

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH JANE FONDA
ACTOR AND ACTIVIST

SUBJECT: HER MOVEMENT TO PUSH FOR POLITICAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Good afternoon, welcome to the National Press Club, the place where news happens. My name is Alison Fitzgerald Kodjak. I am the 112th President of the National Press Club. And I am the investigations editor at the Associated Press.

We have a terrific program ahead, and we invite you to listen, watch, and follow along on Twitter, at the #NPCLive. For our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences, please be aware that in the audience today there are members of the general public, in addition to journalists. So any applause or reactions you hear are not necessarily from the working press. [laughter]

I'd like to begin by introducing our head table. Please hold your applause until all the head table guests are introduced. To my far left is Valerie Jackson, a Washington-based editor. Doug Harbrecht, former NPC President and a member of the National Press Club Journalism Institute's Board of Directors. Next to Doug is Debi Karolewski, a guest of our speaker. Jacqueline Policastro, who's the Washington Bureau Chief at Gray Television. Adam Aton, a reporter at E&E News. Ira Arlook, who's the Communications Director for Fire Drill Fridays. And next to Ira is Elizabeth McGowan, a reporter at the Energy News Network.

To my immediate right is Donna Leinwand Leger. She's the President at D.C. Media Strategies, a former NPC President, and a Co-Chair of the NPC Headliners Team which

organizes these events. Skipping over our speaker for a moment, we have Amanda Bennett, the Director of Voice of America and this year's National Press Club Fourth Estate Honoree. Next to Amanda is Mary Williams, Jane's daughter. Next to Mary, Rebecca Baker. She's Deputy Team Leader at Bloomberg Law and a past President of the Society for Professional Journalists. And Gil Klein, the University of Oklahoma's Gaylord News Washington Bureau Chief and NPC past President. And finally, Valerie Hopkins, the South-East Europe Correspondent at the Financial Times. Thank you everybody for being here.

[applause]

Actor Jane Fonda turns 82 this Saturday. [applause] Pretty impressive, huh? However, she might very well wake up on her birthday morning in jail. [laughter] Since she moved to Washington in September, Ms. Fonda has spent every Friday, often accompanied by fellow celebrities, engaged in what she has termed "Fire Drill Fridays," a protest of the lack of government action on climate change. Friday will mark her 11th protest, and potentially her fifth arrest.

The idea, she said, came to her over Labor Day weekend, spent in Big Sur with friends and fellow actors, Catherine Keener and Rosanna Arquette. Naomi Klein's book called, *On Fire: The Burning Case for a Green New Deal* spurred her to action. As she wrote in the *New York Times* last summer, "As the wildfires wreaked havoc on my home state, California, and young people like Greta Thunberg so powerfully reminded us that we are the last generation that can prevent an unthinkable global catastrophe, I decided it was time for me to do more."

The United States, Fonda says, is failing to act, even as the world's leading scientists declare a climate emergency that demands profound economic and social change. Civic protests have defined her life as much as a remarkable acting career that has brought her two Oscars, seven Golden Globes, two BAFTAs, and one Emmy. The *Grace and Frankie* star has advocated for civil rights and women's rights and pushed back against fossil fuels.

But it's not always been without controversy. During a tour of Vietnam in 1972, to protest the war, Fonda's photo on an anti-aircraft gun in Hanoi, that appeared to be aiming at American planes, landed her on the wrong side of a public opinion, sidelined her career, and stuck her with the nickname, "Hanoi Jane." It was a mistake, she wrote, that she will, "regret to my dying day."

But now Ms. Fonda says that changing climate is an emergency that the world must address for the sake of the next generation. As she wrote in the *New York Times*, "Each of us, one day, will have to answer this question. What did I do to protect the planet for our children, grandchildren, and so many precious species, while we still had time?" Please join me in welcoming Jane Fonda to the National Press Club.

[applause]

JANE FONDA: Thank you very much. Thank you for being here. Thanks to the National Press Club for having me here. Thanks to the Women's Media Center, which I cofounded with Gloria Steinem and Robin Morgan a number of years ago. You know, I lie in bed at night, searching for the right words that will galvanize people to action around the climate emergency, and show them why it's too late for moderation. I try out conversations about what the fossil fuel industry has done to us. And I get so worked up, I can't sleep.

I tell my imaginary Senator how, back in July, 1977, James Black, a senior scientist at Exxon told Exxon's management committee that the burning of fossil fuel was influencing global climate. That doubling CO₂ gases in the atmosphere would increase global temperatures by two or three degrees. And that mankind had a small window of five to ten years before they would have to make hard decisions about new ways to get energy. Exxon knew 40 years ago.

