

Global Warming: follow the money

It isn't fossil fuel companies that are polluting climate science

Citing documents uncovered by the radical environmental group Greenpeace, a group of media outlets — including the New York Times and the Boston Globe — have attacked global-warming skeptic Wei-Hock (Willie) Soon for allegedly hiding \$1.2 million in contributions from “fossil fuel companies.”

Reporters have fundamentally misled readers

The articles were the latest in an ongoing campaign by greens and their media allies to discredit opponents of the warming agenda. But in allying themselves closely with activist groups with which they share ideological goals, reporters have fundamentally misled readers on the facts of global-warming funding.

In truth, the overwhelming majority of climate-research funding comes from the federal government and left-wing foundations. And while the energy industry funds both sides of the climate debate, the government/foundation monies go only toward research that advances the warming regulatory agenda. With a clear public-policy outcome in mind, the government/foundation gravy train is a much greater threat to scientific integrity.

Officials with the Smithsonian Institution — which employs Dr. Soon — told the Times it appeared the scientist had violated disclosure standards, and they said they would look into the matter. Soon, a Malaysian immigrant, is a widely respected astrophysicist, and his allies came quickly to his defense.

“It is a despicable, reprehensible attack...”

“It is a despicable, reprehensible attack on a man of great personal integrity,” says Myron Ebell, the director of Global Warming and International Environmental Policy for the Competitive Enterprise Institute, who questioned why media organizations were singling out Soon over research funding.

Indeed, experts in the research community say that it is much more difficult for some of the top climate scientists — Soon, Roger Pielke Jr., the CATO Institute's Patrick Michaels, MIT's now-retired Richard Lindzen — to get funding for their work because they do not embrace the global-warming fearmongering favored by the government-funded climate establishment.

If he had only mouthed establishment platitudes...

“Soon's integrity in the scientific community shines out,” says Ebell. “He has foregone his own career advancement to advance scientific truth. If he had only mouthed establishment platitudes, he could've been named to head a big university [research center] like Michael Mann.”

Mann is the controversial director of Pennsylvania State's Earth System Science Center. He was at the center of the 2009 Climategate scandal, in which e-mails were uncovered from climatologists discussing how to skew scientific evidence and blackball experts who don't agree with them.

Taken millions from government agencies

Mann is typical of pro-warming scientists who have taken millions from government agencies. The federal government — which will gain unprecedented regulatory power if climate legislation is passed — has funded scientific research to the tune of \$32.5 billion since 1989, according to the Science and Public Policy Institute. That is an amount that dwarfs research contributions from oil companies and utilities, which have historically funded both sides of the debate.

Mann, for example, has received some \$6 million, mostly in government grants — according to a study by The American Spectator — including \$500,000 in federal stimulus money while he was under investigation for his Climategate e-mails.

Ignored millions in contributions from left-wing foundations

Despite claims that they are watchdogs of the establishment, media outlets such as the Times have ignored the government's oversized role in directing research. And they have ignored millions in contributions from left-wing foundations — contributions that, like government grants, seek to tip the scales to one side of the debate.

Last summer, a minority staff report from the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works gave details on a “Billionaire’s Club” — a shadowy network of charitable foundations that distribute billions to advance climate alarmism. Shadowy nonprofits such as the Energy Foundation and Tides Foundation distributed billions to far-left green groups such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, which in turn send staff to the EPA who then direct federal grants back to the same green groups. It is incestuous. It is opaque. Major media ignored the report.

Media outlets have discriminated in their reporting

Media outlets have also discriminated in their reporting on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. The Times trumpeted Greenpeace FOIA requests revealing Soon’s benefactors, yet it has ignored the government’s refusal of FOIA filings requesting transparency in pro-warming scientists’ funding.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute, for example, has submitted FOIA requests asking for the sources of outside income of NASA scientist James Hansen (a key ally of Al Gore). The government has stonewalled, according to Ebell.

Media reporting further misleads readers in suggesting that “fossil fuel” utilities such as the Southern Company (a \$409,000 contributor to Soon’s research, according to the Times) seek only to undermine climate science. In truth, energy companies today invest in solar, biomass, and landfill facilities in addition to carbon fuels. Companies such as Duke Energy, Exelon Corporation, NRG Energy, and Shell have even gone so far as to join with green groups in forming the U.S. Climate Action Partnership — an industry/green coalition that wants to “enact strong national legislation to require significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.”

Enormous cost to consumers

This alliance worries a scientific community that is hardly unanimous that warming is a threat. Continued funding of contrarians such as Soon and Lindzen is essential to getting the best scientific research at a time when the EPA wants to shut down America's most affordable power source, coal — at enormous cost to consumers.

The real threat to science

The lack of warming for over a decade (witness this winter's dangerous, record-breaking low temperatures) and Climategate are proof that the establishment has oversold a warming crisis. Attempts by the media to shut up their critics ignore the real threat to science.

Henry Payne is a regular contributor to National Review, the Wall Street Journal, and other publications.