put bluntly, we need a future without places like Drax if we are to have any future at all.