I tell my listener that, a decade later, the fossil fuel industry scientists told them that the warming effects of their carbon emissions could double even earlier than previously predicted, causing ecological calamities such as the disintegration of the West Antarctic ice sheets, that would inundate entire low-lying countries, and would cause the disappearance of specific ecosystems, destructive flooding, and inundation of low-lying farmlands. And that new sources of fresh water would be required. And that global changes in air temperature would, "drastically change the way people live and work, and that the changes may be the greatest in recorded history." And that the American Midwest and other parts of the world would become desert-like.

That was in the mid 1980s. And you know what Exxon's executives said? This is a quote. "This problem is not as significant to mankind as a nuclear holocaust or world famine." And they continued to drill. Exxon, Shell, Mobil, and others knew that their products wouldn't stay profitable once the world understood the risks. So they used the same consultants that the tobacco companies had used to launch a huge communications effort, to develop strategies on how to fool us.

The difference is that tobacco companies were primarily harming people who smoke. The fossil fuel companies are harming the entire planet and all its inhabitants. The companies not only hid what they knew, a coalition, together with the Koch brothers and other billionaires spent tens of millions of dollars on think tanks, like the Heartland Institute, that promote false science, sowing confusion about global warming, so that people won't try to stop them. Their line was, and continues to be, that the, "Science about climate change is not clear. And even if it were, the fault lies with governments and consumers, not with them." You see, but the thing is, these oil companies have played a big role in actively stopping governments from enacting clean energy policies, with Exxon leading the way.

For example, Exxon prevented the United States from signing the International Treaty on Climate known as the Kyoto Protocol in 1998, to control greenhouse gases. Exxon's tactics worked not only on the United States, but also stopped other countries, such as China and India from signing the treaty. This very year saw atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases hit the highest level ever recorded in human history. While our window of

opportunity to do something is quickly closing, fossil fuel companies are frantically expanding new drilling, mining, fracking, and exports.

And then there's plastic. Fearful that their oil and gas explorations will be curtailed and wanting to maintain profits, Exxon actually proclaimed recently, "Our future is in plastic." Really? I mean, really? They feel okay about saying a thing like that, when we're facing the horrendous damage plastics have wreaked on our oceans, our Arctic ice sheets, our waterways, and on entire species?

Their new attempts to counter efforts to halt new fossil fuel production and infrastructure includes the American Petroleum Institute's just released video called *America's Energy Security: A Generation of Progress at Risk*. The video shows American flags and the Statue of Liberty in an attempt to make fracking and drilling somehow patriotic. And bans on them somehow weakening the country. The oil and gas industry likes to say that natural gas is a bridge energy that has a role in reducing carbon emissions. But they deliberately ignore fracking's contributions to increases and highly dangerous global warming methane emissions. And they deny the seismic dangers of fracking, and the pollution of precious underwater aquifers that provide drinking water to millions of people.

A coalition called Pennsylvanians Against Fracking is advocating for a fracking moratorium in their state. And following visits from families of rare cancer patients, announced nearly \$4 million dollars in funding for studies on the health impact of fracking. The fossil fuel industry has gotten a senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, which is paid for by fossil fuel money, to warn of a global recession should the US ban fracking. The Manhattan Institute also says that Democratic Presidential candidates' climate claims are, "pure fantasy and moving to clean renewable energy is not possible, given today's technology and basic physics."

And they reference notorious climate science denying organizations like the Empowerment Alliance. Several Republicans, notably Senator Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, have introduced resolutions prohibiting a unilateral moratorium on fracking by a President, just in case, next November, a pro-climate President is elected. By the way, just so you know, Toomey's reelection a few years ago against a progressive Democrat was largely financed by Michael Bloomberg.

Officials like Senator Toomey tells us that American oil and gas production is the only path to energy security. This narrative is at odds with the fact that we export so much gas and oil—I mean if we need it for energy security, what are we doing shipping it overseas? This narrative also ignores the fact that 100 percent renewable energy, which over 100 US cities have already committed to, also creates energy security and independence, and for a comparable or lower price.

Climate scientists are very clear. We can transition to clean renewable energy. We have the technology, which is fast becoming more competitive. And economists say, "Climate action should not be viewed as an impediment to economic growth, but as an impetus for decoupling economic growth, from emissions and resource extraction. And as a

catalyst for a green economic transition, labor rights improvements, and poverty elimination efforts.”

