

These notes are taken from the last chapter of the book, *Miseducation - How Climate Change is Taught In America* by Katie Worth.

## "The Victory" chapter 7 notes--summary

- Heartland Institute convenes DC conference of climate denier organizations. They publish booklet -- *Why Scientists Disagree About Global Warming*, and DVD to distribute to every science teacher in the US (2017)
- Unclear on how many teachers actually used the book.
- Plutzer survey in 2019 of 1,427 teachers found only a "few" resorted to denialist sources in their climate teaching (sources beyond textbooks).
- Points out that this kind of effort takes advantage of teachers being overworked, they can't fully vet materials, prone to use glossy stuff they get in the mail.
- Merchants of Doubt, tobacco industry effort to hide truth re. Cigarettes is used as model and inspiration for climate misinformation campaign.
- Climate deny effort took lessons from tobacco industry; find willing scientists

## "The Memo"

- 1998 American Petroleum Institute--issued 8 page memo: "Global Climate Science Communications Action Plan", funded my millions of dollars.
- Goal of the plan: to reach "victory," victory reached when "average citizens recognize uncertainties in climate science"
- They denied the memo really had teeth or was implemented much, but the Guardian and DeSmog reported that many of the intentions were implemented.

*Actions actually taken as a result of the Memo:*

1. **Assembled corps of scientists** willing to engage with media on the "debate"
2. **Inundated science writers with climate info**, American Enterprise Institute offered \$10,000 for published articles that contradicted IGPPC conclusions. In 2020 study--1,768 press releases issued between 1985 and 2013 found that climate skeptical releases were twice as likely to receive attention from newspapers vs. those that confirmed climate science.

3. **Convinced major TV journalists to promote misinformation**--(e.g. Bob Stossel--ABC news and later Fox), reached to classrooms, "Stossel in the Classroom" claims to have reached 150,000 teachers.
4. **Reach into classrooms:**
  - a) Established Science Education Task Group to distribute education materials directly to schools, would serve as "point of outreach" to collaborate with NSTA (National Science Teaching Association).
  - b) on curriculum.--NTSA claimed not to EVER be influenced by outside funders, but...
  - c) In 1998 NTSA launches energy website funded by the American Petroleum Institute, it virtually ignores climate
  - d) In 2003 NTSA collaborates with Conoco-Phillips on 10 part series of science films for middle and high school, Search for Solutions, mentions climate but avoids anthropogenic dimensions....
  - e) **2007-2020**, Publication by NTSA: *Resources for Environmental Literacy: Five Teaching Modules for Middle and High School Classrooms*, written in collaboration with the Environmental Literacy Council (founded by Jeffry Salmon, deep history as climate misinformation warrior...) publication very biased, encouraging doubt and students drawing their own conclusions with minimal knowledge and accurate information....
  - f) Controversy/scandal ensued re NTSA, officials claimed not be aware, to be embarrassed, and lacked editorial archives to track or look into it...
  - g) Much backpedaling, then removed the publication from stores and circulation.

5. By 2010 the industry efforts shifted, and actually voiced support for the goal of reducing greenhouse gasses--what remained was a large number of climate denial groups doing the same work, attack legitimate climate science:

- Heartland Institute
- Competitive Enterprise Institute
- The CO2 coalition
- The committee for a constructive Tomorrow
- The Cooler Heads Coalition
- The American Enterprise Institute
- Center for the study of CO2 & Global Change
- Science and Environment Policy Project
- JunkScience.com
- EIKE (Germany)
- Fraser Institute (Canada)

6. Funding for climate denial "industry":

- Climate denial industry spokesperson espouses that their efforts are dwarfed 100 to 1 in funding against "corrupt environmentalists and self serving scientists".

Reality:

- 2003-2010, 91 think tanks and climate denial organizations collectively received \$900 million per year.
- 2000-2016 \$2 billion in lobbying to convince congress NOT to adopt climate policies, **ten times the amount for environmental lobbying over that period.**

7. Where we stand with American public as of 2019:

- 30% believe climate change is mostly natural.
- 4 in 5 don't know there is scientific consensus
- a third of science teachers use "many scientists believe" language
- standards and textbooks largely still not accurate or misleading
- internet is filled with misleading information

8. Author conclusion: By any measure, the enemy has been victorious...

## Commentary

1. Overview of examples of sustainability and climate change education since 1998, my work
2. Corroboration of current state public mindset and knowledge today (Yale surveys)
3. Recognition of the fact that emission levels, atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, and deterioration of natural systems has continued unabated (?) over the past two decades.

## Discussion questions

1. Where are we now?

Since the writing and publication of this book has there been a shift in denial propaganda intensity and/or public awareness? Are things getting worse or better?

2. Why has the climate denial industry been "victorious"?

(Is it only the result of 10 times the funding or have the climate education and activism strategies used over the past 20 years been less effective or flawed in some way?)

3. What lessons can we take from this going forward as activists and educators?

What are the most relevant actions and strategies?

4. What dynamics have driven the failure of our efforts in affecting hearts and minds and ultimately the trajectory of climate change? Again, is it just funding?

5. Where do we go from here?

What kind of focus in audience and content will have the most impact going forward?