



When US senator Jim Inhofe called climate change a hoax

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Fakenomcis: Inhofe's infamous 'climate hoax' Senate speech was basically funded by the oil baron Koch brothers.

The US Senator Jim Inhofe relentlessly denies that humans are driving climate change. In a rambling February speech he lobbed a snowball in the Senate as a means of disproving climate change and dismissed President Obama's warnings that climate change is the greatest threat to future generations as "a severe disconnect from reality".

But perhaps one of his best known antics took place in 2003. It was yet another summer of record-breaking heat waves in the United States at the time and the deniers' attacks on Professor Michael Mann had reached fever pitch.

Mann, among the world's most eminent climate scientists, described the ordeal of being besieged as the "Serengeti strategy" - in which a pride of lions would hunt down the most vulnerable or appetising prey in a stampeding, panicked herd.

"I have received menacing e-mails, including anonymous death threats. I've received a package containing an Anthrax-like white powder – the FBI determined that it was a hoax. Someone threw a dead rat on the doorstep of another colleague," he said.

Inhofe's attack

Mann was being hunted because his hockey stick graph had become the iconic image of the global climate movement. Senator Jim Inhofe would sound the bugle.

The staunch Republican was chairman of the Committee on Environment and Public Works which had received funding from Koch Industries through their political funds and had supported the Tea Party in the House of Representatives.

Inhofe attacked Mann and his hockey stick graph in the Senate on 28 July 2003 during a exhaustive two-hour rehearsal of the main sceptic claims against science.

The section of the speech was called “The IPCC plays hockey” and relied on the challenges first set out by Pat Michaels from the Exxon-funded Cato Institute in 1998. But, Inhofe failed to mention this connection to the oil industry.

'Many flaws'

Inhofe told his fellow senators that “many scientists had pointed out” that the graph had “many flaws”.

The clearly explained technique of using both modern temperature records and historic tree proxy data on the same graph was characterised by the senator as “a highly controversial and scientifically flawed approach.”

He quoted Michaels directly in stating that comparing the temperature as recorded by thermometers and the temperature as recorded by tree-ring data was “like comparing apples to oranges”.

His diatribe against Mann concluded with an astonishing claim: “It's worth repeating: Mann's theory of global warming is out of step with most scientific thinking on the subject,” he huffed.

Show-stopping

The speech was a show stopper fit for Broadway, and is still perhaps unrivalled in the climate debate for its elegance, gall and surrealism.

“Let me be clear,” he thundered, “alarmists are attempting to enact an agenda of energy suppression that is inconsistent with American values of freedom, prosperity, and environmental progress. Over the past two hours I have offered compelling evidence that catastrophic global warming is a hoax. That conclusion is supported by the painstaking work of the nation's top climate scientists.”

He said his scientists had shown that climate change was just natural variability, that there had been “no meaningful warming”, and that climate models were highly imperfect.

He then named these scientists as Dr S. Fred Singer, Dr Richard Lindzen, and Dr David Wojick, shrewdly entangling their credentials with the names of respected climate researchers to give his speech further gravitas.

Call to arms

The speech was a call to arms and the climate deniers in the US and the UK would be galvanised by its power and sheer imaginativeness.

He puffed: “With all of the hysteria, all of the fear, all of the phony science, could it be that man-made global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people? It sure sounds like it!”

Mann himself expressed an appreciation for the tragicomic theatricality of Inhofe's speech.

“Personally, I thought Mr Inhofe was paying my colleagues and me a tremendous compliment,” Mann wrote in his account of the climate wars.

“After all, if thousands of highly opinionated and frequently cantankerous climate scientists had indeed conspired not only to coordinate such an elaborate hoax, but to get the ice sheets, sea level, and ocean temperatures to play along, we were certainly far more impressive a bunch than anyone had ever acknowledged.”

Whatever Mann is implying, Inhofe is no fool. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, in the five years leading up to 2006 he received \$40,000 from Koch Industries, both directly and indirectly, a total of \$452,108 from the oil and gas industry, \$384,643 from electric utilities and then a further \$245,724 from lobbyists.