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Clearing the PR Pollution that Clouds Climate Science





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Media Outlets Falsely Reporting Scientific Fraud Should Make Corrections



Ideologically motivated and often well-funded operatives were quick to broadcast the hacked East Anglia emails in November as 'the biggest scandal of the century.' Thanks to a [UK parliamentary investigation](#), and an earlier [Penn State investigation](#), we are reminded that the emails revealed no such scandal.

We can expect that the industry-funded think tanks would go all out to spread any story that fits into their narrative of denying climate science. More alarming are the reporters that swallowed the bait and reported on the manufactured scandal in a fake debate.

We should be expecting apologies and corrections from these reporters for taking the hints of 'scandal' and 'fraud' and reporting on them as fact:

- Bret Stephen in the WSJ hinted that global warming scientists were "closet Stalinists"? (The [seems](#) to have been removed, but did he apologise for it?) 12/8/2009
- Andrew Bolt in the [Melbourne Herald Sun](#): "Climategate: Warmist conspiracy exposed?" 11/20/2009
- James Dellingpole in the [Telegraph](#): "The Final Nail in the Coffin of Anthropogenic Global Warming" 11/20/2009
- Leo Hickman and James Randerson in [The Guardian](#): "Files stolen. Evidence of collusion among scientists"
- Lauren Morello writing for Climatewire and picked up in the [NYTimes](#): "Stolen E-Mails Sharpen a Brawl Between Climate Scientists and Skeptics" 11/24/2009
- The Freakonomics blog on the [NYTimes](#): "Phil Jones, the scientist at the center of the Climategate scandal, answers questions from the BBC." 2/18/2010
- Fred Guteri in [Newsweek](#): "Climate scientists who play fast and loose with the facts are imperiling not just their profession but the planet." 2/19/2010

Even though it generates lots of web-views, taking quotes out of context from illegally obtained information and then implying global implications is irresponsible. Calmly investigating the claims, as the [UK House of Commons Science and Technology Committee](#) has done, and finding the science sound is to be applauded.

The imputation of fraud was so powerful that environmental reporters who should have known better were caught up in it.

- Andy Revkin in the [NYTimes](#) says "Hacked E-Mail Is New Fodder for Climate Dispute" even though he knows the 'climate dispute' only exists as part of the big-oil PR campaign.
- George Monbiot was correctly advocating for a louder and more aggressive response on the part of scientists to affirm the established understanding of global warming during the scandal. But he was also [calling for](#) Phil Jones resignation and expressing dismay over the practices of the research unit.

Legitimate news organizations have standards of accuracy to uphold and should correct the record. Fossil-fuel industry funded organizations don't, so we're not holding our breath waiting for the paid deniers to retract their statements and report on the scientific consensus:

- CEI's [Chris Horner](#) salivated over the supposed 'blue dress moment' of the stolen emails, even writing on thanksgiving [how thankful he was](#) for the hackers 'exposing' the nefarious plot to solve global warming. Surely his thanksgiving memories must taste a bit sour as he find out how conclusive the science on climate change is.
- Perhaps the oh-so-royal Lord Monckton will apologize for stating so bluntly in an [op-ed](#) "They are criminals" referring to the climate scientists who were victims of the email theft.
- Senator James Inhofe will need his imaginary crowbar to pull out the imaginary nails

Democracy is utterly dependent upon an electorate that is accurately informed. In promoting climate change denial (and often denying their responsibility for doing so) industry has done more than endanger the environment. It has undermined democracy.

There is a vast difference between putting forth a point of view, honestly held, and intentionally sowing the seeds of confusion. Free speech does not include the right to deceive. Deception is not a point of view. And the right to disagree does not include a right to intentionally subvert the public awareness.

Although all public relations professionals are bound by a duty to not knowingly mislead the public, some have executed comprehensive campaigns of misinformation on behalf of industry clients on issues ranging from tobacco and asbestos to seat belts.

Lately, these fringe players have turned their efforts to creating confusion about climate change. This PR campaign could not be accomplished without the compliance of media as well as the assent and participation of leaders in government and business.

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