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1 of 12



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2 of 12



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3 of 12



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LETTERS

# The Problems of the Progressive Left in Governing Well

Liberals can't govern because they won't. They are, at best, poet philosophers with no commitment to reality.

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April 2, 2014 3:59 p.m. ET

Regarding Daniel Henninger's "[Why Can't the Left Govern?](#)" (Wonder Land, March 27): Liberals can't govern because they won't. They are, at best, poet philosophers with no commitment to reality, and at worst bureaucratic martinets whose sole aim is power and the ability to force people to do what the progressive elite want. As both are unsuitable to a democracy, the opportunistic grab for power is cloaked in philosopher-poet lingo of "hope and change," "fairness" and "leveling the playing field" or other vague ideals long disproved to be effective vehicles for governance.

Robust democracy and glittering economic success bore the academic and political elite for the very good reason that they are someone else's ideas.

The left espouses outmoded ideals long rumbling in the "dustbin of history." So what's new on the left? Of course, the environment.

### Nicolaus von Baillou

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Mr. Henninger draws on our Academy of Management Journal study, "Melting Summits," to support the argument that the political left lacks the capacity to govern. This is seriously misleading.

Analyzing data spanning nearly 20 years of climate negotiations, we find that the increasing complexity in the process has slowed progress, but we never attribute this failure to any particular political persuasion. Over the years, climate policy has seen governments of the political left and right as well as anywhere in between. When it comes to U.S. administrations, the U.N. climate treaty was first conceived of and signed by George H.W. Bush in 1992. But the subsequent U.S. withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol occurred in George W. Bush's administration and was the main cause for a slowdown in negotiations over many years.

In sum, our paper shows many forces at work in fostering or hindering progress on climate policy, neither the political left nor right among them.

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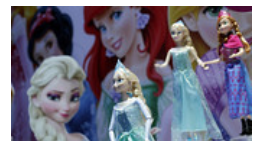
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