

ARE SKEPTIC SCIENTISTS CORRUPT?

*Or Does The Accusation Fall Apart
Under Hard Scrutiny?*

by Russell Cook



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INTRODUCTION

The collection of Original Papers at SPPI are authored by people with impressive credentials in science, or at least they have a demonstrated grasp of the various technical aspects of global warming theory through their history of writing on the subject. I must stress on no uncertain terms that I do not share those accomplishments, a fact that will no doubt delight believers of anthropogenic global warming (AGW) and prompt them to read no further into this paper, but instead accuse SPPI of issuing papers written by people unqualified to speak about the subject. That would be unfortunate, as the evidence I present here and the questions I ask are things **any** unqualified, disinterested bystander might find and ask about. Indeed, believers of AGW could have posed the following to each other in order to see if their criticisms about skeptic scientists survive under hard scrutiny.

WHAT THIS PAPER IS ABOUT

Even the most uneducated AGW believer can easily describe their version of global warming in three short points:

1. A scientific consensus says the debate is settled; *Fact, end of story.*
2. Skeptic scientists corrupted by big coal & oil industries seek to **'reposition'** the public into believing AGW is not a fact.
3. Journalists don't have to give equal weight to skeptic scientists because there's an overwhelming consensus, and those scientists are corrupt.

The central point is that the few opposing scientists are irrelevant, by virtue of taking a false position against AGW. This paper will dispel the idea that this accusation is omnipresent with no particular origins. It is a major error to assign such a nebulous quality to the accusation, when basic information gathering instead ultimately distills it either to a statement similar to *"according to leaked internal strategy papers, scientists were engaged in an effort to 'reposition global warming as theory rather than fact'"*, or else it leads to people and organizations that themselves can be traced back to the first successful promulgation of that "reposition" phrase. Tracing this general accusation is like genealogy, it does not simply go back one or two steps, each prior source must be questioned to find the original source.

My objective is not to accuse anyone of wrongdoing, or say that my research below proves anything with absolute certainty. I am not a journalist, it would be up to a professional journalist to interview the central figures of the situation, to ask the questions I pose here in order to close gaps in my information and confirm or disprove suspicions that arise when anyone sees what I have to present. It is my hope that this paper will not only prompt

ordinary undecided readers not to casually take the accusation against skeptic scientists at face value, but will also cause skeptic scientists themselves to reconsider any perception that ignoring this accusation will make it go away. Skeptic scientists are not likely to vindicate themselves through plain presentations of new science studies in the face of viral anti-skeptic rhetoric, so long as the mainstream media and majority of internet pages remain gatekeepers to the release of accurate science information. The key problem is that this accusation **has** been taken at face value since 1991.

To reveal why this accusation appears highly questionable under more than superficial examination, I will start with a basic chronology, and show the degrees of association of the central figures along with other problems. As first, some of my bits of evidence may seem initially unrelated to those immediately preceding them, however it soon becomes apparent that subsequent evidence is contradictory, or problematic but also incomplete, thus the need for tough questions about each situation becomes obvious.

THE MURKY ORIGINS OF THE ACCUSATION IN 1991

When Al Gore spoke in the late '80s about the threat of global warming, he was basically contradicting widespread worries a decade earlier about global cooling. The news media did not mention this, but instead proceeded to publicize Gore's narrative.^{1, 2} In response, U.S. coal company associations created the Information Council on the Environment (ICE) public relations campaign in early 1991. They intended to counter-argue that the debate was anything but settled, and one of their internal memos for campaign planning had as its #1 strategy point this exact sentence: **“Reposition global warming as theory (not fact).”** Arguably, this was shorthand for “Show how the theory of man-caused global warming is contradicted by its own science faults, and theories of natural variability”. The actual phrase, in context with the rest of the papers, gives no indication of being a top-down directive from coal industry executives to skeptic scientists.³

By mid June 1991, these internal memos were leaked to at least the Sierra Club, and perhaps to other environmentalist groups. *NY Times* reporter Matt Wald wrote a July 8, 1991 article about ICE, opening with a description of the campaign being run by coal-burning utility companies and coal producers, then repeating the “reposition global warming as theory” phrase, and stating the *NY Times* had received copies of the ICE memos from the Sierra Club.⁴ The *Energy Daily* trade paper, *The National Journal*, and the *Arizona Republic* newspaper also wrote articles about ICE around that same month or earlier.⁵ The articles other than Matt Wald's are not found on the internet, although references to the *Energy Daily's* article title indicate it relied on the ICE memos.⁶

¹ <http://www.aip.org/history/climate/xNewsweek.htm>.

