

# How Sinclair Oil's Dinosaur Mascot Shaped Our Beliefs

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# How Sinclair Oil's Dinosaur Mascot Shaped Our Beliefs

## Source & Date

Surprise! Oil doesn't come from dino bones.

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## Article



Photo by [Blanca Paloma Sánchez](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I'll never forget the first time I saw an oil refinery. It looked like it belonged in the future on some evil planet affiliated with the Death Star.

I was driving across Wyoming on Interstate 80 at night. There was no sign of civilization around for miles. All of a sudden, I saw an enormous glow penetrate the darkness

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ahead. It caught me off guard as I was in the middle of nowhere. No road signs indicated that a big city was coming up.

*"Where are all these bright lights coming from?"* I wondered.

Answer: Sinclair, Wyoming. Home to Sinclair Oil Refinery.

Super bright lights glared all around. Everything was made of shiny metal. There were strange flaming torches throwing fire into the air and smokestacks of various sizes spread out across a sizeable chunk of land. The smoke or vapor (or whatever it was) spread through the nighttime air in a cloudy haze that blanketed the surrounding area.



Photo by [Robin Sommer](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I didn't know it was an oil refinery as I drove by, but it scared me nonetheless. It felt like the beginning of a horror film that would not end well. I locked my doors and pressed the gas pedal down a little harder. I wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible.

This happened many years ago, before GPS and smartphones. (Yes, that must make me as old as the dinosaurs!) That meant I was on my own to figure out what it was. I realized my answer as I sped past [a little green dinosaur](#) mascot on the side of the road.

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*"Ah, dinosaur = fossils = fossil fuels = oil. That must have been an oil refinery." I surmised. (Who needs Google anyway, right?)*

It's been years since that first fateful night. I have driven past the Sinclair refinery many more times, both day and night. Each drive-by drums up the same eerie thought.

***"Isn't it creepy that they're digging up dead dinosaur fossils to fuel the car I'm driving right now?"***

Yes. Yes, it is creepy.

But also, no. No, because it is inaccurate.

## **Sinclair's DINO: The Oil Dinosaur Who Started It All**

Isn't it funny how we're fed information and just accept it as truth?

That's what happened with the Sinclair dino I saw. I immediately knew that the massive flaming, smoky, metallic compound I passed had something to do with oil... because I saw a dinosaur. That means that my memory banks somehow held a connection between dinosaurs and oil.

Well, the term *fossil fuel* is partly to blame. But, let's get real. At one point I, too, believed that oil came specifically from dinosaur fossils. Now I know why — advertising. Turns out, it all stemmed from a [bunch of propaganda](#) that came out of Sinclair Oil in the early 1900s.

A paleontologist (read: dinosaur bones guy) by the name of [Barnum Brown](#) was trying to fund his wild dinosaur fossil expeditions. He knew someone at Sinclair Oil and Refining Corporation with some cash. They gave him a [gig authoring promo materials](#) for them, which included designing dinosaur stamps, in return for money to continue his search for more dino bones.

**And thus, the connection between dinosaurs and oil was born.** Each side used the other to further their desires. Brown used his corporate sponsor with deep pockets to fund his insatiable need to be the top dinosaur fossil guy. Sinclair Oil capitalized on the general public's newfound obsession with dinosaurs to sway people to buy their oil by "getting customers to believe that [better oil came from older rocks](#)." As in, rocks as old as dinosaur fossils.

Dino the Sinclair mascot got leveraged [all around the nation](#). Models of him made appearances at the World's Fair in Chicago (1933–1934) and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1963. He eventually graced the stage with 8 other dinosaur models during the 1964–65 New York World's Fair at Sinclair's Dinoland exhibit.

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All this press helped solidify the unfounded and inaccurate belief that dinosaurs were even remotely related to oil or oil refining.

Instead, the reality is most scientists agree on the theory that “the [majority of petroleum](#) is thought to come from the fossils of plants and tiny marine organisms.” It’s a mixture of this small, dead organic matter plus heat, pressure, and a heck of a lot of time that eventually creates crude oil.

And *that* is what we’re digging up to fuel our cars. Not dinosaur fossils.

## Extinction...Times Two

Even if it had been dinosaurs rather than small marine life fueling our cars, it’s 2020 so it doesn’t really matter anymore. The message is clearly changing. It’s time to let dinosaur bones lie and move on to brighter pastures. Specifically, bright pastures with solar panels and windmills; because the transition to clean energy is here. With the arrival of President-Elect Joe Biden comes [his bold renewable energy plan](#) that includes, among many initiatives: swapping out gas guzzlers for EVs, establishing a cross-country grid of public EV charging stations, and creating a carbon-neutral power industry by 2035.

## What This Means For the Oil Industry

It’s easy to blame the oil industry for all of our climate woes but, honestly, I still use oil. And most of you probably do too. Even if you have an electric car, you may rely on fossil fuels as your home heat source. Or worse, [the electricity you use to charge your EV may come from fossil fuels!](#) Talk about a conundrum.

Even if you escaped the oil industry on all those fronts, then you likely still buy your food and supplies from companies that use oil. The truth is, oil continues to pervade many aspects of 21st-century modern life. It’s hard to get around at this point in our transition. There’s obviously a lot of work to be done in the coming years. That includes overcoming oil money, lobbying, and resistance.

Yet there is another, harder, truth. It’s easy for everyone outside the oil industry to shame those who are inside of it — but the truth is that those oil company owners and employees have families too. They need to provide for their loved ones just like you. So maybe they’re just doing what they know how to do, and have millions (or more?) of dollars in equipment to do.

I am not making excuses for them. I am, however, putting myself in their shoes. I see that it would be hard for me to stop digging up fossils too if I knew I had no other way to

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make money. So maybe it is time we stop looking at it as an “oil industry people are evil” thing and more of an economic “we all need money to live & are obsessed with being wealthy” thing.

I often wonder, what would happen if we stopped demonizing the oil industry? Maybe if our government gave the oil companies financial initiatives and paths to participate in the renewable energy industry, then they would transition! Has anyone given them a chance? My guess is, they don't care how they make the money — oil or renewables — they just want the cash flowing in.

Either way, I recognize it is time. This completely vital transition from fossil fuels can not be postponed out of greed or fear. **Our planet can't sustain our fossil fuel addiction much longer.** I just hope that Biden also has a plan to address the hardships that oil companies, like Sinclair, may undergo as their industries follow the path of the dinosaurs — into extinction.

## Source Article Link

- Ref: <https://medium.com/climate-conscious/how-sinclair-oils-dinosaur-mascot-shaped-our-beliefs-7c05b12e8406>