We just have to break the stranglehold that the fossil fuel industry has on our government. Will we continue to allow these executives who have committed crimes against humanity, and the earth, to keep on doing it? Not just with oil, gas, and coal, but with plastics, dangerous fertilizers, and pesticides? And do most Americans even realize that we’re paying them to do this to us, with subsidies of more than \$16 billion dollars a year, our taxpayer money?

Oil Change International says that 45 percent of their existing drilling wouldn’t even be profitable without these subsidies. We cannot—We cannot allow this to continue. The fossil fuel industry has controlled the US government and too many other governments for too long. This is the last possible moment in history when changing course can mean saving lives and species on an unimaginable scale.

Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its report, stating that, given the worsening disasters we’re already seeing, and the additional warming that is already baked in, because we didn’t act 40 years ago, we don’t stand a chance of changing course in time without profound systemic, economic, and social change. And they say we have, at best, 11 years before the tipping point is reached, 11 years to reduce fossil fuel emissions roughly in half, and then continue to reduce them to net zero by 2050.

Yes, we are facing a climate crisis. But we’re also facing an empathy crisis, an inequality crisis. It isn’t only the earth’s life support systems that are unraveling. The fabric of our society is unraveling. This is going to take an all-out war on drilling and fracking and deregulation and racism and misogyny, and colonialism and despair, all at the same time. Now, some people say that we can’t deal with everything all at once. But history has shown, over and over again, that whenever we try to solve problems without addressing the issues of inequality and injustice, it never works.

Besides, the problems we face now require every one of us to join the fight. It is a herculean task. And why would people join it if they didn’t see something in it for themselves? Fossil fuel workers must see them continue to earn good union wages and benefits in a new energy economy. People of color and Indigenous people have to see that they, and their communities, won’t continue to be viewed as sacrifice zones, where cancer-causing wastes from the oil industry get dumped, and pipelines, and fracking pits pollute their lands and waters, that there will be a plan to invest in their communities, to rebuild, and restore.

All you have to do is look at what happens when there's no plan that centers workers. Look at how people have been treated in former coal country. Laid-off workers, suffering from black lung disease, many too old to be retrained for new jobs, with healthcare benefits and pensions being cut. Science dictate that the fossil fuel industry leave \$11 trillion dollars of fuel in the ground, in order to guarantee a livable future. These are called stranded assets. But their workers must never be stranded assets.

That is why those who are working to address the climate emergency support a Green New Deal. This is what provides the framework to bring all of us, all of us together into a sustainable future. Proposals that don't center fairness and justice will not pass. Yes it will be a huge disruptive, super ambitious undertaking. And yes, it will cost a whole lot of money. But think what inaction costs. Over the last three years, the total cost of billion dollar weather and climate events exceeded \$450 billion dollars. We can find the money.

And remember, this country has kind of been here before. In the 1930s, it was a massive financial collapse known as the Great Depression. It was also an environmental collapse. My dad starred in a movie, *Grapes of Wrath*, that showed what happened to farmers. And it was a time of huge social unrest, with labor protests, riots, in the streets, over growing inequality, demanding that government step up with large-scale programs to help alleviate the hardship. And you know what Roosevelt said to them? "I agree with you. Now go out and make me do it."

It's really important that we remember that. They won't do it unless we make them. So they did. And with the force of public pressure behind him, President Roosevelt launched The New Deal. Well, in his first 100 days, largely by executive order, Roosevelt created government spending programs that put millions of people in hundreds of public projects back to work all across the country. The Civilian Conservation Corps employed three million young men to restore the Great Plains. Thousands of farmers could move away from places that couldn't support them, onto more fertile land, into towns, and in cities, where with government help, they became the new American middle class.

The Civil Works Administration, the Farm Security Administration, the National Industrial Recovery Act, and the Social Security Administration that we have today, all of this came into being because of the New Deal. This is exactly the kind of brave, bold leadership we need to see from our next President.

Now, on December 9th, this just last December 9th, a consortium of policy experts released a plan that urges the next administration to take 10 executive actions, starting day one, to confront the climate emergency without waiting for Congress. By the time of the inauguration, we will have 10 years left to reduce fossil fuels by half. And we're saying to the next President, we have 10 years. You have 10 days, 10 executive actions, to do in 10 days, to make history, and change course away from the climate cliff. The actions include an immediate halt to new fossil fuel leases, infrastructure, and exports. Significant investment in public renewable energy generation. Use the Clean Air Act to slash greenhouse pollution. And a prosecution of fossil fuel polluters.

The plan urges the next President to ensure a just transition that protects workers and communities, disproportionately harmed by the shift to a post-carbon pollution economy. The plan is intended to work alongside actions taken by Congress, state, and local governments, as well as international partners. And the ten-step plan also urges the creation of an inter-agency just transition taskforce, to ensure that impacted workers and communities are protected.