² <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,956632,00.html>.

³ <http://research.greenpeaceusa.org/?a=view&d=2950>, page 10.

⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/07/08/business/pro-coal-ad-campaign-disputes-warming-idea.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁵ <http://www.heatisonline.org/contentserver/objecthandlers/index.cfm?ID=4461&Method=Full&PageCall=&Title=The%20Coal%20Industry%27s%20%22ICE%22%20Campaign%20%281999%29>.

⁶ <http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/bcenv33&div=20>.

QUESTIONS: *What do those other articles say about the Sierra Club’s role? Who provided the ICE memos to the article writers? Do they emphasize the alleged connections of the scientists to the coal industry?*

THE TRANSITION BETWEEN 1991 AND 1995-6

What little that can be seen at a Google books search of the 1992 *The Greenhouse effect, Volume 64*⁷ shows wording identical to Matt Wald’s *NY Times* article about ICE and the “reposition” phrase. Curtis Moore’s 1994 book *Green Gold*, cites the phrase from Matt Wald’s article. He also must have seen the other ICE papers, as he mentions an interview with a person noted in an ICE radio ad narrative, Tom Helland,⁸ who is not named in Wald’s article.^{9, 10} Andrew Rowell’s 1996 *Green backlash: global subversion of the environmental movement* book repeats the “reposition” phrase, without saying how or where he saw it.¹¹ (Note: online views at Google Books of *Green backlash* stopped being available in the fall of 2010)

QUESTIONS: *What is UK resident Andrew Rowell’s source for the ICE memos? How was Curtis Moore able to know about Tom Helland without the benefit seeing Helland’s name in the Wald article, and how are Rowell’s and Moore’s ties to Greenpeace relevant to the details following below?*

ROSS GELBSPAN’S CONNECTION TO THE ECO-ADVOCACY GROUP OZONE ACTION & THE ‘OBTAINING’ OF THE ICE MEMOS

Former *Boston Globe* reporter Ross Gelbspan wrote a December 1995 magazine article for *Harper’s Magazine* titled “The Heat is On: The warming of the world’s climate sparks a blaze of denial”. He never mentions the “reposition” phrase or ICE, but simply states, “*The skeptics assert flatly that their science is untainted by funding. Nevertheless, in this persistent and well-funded campaign of denial they have become interchangeable ornaments on the hood of a high-powered engine of disinformation. Their dissenting opinions are amplified beyond all proportion through the media while the concerns of the dominant majority of the world’s scientific establishment are marginalized*”.^{12, 13} Arizona Republic reporter Steve Wilson cited Gelbspan’s *Harper’s Magazine* article in his own November 24, 1995 newspaper article,

⁷ http://books.google.com/books?cd=6&id=ulbYZzc_IrMC&dq=information+council+on+the+environment&q=reposition#search_anchor.

⁸ <http://research.greenpeaceusa.org/?a=view&d=2949>.

⁹ <http://books.google.com/books?id=kWNluLthW7kC&pg=PA94#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

¹⁰ <http://books.google.com/books?id=kWNluLthW7kC&pg=PA241#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

¹¹ <http://books.google.com/books?id=OtfhOGNoIHAC&pg=PA142&dq#v=onepage&q=&f=false>, pg 142, pg 410 at Rowell’s endnote #106.

¹² <http://www.harpers.org/archive/1995/12/0007823>.

¹³ <http://dieoff.org/page82.htm>, full text.

repeating the funding accusation along with a note about Gelbspan being a Pulitzer Prize winner. Both Gelbspan's and Wilson's article excerpts appeared in an April 1996 Ozone Action report titled, "Ties That Blind: Case Studies of Corporate Influence on Climate Change Policy, Case Study #1 Dr. Robert Balling, Jr., Arizona State University."¹⁴ It should be noted that magazine articles have often been available to the public prior to their publication dates, so it is a reasonable assumption that Wilson was able to see Gelbspan's article sometime in November 1995.

