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August 10, 2016: What They're Doing to Bill McKibben

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Title: What They're Doing to Bill McKibben

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8/10/2016—On Sunday, Bill McKibben published an op-ed on how he is being followed and how maybe his daughter is also being followed. Apparently a GOP opposition research group has decided to follow him and one other environmental leader to get embarrassing pictures. The pictures are meant to show that McKibben is a hypocrite—he uses plastic bags for shopping when he forgets to bring cloth etc. McKibben wanted to make the point that we are living in the world of choices corporate power has given us—he mentions Exxon. That is, we have to fly because corporations have blocked fast trains, for example. And to change that world, we have to live in it. So, McKibben wants to show the context. But I am more interested in a minor comment he makes. McKibben is not sure that his daughter is being followed. “When my daughter reports someone taking pictures of her at the airport, it drives me nuts. I have no idea if it’s actually this outfit; common decency would suggest otherwise, but that seems an increasingly rare commodity.” Common decency is an increasingly rare commodity. But I wish McKibben had admitted that in this regard at least, the environmental movement is no different. The left demonizes the corporate leadership at Exxon. They are just liars and criminals—knowing the truth about global warming, they have deliberately misled the nation for their own profit. They will be responsible for many, many deaths. As I write those words, I am certain that this is the attitude on the left because this is my attitude. But if I believe my opponents are evil, I cannot be surprised if my opponents feel the same way. Even if I am right about them, I should not pretend that they are overly zealous but I am not. In other words, if I could change Exxon’s policies by following the CEO and his family around with a camera, wouldn’t I do it? Of course I would. Since common decency is in short supply in our political life, we are going to have to pay very careful attention to our own characters. Since we are not going to change our behaviors, changing our candor might be a good starting point.