Now the rich and powerful hated the New Deal, hated Roosevelt, because it set a precedent for the federal government to play a central role in the economic and social affairs of the nation. It was criticized as fascist, as socialist. Bankers tried to overthrow Roosevelt. Big business, big railroads, big banks ranted and raved against it. But there were millions of people in the streets demanding that Roosevelt do more, because it was helping them. And, because of that, it succeeded.

The same interests that hated the New Deal are the ones telling us today that the Green New Deal is bad, that government shouldn't be so involved in economic and social regulation. And they've convinced a lot of people of this. Big government is evil, they say. But it's not the size of government that matters, it's who the government is working for. And for too long, it's been a government controlled by corporations, most particularly the fossil fuel industry. This is why it hasn't been working for working people.

And powerful forces are arrayed against the efforts to change this, just like back in the 1930s. Already, there's a rash of new laws supporting happening across the country, that specifically criminalize protests aimed at fossil fuel infrastructure. These new laws are called critical infrastructure laws, since they reclassify fossil fuel infrastructure as critical, in order to justify harsh penalties against climate advocates exercising their Constitutional right to peaceful protest. This is a huge problem.

Scientists say we need to cut fossil fuel use in half. But protesting the expansion of fossil fuels is being criminalized. The fact is, the policies proposed by the Green New Deal are in line with what American people have already done when there was no choice. And there is no choice. Had we known what the fossil fuel industry knew in the 1970s, we could have begun a nice polite, incremental, moderate transition to a new economy off of fossil fuels. But they lied. They hid the science. And, as a result, we've lost decades. And our carbon budget, the amount of carbon we can still burn without passing the tipping point, has shrunk.

Now, because of the fossil fuel industry, it's too late for moderation. And given the emergency, it's those who believe in moderation, in pre-Trump "business as usual," who are truly delusional. And those who lied and continue to lie about what they're doing to the environment should be put on trial, not awarded tax cuts and made Secretaries of State. [applause] But I beg people to think about how they can ratchet up their activism on climate. Not as individuals, but in concert with others, in ways that will awaken more people to the urgency, and with the focus on changing policy, shifting power, electing brave people who aren't scared of bold actions in the face of this crisis, but—and now I am addressing the media in the room. It's hard to get people to increase their activism when only 43 percent of Americans report hearing about climate change, and 23 percent say they never hear about it.

We can't fix the climate crisis if we're not talking about it. If we're going to build the robust mass climate movement we need, we need the media to step up. The announcement of the Global Collaboration of News Outlets, called Covering Climate Now, is an encouraging sign. Very grateful for that. But more media outlets need to begin drawing the links between

extreme weather events and the climate crisis, need to stop taking ads from the fossil fuel industry, need to stop giving a voice to climate deniers by saying, “There's still much debate among the scientists.” There isn't. There isn't. 97 percent of climate science agree, agree about the crisis, agree about its causes, and agree about the time remaining to act. And yet this “two sides to the story” narrative continues.

If Americans realized the level of consensus among scientists, they would want to do something to prevent the worst from happening. And also, here is another thing. While it's important to write about the tragic impacts of climate crisis, it's also important to give people a hopeful vision of what can be, by reporting on what cities like Seattle or Oakland, Los Angeles, and Boulder, and states like New York and Maine are already doing, to transition from fossil fuels to sustainable clean energy.

Write about the young climate strikers, globally, who are drawing attention to the climate crisis, and asking us older folks to take action on behalf of their future. This is it, folks. This is the time. Thank you.

[applause]

I've been talking at so many rallies, I'm losing my voice. Thank you.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Thank you very much. We have approximately 6,000 questions here. So I don't think we're going to be able to get through all of them. But we'll do our best. I would just take a moment to mildly defend the news industry, too. Because if you know about the global young climate strikers, chances are you heard them in the media. But we can always improve.

I wonder about—You are pointing very specifically to Exxon and the fossil fuel industry. Do you think there's more blame to go around? I mean you're pointing very specifically. But do you think that's productive to point at one specific country or one specific industry?

JANE FONDA: I think it's absolutely essential. For too long, even the environmental movement talks about sustainable energy and windmills and solar panels. And they don't point their finger at the culprit. Even the most famous environmental organizations, because it's scary. We've got to acknowledge what is happening, because no matter what we do—We can pour billions of dollars into, you know, building out windmills and the alternative energy. But, if they keep drilling and fracking and exporting, it's not going to make a difference. And so we have to start calling out the people who are responsible. And it is not our fault, okay. It'll be our fault now that we know, and we don't do every single thing we possibly can. But what's brought us to this is not our fault, it's the fossil fuel industry.