In a December 15, 1995 interview on National Public Radio's *Living on Earth* program, Gelbspan said, "In 1991, for instance, the coal industry launched a disinformation campaign designed to, quote, "reposition global warming as theory rather than fact." They used 3 of the so-called scientific skeptics, Doctors Robert Balling, Pat Michaels, and Sherwood Idso, in broadcast appearances, in newspaper columns, designed to target quote 'older, less educated men and young, low-income women.'"¹⁵

In the Ozone Action April 1996 "Ties That Blind" report's subsection, "Case Study #3 Information Council on the Environment (ICE)", it stated, "According to documents obtained by Ozone Action and by Ross Gelbspan, several ICE strategies were laid out including: the repositioning of global warming as theory, not fact..."¹⁶ Another Ozone Action web page dating from around January to June 1997 says, "Ozone Action is a non-profit, public interest organization founded in July 1993 to raise public awareness on stratospheric ozone depletion. ... Since December 1995, Ozone Action has also been working on climate change."¹⁷ Kalee Kreider, Communications Director for Ozone Action, said in an October 19, 1995 press release that the group "...was formed in 1993 to reinvigorate the public debate on stratospheric ozone depletion". She did not mention a global warming focus,¹⁸ however, John Passacantando says in his current web page that he founded "Ozone Action (1992-2000), the first national environmental organization devoted exclusively to stopping climate change. Success there brought me to Greenpeace and a merger of the two organizations..."¹⁹ In a 1999 book chapter, Passacantando first cited Ross Gelbspan's *Harper's Magazine* article, but went on to say "...the strategy document for the Information Council for the Environment (ICE) was leaked out of a public relations firm"...According to documents obtained by Ozone Action, several ICE strategies were laid out including: the repositioning of global warming as theory, not fact..."²⁰ Ross Gelbspan wrote in a 2005 magazine article, "According to internal strategy papers I obtained at the time, the purpose of the campaign was to reposition global warming as theory (not fact)".²¹

The "Ties that Blind" report said at its beginning, "Ozone Action believes that individuals or organizations representing themselves before the US Congress or the media should disclose

¹⁴ <http://web.archive.org/web/19980214091833/www.ozone.org/page17.html>.

¹⁵ <http://www.loe.org/shows/shows.htm?programID=95-P13-00050#feature9>.

¹⁶ <http://web.archive.org/web/19970625145550/www.ozone.org/page18.html>.

¹⁷ <http://web.archive.org/web/19970625145227/www.ozone.org/back.html>.

¹⁸ <http://www.uow.edu.au/~sharonb/STS300/market/green/probnews.html>.

¹⁹ http://www.ournexteconomy.com/?page_id=6.

²⁰ <http://research.greenpeaceusa.org/?a=view&d=1864>, pg 9.

²¹ <http://motherjones.com/politics/2005/05/snowed>.

their funding sources so that the public may more clearly determine the credibility of the position advocated by the individual/organization. After all, the public is the best judge of what the motivations and pressures of US government versus corporate coal and energy funding may be on the climate change debate.” Although the report appeared at the group’s web site in April, a preliminary copy must have been sent out around mid-March because a March 21, 1996 *Washington Post* article by Gary Lee titled “Industry funds global-warming skeptics” stated, “Ozone Action, an environmental lobbying group, charged that three researchers who are outspoken critics of the scientific evidence for global warming, Robert Balling, Patrick Michaels and Sherwood Idso, have received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the petroleum and coal industries.”²²

QUESTIONS: Which man actually obtained the ICE memos, Gelbspan or Passacantando? From whom did each or both obtain the memos? Was this transfer a result of Matt Wald’s four interviews of Ozone Action personnel about ozone depletion issues from June 30, 1994 to December 21, 1995, or did Andrew Rowell or Curtis Moore alert Gelbspan or Passacantando to the memos? Why is there no mention of the source being the Sierra Club, Matt Wald, or others? Was the arrival of the ICE memos at Ozone Action the main motivation to prompt the group’s new focus on global warming, since Gelbspan’s NPR radio interview coincides with the time of their split focus? What brought about the association between Passacantando and Gelbspan?

ROSS GELBSPAN’S TWO BOOKS: THE HEAT IS ON (1997), AND BOILING POINT (2004)

His first book, printed in April 1997, presented the three AGW believer points I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, all in one place - consensus, skeptics ‘repositioning’ public perceptions, and the idea of unfair journalistic balance. The “overwhelming consensus of scientific thought”, and a mention that critics’ opinions “carry more weight than those of the world’s leading scientists” appears immediately on page three, and those two points are repeated throughout the book in various forms. On page 34, Gelbspan states, “In 1991, using the ICE, the coal industry launched a blatantly misleading campaign on climate change that had been designed by a public relations firm. This public relations firm clearly stated that the aim of the campaign was to ‘reposition global warming as theory rather than fact’. Its plan specified that three of the so-called greenhouse skeptics - Robert Balling, Pat Michaels, and S. Fred Singer - should be placed in broadcast appearances, op-ed pages, and newspaper interviews.”²³ His endnote for this reference is “ICE documents in author’s possession, Mission Statement, Strategy Statement, and Test Market proposal, February 1991”. On page 45, he says, “Just because research is funded by industry, to be sure, it is not necessarily tainted. But public disclosure of industry funding is of critical importance so that the research can be reviewed for possible bias,” a statement quite similar to the “Ties that Blind” report statement in the previous section.

