



CHAPTER 3 THE BIG POLLUTERS

It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.

- Upton Sinclair



Many people and institutions are still in denial over the existence of global warming. This is due to global warming being a complex problem, which is clouded by deep political and industrial implications. Scientists have concluded that the only way to effectively address global warming is to dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 90%. This would mean humans would need to stop using fossil fuels and switch to



renewable energy sources. Ultimately, the fossil fuel industry (the richest industry in the world) would need to come to an end to achieve the reduction that is required.

Not wanting to suffer financially, these industries have deliberately misled the public, policy makers and the media through campaigns of deception and misinformation. Oil and coal companies have poured millions of dollars into promoting the message 'climate change/global warming is uncertain' through the use of groups such as the Global Climate Coalition, the Greening Earth Society, the American Petroleum Institute, the Competitive Enterprise Institute and the World Coal Institute.

The ICE campaign is an example of how far coal and utility companies (National Coal Association, Western Fuel Association and Edison Electrical Institute) are

prepared to go to salvage their profits. A public relations firm created the \$500,000 ICE campaign one year before the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The campaign's goal was to 'reposition global warming as theory rather than fact' through utilising climate change skeptic scientists in broadcast appearances, interviews and newspaper advertisements. The campaign's newspaper advertisements made statements such as 'Some say the earth is warming. Some also said the earth was flat'. Fortunately, the ICE campaign collapsed after it was exposed by various publications (i.e. The New York Times and the Energy Daily).

Even to this day, an abundance of climate change propaganda still exists. On the 18th of May 2006, the Competitive Enterprise Institute launched a series of television advertisements in various U.S. cities in response to major media threats of worldwide climate change. The new commercials, featuring

images of children and glaciers melting and then reforming (played in reverse), make statements such as 'Carbon dioxide: they call it pollution, we call it life' and '...some politicians want to label carbon dioxide a pollutant. Imagine if they succeed – what would our lives be like then?' (Fortunately, in April 2007 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that CO₂ and other heat trapping emissions are air pollutants under the *Clean Air Act*). Earlier this year, scientists and economists were also offered \$10,000 by a lobby group (The American Enterprise Institute) funded by ExxonMobil to emphasize the shortcomings of the latest IPCC report just after it was released.



Climate change skeptics such as Robert Balling (Professor of Geography at Arizona State University), Richard Lindzen (Professor of Meteorology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Patrick Michaels (Professor of Environmental Science at the University of

Virginia) and S. Fred Singer (Electrical Engineer and Physicist) hold views that are in the minority of the scientific community. Many of these global warming skeptics do not have backgrounds in climatology, fail to source where they get their information from and hold extreme views regarding other areas of science. For example, S. Fred Singer is well known for being skeptical about the connection between CFCs and ozone depletion as well as second hand smoke and cancer.

These skeptical views have been portrayed in Congressional hearings in a way that has created a false portrayal of the climate change issue. A study by McCright and Dunlap examined the number of testimonies delivered by conventional scientists (holding a mainstream view on climate change) and climate change skeptics in congressional hearings from 1990 to 1997. Until 1994 the conventional scientists were outspoken on the issue, with the climate change skeptics presenting only 25% of all

testimonies given by scientists. From 1995 until the negotiations of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 (An International agreement aimed at reducing countries CO₂ and greenhouse gas emissions) things however changed dramatically. The number of testimonies presented by skeptics and conventional scientists was approximately equal every year, thereby clouding the issue in politicians' minds. For people who had no background information on the science of global warming, it would have appeared to them that the scientific community was split 50-50 on the issue, when in reality the situation was more like a 99-1 split.



Similarly, the media has been responsible for clouding the issue of climate change for the general public by reporting the most extreme views of climate change (those held by climate skeptics), regardless of the fact that the majority of scientists hold views towards a consensus position. This has resulted in

public confusion over the science and state of climate change, which has led to policy gridlock, personal and political inaction.

In summary, be careful what you read or who you choose to listen to on the science of global warming. Always ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is funding or sponsoring this scientist?
Is it the fossil fuel industry?
- Is this person a climatologist (scientist specialising in the Earth's climate)?
- Has their work been peer-reviewed?

Dr Karl Kruszelnicki states:

You don't get a plumber to build a fence for you, and you don't get a chef to do some plumbing. In the

same way, if you need some surgery, you don't call a pathologist, virologist or an immunologist, you call a surgeon. In the same way the only people qualified to give you opinions on climate change are climatologists and they are of the opinion that climate change is real and that we caused it.

The climate debate has been dominated by a bunch of clowns instead of climatologists for far too long. The clowns are still out there, but it is up to us to recognise them and decide if what they are saying is worth our time and energy. Who would you rather learn from? A clown or climatologist? The choice is yours.