[applause]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: You mentioned several times in your speech the next administration. What will it mean for climate activism if President Trump is reelected?

JANE FONDA: Well, one of the reasons that I have moved to D.C. for four months, to engage in these once a week teach-ins on Thursday night, and once a week actions that include civil disobedience every Friday, is because it was the best way that I could think of, of using myself, my body, my platform, *Grace and Frankie's*, you know, what—that makes me kind of popular. Wasn't always that way—to raise the sense of urgency, to get the word out wider than it had been. Unfortunately, there is a cult of celebrity. And so I get covered when Jerome Foster, who's every Friday in front of the White House, and the other young people that protest every Friday, don't get covered. So I'm trying to use my celebrity.

And the reason is, to answer your question, is because I'm well aware that the person elected next November, whether it's the Republican or even certain of the Democratic candidates, might not be brave enough to step up to the plate and do the kinds of things that Roosevelt did in the 1930s. And the only thing that can make the difference under that scenario is exactly what the scientists are saying. Massive numbers of Americans in the streets, mobilized and organized and demanding, demanding, and even if the best person with the climate plan gets elected, we still have to be in the streets, holding their feet to the fire.

You know, we don't—When we elect someone that we feel is a good person, oh good. Now I can learn how to garden, or learn a new language. And that's all fine. But I've seen it. I'm—You know, there's a big advantage of being old, because you can look back, and you can see precedence. I've seen precedence of when we just don't do, we don't force the people in office to do what they need to do. And so terrible things happen. So, no matter who gets elected, including if it's that guy, we have to organize and be in the streets and demand.

I was asked to speak to the Senate Taskforce on Climate Change. And I asked them, you know, “Am I doing the right thing? Can you give me some advice about something else I should be doing?” And Senator Ed Markey said to me, “You're building an Army. Make it big.” We need—They need the pressure from the outside to force them to do what's right. So come on, folks. Do it. We got to organize.

[applause]

You know, maybe some of you heard of Anthony Leiserowitz, the scientist at Yale. He's quite well known. He told me that 43 million Americans would do something about climate change, but nobody asked them. So we have to talk about it. Even with Uncle Bob at Christmas dinner, because maybe he voted for Trump, but he probably has grandkids. You know, find a way into people's hearts, so that they will feel that they have a responsibility to do something. We have to talk about it.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: But we don't seem to have, in our culture, like there might have been a few decades ago, the culture of marching in the streets. What do you think has changed?

JANE FONDA: Where were you the day after Trump's inauguration? [applause]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: I was at work.

JANE FONDA: You were at work with your head in the sand? I mean, didn't you watch TV? There were over a million women in the streets. [applause] California, 750,000 men and women and children in the streets. It was the largest mass demonstration in the history of Los Angeles. People are out. They're just not big enough numbers. And one of the things that I've learned, with Fire Drill Fridays, that I didn't know—you know, you don't know. You give a party, and nobody comes. I didn't know what was going to happen. But I realized, after about five Fridays, it's got traction. People are coming from all over the country to do something they've never done before, engage in civil disobedience, and get arrested. And they're transformed.

It's so hard, in this day and age, to align our bodies with our deepest values, and become integrated as people. And that's what these kind of actions do. And I'm realizing that we tapped in, without really being sure that we were going to—tapped into a deep need, in a whole lot of people in this country, to take the next step. That's where we're at, take the next step. We have very little time.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: How long do you plan to continue your Fire Drill Fridays?

JANE FONDA: Well, I moved for—I tried to get a year, but Ted Sarandos, who's the head of Netflix, couldn't arrange it, to give us a hiatus from *Grace and Frankie*. He's a good guy, but he'd already signed a lot of contracts. So I have four months. The last one is January 10th. I go back. I do the last season of *Grace and Frankie*. It ends in July. And then I'll travel around the country, because people want to start it in their own towns and cities. So we're going to take it and build the Army, man. I'm going to devote two years of my life to build an Army. [applause]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Is somebody here ready to take up the slack after you are gone?

JANE FONDA: I don't know. We'll see. I mean, but yeah. But see, they've been here all along. They've been here for a year. The young people have been doing this every single Friday. They are the ones that inspired me. And they're going to stay behind when I go. But they're here.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: So what do you say to people who say what you're doing is a publicity stunt?

JANE FONDA: I beg your pardon?

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: What do you say to people who say that what you are doing is a publicity stunt?