²² <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/washingtonpost/access/9410935.html?FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS&date=Mar+21%2C+1996&author=Lee%2C+Gary&pub=The+Washington+Post&edition=&startpage=A8>.

²³ http://books.google.com/books?id=fkb5T0Vv_tQC&pg=PA34#v=onepage&q&f=false.

On the inside of the book's dust jacket sleeve, it says, "Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ross Gelbspan..."

Repetition of "Pulitzer-winner" and the "reposition" phrase are seen almost immediately at the *Boston Globe*, April 28, 1997,^{24, 25} and in an August 3, 1997 *New York Times* book review "Hot Air" by Mark Hertsgaard.²⁶ The repetitions increased from that time onward, and are essentially uncountable on the internet in association with Gelbspan's name, appearing in places ranging from sites for supporters of man-caused global warming, to nature science pages, political news media pages, motor vehicle hobbyist pages with general topic discussions, and scans of books discussing lawsuit issues.

In his second book, Gelbspan again repeats the points about consensus and unfair journalistic balance on numerous occasions, and says on page 51, "One campaign, which sent three of these 'skeptics' around the country to do media interviews, was crafted, according to its strategy papers, 'to reposition global warming as theory rather than fact'".²⁷ His endnote for this reference is to the 1998 paperback version of his first book. The description of the "reposition" phrase continues on to page 52, and the paragraph after it says of the skeptic scientists, "Their funding by the fossil fuel lobby was never disclosed publicly until it was published in *The Heat is On* in 1997."

Hardcover editions of *Boiling Point's* cover prominently says "Ross Gelbspan Winner of the Pulitzer Prize"²⁸ but paperback editions do not, and instead feature this statement on page xxi of the Preface, "Shortly after the publication of *The Heat is On*, the fossil fuel lobby mounted an extensive campaign accusing me of résumé fraud. The circulated a message on the Internet and elsewhere that I had falsely claimed to be a co-recipient of a Pulitzer Prize."

References to this second book are also viral on the internet, including online versions of print edition books and magazines. Perhaps the most well known one is Al Gore's book *An Inconvenient Truth*²⁹ as it ultimately led to the movie version, except the movie does not repeat Gelbspan's name or mention of the Pulitzer, but the "reposition" phrase is shown full screen for six seconds starting at the 1 hour 12 minute 55 second point.³⁰

Despite all the internet and print references to the "reposition" phrase variously described as leaked "documents", "memos", or "strategy papers", not one shows the ICE memos in their full context, nor do any link to the Greenpeace scans seen in note #3. That includes both of Gelbspan's books. Despite Gelbspan's assertion about criticisms that he was not a Pulitzer co-recipient, there is little ambiguity about the statements on the sleeve of his first

²⁴ <http://144.16.65.194/hpg/envis/doc97html/global429.html>.

²⁵ <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/boston/access/11569002.html?FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Apr+28%2C+1997&author=Scott+Allen&pub=Boston+Globe&edition=&startpage=C.1>.

²⁶ <http://www.markhertsgaard.com/articles/107>.

²⁷ <http://books.google.com/books?id=NLzgunts0aAC&pg=PA51>.

²⁸ http://www.scottdalecc.edu/green/images/Boiling_Point.jpg.

