

The New American

Who's Bankrolling the Climate Change Fanatics?

BY REBECCA TERRELL

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Time Magazine is accusing climate change deniers of a vast right-wing conspiracy of deceit that threatens to subvert efforts protecting the Earth from eco-catastrophe. In "Who's Bankrolling the Climate-Change Deniers?" Bryan Walsh bemoans the fact that only a few years ago Republicans such as John McCain and Mitt Romney supported government cap-and-trade programs to restrict industrial emissions of so-called greenhouse gases (GHG) but are now backpedaling. He cites polls showing a growing number of conservatives in the deniers' camp. "That's deeply troubling," Walsh laments, "... despite an overwhelming scientific consensus" confirming imminent calamity.

He highlights two sociologists who blame "climate denialism" on long-term efforts of "conservative groups and corporations to distort global-warming science." Walsh quotes their article in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, in which the sociologists claim, "Contrarian scientists, fossil-fuel corporations, conservative think tanks and various front groups have assaulted mainstream climate science and scientists for over two decades. The blows have been struck by a well-funded, highly complex and relatively coordinated denial machine."

Missing from Walsh's diatribe is any actual proof of a well-heeled denial machine or the "settled scientific truth" of climate change. He makes passing mention of two companies, Exxon and Peabody Energy, and a handful of groups including the Cato Institute and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and accuses them of infiltrating society through conservative media outlets. No data, no quotes, no evidence. Just chatter.

Is there data to back up Walsh's claims? First, let's look at the issue of scientific consensus. In a report to the U.S. Senate and the UN Climate Change Conference last December, 1,000 scientists challenged the idea of anthropogenic (man-made) global warming (AGW). These scientists are hardly isolated eccentrics or Tea Party mavericks. The list includes Nobel Prize winners and others who hail from the likes of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), and the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

A small sampling of quotes from the report clears up any questions of consensus. IPCC member Tom Tripp declared, "We're not scientifically there yet. Despite what you may have heard in the media, there is nothing like a consensus of scientific opinion that this is a problem."

"Any reasonable scientific analysis must conclude the basic theory [of global warming] wrong," stated Dr. Leonard Weinstein of NASA's Langley Research Center and the National Institute of Aerospace. RAS geologist Dr. Anatoly Levitin agrees. "We simply lack data to draw the proper conclusions," he explained.

His colleague, biologist Pavel Makarevich, added, "In my opinion and that of our institute, the problems connected to the current stage of warming are being exaggerated. What we are dealing with is not a global warming of the atmosphere or of the oceans."

Other scientists also disagree that there is "consensus" on the issue. Mike Hulme, a professor of environmental sciences at Britain's University of East Anglia – which gained infamy in the *Climategate* scandal – debunked media reports in 2010 that "2,500 of the world's leading scientists have reached a consensus that human activities are having a significant influence on the climate." Hulme, who has written extensively on IPCC governance, explained, "That particular consensus judgment, as are many others in the IPCC reports, is reached by only a few dozen experts in the specific field of detection and attribution studies."

So much for consensus. Now to determine the Rich Uncle Pennybags of climate deniers. This is an old argument, and in 2009 Joanne Nova pointed out its hypocrisy in her paper *Climate Money* published by the Science and Public Policy Institute. "Exxon-Mobil Corp is repeatedly attacked for paying a grand total of \$23 million to skeptics," she said, an amount that pales in comparison to \$79 billion the U.S. government invested in AGW research and technology development between 1989 and 2009. This does not count amounts spent by other governments around the globe, nor does it include tens of billions spent each quarter on the international carbon trading market.

Paul A.T. Higgins of the American Meteorological Society, who is incidentally a proponent of the AGW hypothesis, wrote in his analysis of the proposed U.S. fiscal year 2011 budget that federal dollars spent on climate change research and development totaled \$15.6 billion in 2009 and \$17 billion in 2010. The 2011 budget proposed a 10 percent increase over the previous year. The total annual operating revenue of groups such as Cato (\$20.4 million) and AEI (\$28.8 million) are paltry in comparison. Yet these are the greedy muckrakers Walsh finds so offensive, though they receive no government funding whatsoever.

Perhaps the question Walsh should ask is, "Who's bankrolling the climate change fanatics?"