JANE FONDA: I say, okay. [laughter] I mean fine. Doesn't matter. [applause] Do you think I like doing this? [laughter] I have a four month old grandson. I feel like he's going to be in college by the time I get back. I have a dog that's my soulmate, that I wanted to bring, but she had a seizure on the way to the airport. I miss her, don't I Debi? I miss her every moment. I mean it's hard being here, living in a hotel room. Publicity stunt. [laughter] But I have gotten a lot of publicity, because I'm a celebrity, you know. And so that's why I'm doing it. If you're a celebrity, it's your responsibility to use that celebrity, especially when the future of mankind is at stake.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: So this questioner says, "I have two tree-hugging, fearless daughters, 17 and 12. They're excited about fighting for the environment. How do I keep them encouraged after President Trump intimidated Greta Thunberg?"

JANE FONDA: Oh yeah. Well, help them feel sorry for him. Help them understand that a man who could do that to a girl like Greta is so empty, so lacking in empathy and compassion, that all we need to be compassionate. We may hate the behavior, but we have to understand that the behavior is the language of the traumatized. So we don't hate the traumatized. And then encourage them to see what's happening with the students all over the world, and tell them they can join a movement. See here is the thing that I've discovered. And it wasn't just with the Fire Drill Fridays, I learned it a long time ago. Activism is the antidote to despair. Better than Prozac, better than all the other things. [applause] It lifts you out of despair when you align yourself with your deepest values and start doing something more than you did before.

When Trump was elected, I, like many of you, I'm sure, I felt like a truck had hit me. I was so desperate. Then I went to Standing Rock. And the depression lifted. I was very depressed before I moved to D.C., because I knew I wasn't doing enough. And I came here, and I started these actions, and the depression lifted. It's very interesting. And I encourage you to try it.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Well, if you are feeling empathy, and you had five minutes with President Trump, what would you say to him?

JANE FONDA: I do have empathy. But I'm afraid that he—there's no changing him. I'll tell you—I'm going to—The day after the election, Gloria Steinem and I had to go to Atlanta to speak to 1,600 women at the Atlanta Women's Foundation. And I hatched a plan on the way, because I kind of know men like Trump, only not as bad, but you know, they—I sort of know those inclinations. And I thought, I'm going to get three or four of the most beautiful, voluptuous, brilliant climate activists, Pamela Anderson is one of them. [laughter] And a few scientists. And I'm going to make an appointment, and we're all going to see Trump. And we're going to get on our knees. No. [laughter] No. And we're going to say to him, "President Trump, you can be the hero of the entire world. You can be the most

important human being ever to be born, the most better, perfect, wonderful, big, huge, wonderful, if you protect the planet.”

So I called Jared Kushner, and I told him my plan. And he said, “Well, uh, Ivanka’s the environmentalist in the family. So I’ll have her call you.” And she did. So I told her my plan. [laughter] And she laughed and said, “I’ll get back to you.” Well, she never did. Pamela Anderson was ready, and a few others. But it just didn’t happen. But that was the only way that I could think of getting him to do it, if he felt—And he would have been, actually. He would have been a hero for forever.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Who were the others? [laughter] Can't say. This questioner says, “Women appear to have taken the lead in the climate movement. Why do you think women are so prominent? And what do you see as the role of women specifically?”

JANE FONDA: Right. Well, it’s interesting that, you know, we’ve gone from 10 people being arrested to 53 people being arrested. Next Friday it’ll be more than 100. And invariably, three-quarters of them are women. As Gloria Steinem says, it’s not that women are better than men, we just don’t have our masculinity to prove. [applause] Gloria. What would we do without her?

Think about it. Starting at the end of the ‘70s/beginning of ‘80s, with Reaganism here and Thatcherism over there, the notion of the commons, the public sphere, civil society, began to be eroded. It was very deliberate. Margaret Thatcher has been quoted saying, “There is no such thing as society.” It’s obvious why these kinds of people don’t want us to think about the collective good, about the commons, about our interdependence. Because that’s when we know that in our hearts, that’s when we start to organize.

Women, for evolutionary reasons, biological reasons, very profound reasons, are less vulnerable to the disease of individualism. We just are. Way back, hunter-gathering time, the men would go out as individuals, with their spears, to get the tigers. And it was always iffy if they were ever going to bring any meat back. It was hard, and it was an individual task of great courage. But the women stayed back. And they helped each other. They helped raise each other’s children. They helped deliver each other’s children. Human babies are the hardest of all to deliver and raise, because our heads are so big, you know. [laughter]

E.L. Wilson once said that he thought maybe God granted the gift of intelligence to the wrong species. [laughter] That he should have given it to species that don’t eat meat and have no thumbs, like whales and dolphins and porpoises. But anyway, so women were there around the campfire, helping each other. The grandmas were really important, because they would stay back with the little babies. But they knew where the tiger was. And they knew where the good water was. And they knew where the best roots were. So they all—the women depended on each other. This is in our DNA, very deep, us women.