²⁹ <http://books.google.com/books?id=93M6C24ac9MC&pg=PA263#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

³⁰ <http://i54.tinypic.com/5qr8j.jpg>.

book, the cover of his second book, statements made by Ozone Action, or Greenpeace,³¹ and various print media, nor is there ambiguity about Dr S Fred Singer's criticism that Gelbspan did not win a Pulitzer.³²

QUESTIONS: *Why are the ICE memos not seen, especially the “reposition” one? If no one criticized the more specific label of “Pulitzer co-recipient” or his “role in helping Boston Globe reporters win the Pulitzer”, why does he portray the situation as such? What exactly is the origin of his designation as a “Pulitzer winner”? Why does Gelbspan say in his 2004 book that the skeptic scientists’ “funding by the fossil fuel lobby was never disclosed publicly until it was published in The Heat is On in 1997” when clearly such allegations appeared in Ozone Action reports and other prior books and newspaper articles?*

ASSOCIATION OF THE “REPOSITION” PHRASE WITH ORGANIZATIONS OTHER THAN ICE

In Gelbspan's first book, he clearly says on page 34 that the “reposition” phrase was a statement made by the ICE's PR campaign. On page 38, he mentions the Global Climate Coalition (GCC), but makes no connection of it to ICE, while on page 56 he says the American Petroleum Institute (API) was “just one of fifty-five members of the GCC”. In his second book, he mentions the GCC on page 40 without any mention of an association with the ICE, but notes one of the GCC members was the API. In October 1997, a UK *Guardian* newspaper article placed a mention of the GCC within two paragraphs of the ICE,³³ but still made no direct connection between the two. Other such media descriptions of “industry front groups” have similar descriptions of the ICE and the GCC in close proximity.

The first direct, though incorrect, association I've found is the late syndicated newspaper columnist Molly Ivins, who said in an August 13, 1998 article, “... the API's notorious PR campaign is designed, in the words of its own strategy documents, to “reposition global warming as theory rather than fact.”³⁴ She wrote that despite correctly stating in a December 14, 1997 article, “The first response of the oil and coal lobbies was to form the Information Council on the Environment. The public relations firm hired to do its bidding frankly stated its mission: ‘to reposition global warming as theory rather than fact.’”³⁵

Mark Hertsgaard's May 2006 *Vanity Fair* article, “While Washington Slept”, places the GCC and the “reposition” phrase within two sentences of each other. Readers who are knowledgeable of the phrase's origins in the ICE would not automatically connect it to the GCC, but others would certainly make the association: “...most of the public argument was carried by lesser scientists and, above all, by lobbyists and paid spokesmen for the Global Climate Coalition. Created and funded by the energy and auto industries, the Coalition spent millions of dollars spreading the message that global warming was an uncertain threat.

³¹ <http://archive.greenpeace.org/majordomo/index-press-releases/1997/msg00116.html>.

³² <http://www.sepp.org/key%20issues/glwarm/gelbspan.html>.

³³ <http://herinst.org/sbeder/PR/Guardian.html>.

³⁴ <http://www.creators.com/opinion/molly-ivins/molly-ivins-august-13.html>.

³⁵ <http://www.creators.com/opinion/molly-ivins/molly-ivins-december-14-1997-12-14.html>.

Journalist Ross Gelbspan exposed the corporate campaign in his 1997 book, *The Heat Is On*, which quoted a 1991 strategy memo: the goal was to ‘reposition global warming as theory rather than fact.’”³⁶ Wikipedia linked to Hertsgaard’s quote just over a year later, in a statement saying, “Alleged denialist organizations such as the Global Climate Coalition, according to a leaked 1991 “strategy memo,” set out not to gather data and test explanations but to influence public perception of climate change science, to “reposition global warming as theory rather than fact.”³⁷ The Wiki entry was altered five days later with the deletion of “Alleged denialist”, and then remained at the site until December 28, 2009, when it was removed under the protest that “the link is not established by flat assertions that are little more than slapping a single label on a number of groups”.³⁸ Careful analysis of various internet references to a GCC / “reposition” connection made between August 2007 and December 2009 reveal their source is that Wikipedia entry.

In 2001, the French graduate business school INSEAD (Institut Européen d’Administration des Affaires) had a role-playing classroom exercise that entailed “three strategic options considered by a fictitious international oil and gas corporation to address the issue of climate change: ‘fight against action’, ‘wait and see’, and ‘dynamic proactive’.” Regarding the first option, the text of the exercise said, “...first of all we have to contest their science with our own – which is more objective. We have a good tool at hand to help us: the Global Climate Coalition, of which we are already a member.... we have to sponsor scientists who have a strongly skeptical stance on the climate change issue. We have to help them gain visibility and media access, so that they will weaken the mainstream science of climate change in the eyes of the public and of policy-makers. This will reposition global warming as theory rather than fact.”³⁹ The Part B section of the classroom exercise reproduces a Ross Gelbspan quote on page 2 right under one from William O’Keefe, former vice-president of API and chairman of the GCC at the time, and its References section cited not only Gelbspan’s articles and book but also his *heatisonline.org* web site, along with Ozone Action and one of Ozone Action’s spin-off web sites that specifically criticized the GCC.^{40, 41}

Katherine Ellison wrote in November 2006, “A 1991 strategy memo of the since-disbanded Global Climate Coalition, whose members included major oil companies and automakers, vowed to reposition global warming ‘as theory rather than fact’, according to Ross Gelbspan’s book, *The heat is on* (Perseus Books, 1997)”⁴² She makes this error despite having written a 3200+ word article about Gelbspan only about seven months earlier, where she demonstrated a rather thorough understanding of Gelbspan’s work.⁴³

³⁶ <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2006/05/warming200605?printable=true¤tPage=all>.

³⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Climate_change_denial&oldid=150481205#cite_ref-7.

³⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Climate_change_denial/Archive_23.

³⁹ <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.125.2798&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, PDF file pg 4.

⁴⁰ <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.125.2798&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, PDF file pgs 2, 18.

⁴¹ <http://web.archive.org/web/20010612154825/http://cool.policy.net/proactive/newsroom/release.vtml?id=17382>.

⁴² <http://www.esajournals.org/doi/abs/10.1890/1540-9295%282006%294%5B504%3AFSVHA%5D2.0.CO%3B2>, requires purchase to read.

⁴³ <http://www.conservationmagazine.org/2008/07/get-real/>.

On page 15 of the *Comer v. Murphy Oil (Third Amended Class Action Complaint February 23 2006)* lawsuit, it reads, “The API and other Oil Company Defendants have engaged in concerted financial activity—far in excess of \$1 million—in furtherance of a tortious civil conspiracy to ‘reposition global warming as theory rather than fact.’” A footnote on the same page⁴⁴ cites a *Seattle Times* article which in turn cites Ross Gelbspan as the person who ‘first uncovered’ the memos’, without ever making a connection of the “reposition” phrase to the API.⁴⁵

Although Al Gore at least correctly associated the “reposition” phrase with the ICE as shown in my note #28, he made two noticeable errors about it only two years later at the 2008 World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, assuming a meeting attendee accurately quoted him in this passage, “Gore, from the audience, takes issue with Brilliant, saying that getting information out is no longer sufficient... He says we are “vulnerable to strategic persuasion campaigns if the other side assumes that we should just get the information out there.” He says Exxon Mobil has funded 40 front groups to “in their own words position global warming as theory rather than fact.” ”⁴⁶

QUESTIONS: Is there any evidence at all to prove either the GCC or the API actually adopted the ICE’s “reposition” phrase? Besides the obvious repetition of the Wikipedia excerpt by ordinary internet users, what is the reason for the efforts to directly associate the “reposition” phrase with the GCC /API? What prompted the prosecuting lawyers in the *Comer v. Murphy Oil* to make this direct association? Can it be verified that Gore actually said “Exxon Mobil” at the Davos 08 meeting, and said “position” rather than the correct word “reposition”?

GELBSPAN AS THE SOLE ‘DISCOVERER’ OF THE ICE MEMOS

As seen just above in note #45, the *Seattle Times* reporter gives Gelbspan the credit for finding the ICE memos, while back at note #s 20 & 21, there is at least the appearance of a discrepancy of whether Gelbpan or someone else at Ozone Action found them, and as I already established in the first section, others has publicized the memos starting four and a half years prior to either he or Ozone Action obtaining them. Al Gore’s August 15, 2004 *NY Times* review article of Gelbspan’s *Boiling Point* book said, “Gelbspan’s first book, “*The Heat Is On*” (1997), remains the best, and virtually only, study of how the coal and oil industry has provided financing to a small group of contrarian scientists...”⁴⁷ Associated Press writer Seth Borenstein says, “There are libraries on climate change alone. To me they start and end with Ross Gelbspan’s “*The Heat Is On.*”⁴⁸ Phil Radford, Executive Director of Greenpeace and former Field Director at Ozone Action described Gelbspan as the person “to uncover the scandalous cover up of global warming by polluting companies. Ross has been the lone voice, the moral compass, the beacon that has inspired countless people, me included, to demand our

⁴⁴ <http://cleantechlitigation.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/third-amended-class-action-complaint.pdf>, PDF file.

⁴⁵ http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2002549346_globewarm11.html.

⁴⁶ <http://www.buzzmachine.com/2008/01/24/davos08-googles-environment/>.

⁴⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/15/books/review/15GOREL.html>.