The sense of interdependence. And I think that that’s why, in this moment of grave collective crisis, that requires a collective solution, that women would be in the lead. And it

moves me very much, and most of the women that are coming to get arrested with me are older. Not as old as me, but they're old. And we were talking about how much we like getting older. Yeah. It's really cool. I mean if you're healthy, if you're healthy. And we both have issues, but they don't define us, right. Yeah. But what was I going to say? [laughter] Oh yeah. Right. See when you get older, I mean what have you got to lose, right? I'm not in the market for some guy that's scared of older women any more, scared of strong women. I've been married three times to one of those. [laughter] I don't need that anymore. I'm on my own, man. I've got time, and I've got courage. And that's why older women are stepping up. Grandmas Unite, right? [applause]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: So you, in 2005, helped found the Women's Media Center with Gloria Steinem and Robin Morgan to, "ensure women are powerfully and visibly represented in the media." What do you think the status is and the biggest achievement of the Women's Media Center?

JANE FONDA: The status of women in the media or the Women's Media Center? The Women's Media Center is just fine. We're—

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: The status of women in the media.

JANE FONDA: We train women. We let, you know, news organizations of all kinds know we have the she source, who is—You know, too often, a network or a magazine, "Well, we couldn't get a woman, because there's no woman that's an expert in this, that, or the other." And no. We now have lists. We have lists of all the women that are experts in all kinds of things. [applause] So we're doing good. But there's a lot of work to do. Yeah.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: You were once married to Ted Turner. I think most people here know that. He created CNN. What do you think when you watch the network now?

JANE FONDA: Oh, I will always be nice to Ted. I was sitting, like right there, when he gave his last speech in this very room. That was when Jerry Levin was taking over Ted's—what Ted built. And Ted, he said, "I feel like a woman who's had genital mutilation." He called it "clitoretomized." Anyway—

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: I see a very wide-eyed man out there. [laughter]

JANE FONDA: How many of you ever knew Ted? So you—Oh, I'm sorry, there are not more. It was a treat to know Ted. And I miss Ted, and I think CNN misses Ted. But, you know, CNN is good. Anything that's not Fox News is good. [applause] I mean CNN tells the news, as do a lot of other networks. Just need to talk more about climate.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Okay. This is another non-climate question. What's your view of the portrayal of a female reporter sleeping with a source to get the story

in the movie *Richard Jewell*? It's based on a real person who's now deceased, but there's no evidence.

JANE FONDA: I don't know. I haven't seen it. I have to see the movie before I can comment on it.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: We have a question from somebody from Germany, who points this out in the question. Just like Great Thunberg is for younger generations, you seem to be a symbolic figure for the older generation. Are you protesting because you feel the need to make up for what your generation has done to the environment?

JANE FONDA: Hey, wait a minute now. My generation didn't do anything to the environment. It was the fossil fuel industry, knowingly harmed the environment, not my generation. We didn't know, or we weren't paying close enough attention, maybe. But basically, the information was kept from us. So don't feel guilty. Guilt is a terrible—you know, unless you deserve to feel guilty. Then we don't feel—deserve to feel guilty for what's happened to the environment. So I don't agree with that. What is that, “Oh Boomer” thing? What is that? [laughter] Whatever it is, it's wrong. It's probably started by the fossil fuel industry. [laughter]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Here is somebody who's looking for some concrete information, because possibly they want to join you. “Where do I meet you on Fridays to get arrested?” [applause]

JANE FONDA: Well, we're right there behind the Capitol. What's it called? Southeast Lawn. It starts at 11. You know who's going to be there? Gloria Steinem, Delores Huerta, Martin Sheen, Reverend William Barber, Ai-jen Poo. I mean that's just to mention a few. It's going to be something. It's going to be my 82nd birthday. And we're focusing on health and climate, which is a very important issue. [applause] Yeah. Starts at 11 o'clock.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: What kind of actions can state governments do to transform to 100 percent clean energy without the federal government's support?

JANE FONDA: It's not easy without the federal government's support. But some of the cities that I mentioned, like Seattle and Oakland, and the a state like Maine, the key thing we've discovered is for all the stakeholders to be at the table. If labor isn't at the table, it doesn't work. Labor has to be there. Frontline communities, people of color, the communities that have been the most impacted, Indigenous communities, where those are, and state legislators, and a lot of lawyers.