⁴⁸ <http://www.sejarchive.org/resource/index11.htm>.

country and our future back from the coal and oil interests behind global warming.”⁴⁹ Radford sent out a Twitter message about a new Gelbspan internet video that was resent by John Passacantando January 28, 2010, saying, “RT @GP_Phil: New video by Ross Gelbspan – the godfather and moral compass of the movement to stop global warming.”⁵⁰ Numerous other similar references are made to Gelbspan’s work, and various authors repeat his “reposition” phrase accusation, but I find none that corroborate his accusation independently.

One very prominent situation where Gelbspan is not directly cited in reference to the “reposition” phrase is the 2008 *Kivalina v. ExxonMobil* lawsuit, in which Bob Burton’s & Sheldon Rampton’s 1998 “Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: The International Conspiracy to Overheat the Earth” article is cited instead, along with the 1991 *NY Times* Matt Wald article.⁵¹ The Wald article, as shown at note #4, says the “reposition” memo came from the Sierra Club, while the Burton/Rampton article mentions the “reposition” phrase without footnoting it, and concludes “Part of the information for this story was provided by the Clearinghouse on Environmental Advocacy Research (CLEAR); by Ross Gelbspan, author of *The Heat Is On*; and by Sharon Beder, author of *Global Spin: the Corporate Assault on Environmentalism*.”^{52, 53} Sharon Beder’s book is described by her own article about it, where she says the ICE “...was formed to “reposition global warming as theory (not fact).” It has a large advertising budget and in a media strategy obtained by Ozone Action, detailed its plan...”. Her footnote to that cites the Ozone Action “Ties that Blind” report.⁵⁴ The CLEAR reference itself also says, “According to documents obtained by environmental group Ozone Action and journalist Ross Gelbspan, ICE messaging strategies included “reposition global warming as theory (not fact).” (*Ties that Blind*).”⁵⁵

There is one other instance of indirect citation of the source of the “reposition” phrase. The recent James Hoggan / Richard Littlemore *Climate Cover-Up* book repeats the phrase on page 32,⁵⁶ but the endnote cites Naomi Oreskes’ 2007 Powerpoint presentation. Oreskes’ presentation cites “Ross Gelbspan, *Boiling Point*, 51-52.”⁵⁷ As shown at my note #27, Gelbspan’s *Boiling Point* cites his own *The Heat is On* book. James Hoggan is the proprietor of the DeSmogBlog web site, which he started in December of 2005, and has had Gelbspan as a contributor since January 2006.⁵⁸ George Monbiot, writer at *The Guardian* newspaper said in December 2009 regarding the ICE, “Its founding documents were leaked. The text has been made available online by the scientist Naomi Oreskes. The strategy was spelt out in a document produced by the Western Fuels Association: to ‘reposition global warming as

⁴⁹ <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/work-connect/change-makers-phil-radford.html>.

⁵⁰ <http://twitter.com/jpassacantando>.

⁵¹ <http://climatelaw.org/cases/country/us/kivalina/Kivalina%20Complaint.pdf>, PDF file pgs 51-52.

⁵² <http://www.prwatch.org/prwissues/1997Q4/warming.html>.

⁵³ <http://web.archive.org/web/19990128074934/www.prwatch.org/97-Q4/warming.html#start>, for 1998 archive web page version.

⁵⁴ <http://www.thetruthaboutdow.org/article.php?id=222>.

⁵⁵ <http://web.archive.org/web/19990223214427/www.ewg.org/pub/home/clear/westernfuels.html>.

⁵⁶ <http://books.google.com/books?id=tQYjQzOkYK0C&pg=PA32#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁵⁷ http://www.aip.org/history/powerpoints/GlobalWarming_Oreskes.ppt, PowerPoint final slide.

⁵⁸ <http://www.desmogblog.com/writers/ross-gelbspan?page=28>.

theory (not fact)’.”⁵⁹

QUESTIONS: Why is there so much focus on Gelbspan as being the source of the “reposition” memo, in what appears to be an absence of awareness that others publicized the memo before him? Why does the Kivalina lawsuit not simply cite Gelbspan directly? Why would James Hoggan, for all the time he’s known Gelbspan, choose instead to cite Oreskes for the source of the “reposition” phrase, and why did Oreskes not simply cite Gelbspan’s first book directly? Why did Monbiot claim the “text has been made available” when his link goes to the same Oreskes Powerpoint presentation in which no such ICE memo text was seen other than tiny fragments that are seen in viral form across the internet already? Why did he not directly cite Gelbspan’s first book?