And one thing that becomes clear when you look at what's happening in all these cities, is that there isn't a cookie-cutter. That's why it has to be decentralized. Because every city has different challenges and different opportunities, depending on topography, depending on their proximity to water, depending on a lot of things, depending on already-existing public transit, for example. So they all are doing it a little differently. But in all the cases, labor has signed on. And that is a critical—I mean when you think about the 1930s,

without labor being there, it wouldn't have happened. So that's what they do. It's different everywhere.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: What do you think is the biggest misconception about you? And what would you like people to know that might change that misconception?

JANE FONDA: I don't care. [laughter] [applause] Next.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: All right, next. Well, this is sort of in the same vein. *Washington Post* review of your book, *My Life So Far*, talked about how complex your causes and convictions have been, calling them a, "beautiful bundle of contradictions." What do you think of that description? Is it accurate?

JANE FONDA: Beautiful bundle of contradictions? Well then, whoever wrote it, or else maybe it was my fault, because they're all interconnected. They're all interconnected, women, war, environment, climate, injustice, racism. It's—They're all connected. And that's one reason why I insisted, when I came here, and we started Fire Drill Fridays, that every week we focus on a different aspect of the climate crisis, so that we can show the new word that everybody—is intersectionality. We can show the connections between them. Maybe I just didn't write my book well enough so that I made those interconnections visible. Maybe I need to write a new one. I don't know. [laughter]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: In your extra time? We have several questions about the recent United Nations Convention on Climate in Madrid, and what many questioners have said, are the disappointing results.

JANE FONDA: Well, yeah. It was disappointing, I think. We hoped that it would conclude with some concrete successes. But one thing was very important, and it hasn't been reported in the press very much, as far as I know. And that is that, for the first time at one of these conferences, they talked about the fossil fuel industry. They named names. And that is new. And that is essential. So that's good. And I guess now we wait for the next one. And, you know, we just have to make our voices heard.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: A lot of people are asking, who is your favorite candidate for 2020?

JANE FONDA: I'm not—I'm not—Whoever wins, we have to mobilize in the streets in huge numbers and hold their feet to the fire. And it doesn't help anything for me to say who I prefer. I mean, I know—You know, I've said pretty clearly, it's too late for moderation. So I guess that tells you something. [laughter] You know, the idea that going back to what existed before Trump, I mean Trump isn't some unicorn that appeared out of nowhere. There's a reason that he was elected. And so the solution requires much more than going back before he was elected. It requires addressing the reasons that he was elected. And that's why I like the Green New Deal, because it'll not only solve the climate crisis, it will

address the reasons that someone like Trump could get elected in a country that is supposed to be a Democracy. [applause] This is where you clap. [applause]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Michael Bloomberg has spent hundreds of millions of dollars trying to stop climate change. But he's also spent a lot of money electing Republicans, including in the 2018 midterms. Do you consider him to be on the same side as you?

JANE FONDA: I like Michael. I admire much—I love his work on gun control. But I don't like the fact that he supports candidates—I mean Pat Toomey in Pennsylvania was running against a very progressive woman. And Michael Bloomberg put a lot of money into Toomey's campaign, because Toomey is good on guns. But he's terrible on climate and fracking. So there's a lot about where Bloomberg is coming from, that I don't like. But, on top of that, I don't like people buying their way into the electoral process. We got to get money out of politics. [applause]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: So we are almost out of time. But before I ask you the final question, I just want to present you with the very highly coveted National Press Club coffee mug.

JANE FONDA: Cool.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Or anything mug. [applause]

JANE FONDA: Thank you.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Now this question seems to have come from many, many corners. How much fun are you having working with Lily Tomlin?

JANE FONDA: Oh, yeah. She's coming Friday the 27th to get arrested with me. [applause] *Grace and Frankie* do jail. [laughter] I love Lily Tomlin, okay. Lily Tomlin is an inescapably lovable human being, with the largest talent of anybody I've known. And I'm just—I feel very blessed that I go to work every day and get to see her radiant face. And we love each other a lot. [applause]

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: And sorry, one final—Somebody asked whether you ever intend to bring Dolly Parton back into your threesome.

JANE FONDA: Well, we've tried. We've tried. Dolly is kind of busy. And so she might. She wants to, she says. So I don't know. But we keep trying.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: Jane Fonda, thank you very much.

JANE FONDA: Thank you all very much. Appreciate it.

ALISON FITZGERALD KODJAK: For being with us today at the National Press Club.

[applause]

END