ASSOCIATIONS OF OZONE ACTION WORKERS WITH OTHERS

As shown in note #19, John Passacantando merged the Ozone Action group into Greenpeace when he took over as Executive Director. My note #49 concerns Phil Radford, who took over at Greenpeace after Passacantando retired, but who was also “served as field director of Ozone Action, where he mapped out a successful campaign during the 2000 primaries, convincing Senator McCain to champion global warming.” A 2000 Dartmouth annual report of outdoor activities described its Environmental Studies Division as being partnered “with Matt Stembridge ‘99, a.k.a. Captain Climate, now working for Ozone Action, we worked to focus the candidates’ attention on global climate change and other environmental issues.”⁶⁰ This is the same “Captain Climate” described in a Bloomberg BusinessWeek article, “John McCain’s global warming journey started back in 2000, when a strange apparition named ‘Captain Climate’ began to turn up at Presidential campaign events. Captain Climate was Dartmouth grad Matthew Stembridge, who wore red tights over orange long johns, a red knit stocking cap, yellow-painted galoshes, and a red cape. ‘What’s your position on climate?’ Stembridge would yell at event after event.”⁶¹ Stembridge moved on to hold several eco-advocacy positions at faith-based organizations.⁶²

Kalee Kreider, who I mentioned at note #18, moved on to Greenpeace in 1996 and repeated the “reposition” phrase in a 1997 press release about Gelbspan’s first book, saying that he was a Pulitzer winner.⁶³ She is currently Al Gore’s spokesperson. The CLEAR report I mentioned at note #55 was produced at the Environmental Working Group. Kert Davies worked at the Environmental Working Group from 1994 to 1998, and in 1998 he became the Science Policy Director of Ozone Action. He moved on to Greenpeace where he created and runs the ExxonSecrets.org website / blog, and is currently Greenpeace’s Research Director.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/georgemonbiot/2009/dec/07/george-monbiot-blog-climate-denial-industry>.

⁶⁰ <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~doc/annualreports/2000/>.

⁶¹ http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/may2008/db20080512_607034.htm.

⁶² <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/matthew-anderson-stembridge/7/964/926>.

⁶³ <http://archive.greenpeace.org/majordomo/index-press-releases/1997/msg00116.html>.

⁶⁴ <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/media-center/experts/>.

Brandon MacGillis and Kymberly Escobar were Ozone Action workers⁶⁵ and both now work at the Pew Environment Group division of the Pew Charitable Trusts.⁶⁶ Both, along with Gelbspan and other Ozone Action workers / associates - John Passacantando, Alan Miller, Kert Davies, Phil Radford, Tara Bewak, Felecia Davis-Gilmore, Kalee Kreider, Chris Ball, and Patricia Daly - were attendees at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in The Hague, November 13-24 2000.⁶⁷

QUESTION: *Besides just the publicity of Gelbspan's books, how much influence have these individuals had in influencing prominent public figures' opinions of global warming skeptic scientists?*

GELBSPAN IN THE MEDIA

In addition to writing numerous op-ed magazine and internet articles over the years about the general subject of his two books, many with a repetition of the “reposition” phrase, Gelbspan has also made media appearances at ABC (as a “Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist” on the first and third occasion),^{68, 69, 70} as well as twice at PBS. Regarding his *Frontline* “Hot Politics” appearance, the Reporter & Editorial Consultant for the program was the same individual I describe in my note #s 26 and 36, Mark Hertsgaard.⁷¹ Appearing on PBS NOW, Gelbspan said, “*This is some of the documents I gathered along the way that document this very, very cynical campaign of deception and disinformation.we got a copy of the strategy papers for [the ICE] campaign. And it said that the purpose of the campaign was to reposition global warming as theory rather than fact.*”⁷²

QUESTION: *Did anyone in the mainstream media check the voracity of his accusation, or check if he really won the Pulitzer?*

GELBSPAN: ORIGINS OF HIS ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

On his own “About the Author” page at the web site for his first book, Gelbspan describes himself, “*His first major article on climate change, which appeared on the cover of the December, 1995 issue of Harper's Magazine...*”⁷³ At the note #43 above for Katherine Ellison, further reading of her article about Gelbspan reveals, “*Gelbspan's introduction to the climate-*

⁶⁵ <http://web.archive.org/web/20001213161800/www.ozone.org/about/staff.html>.

⁶⁶ http://www.pewtrusts.org/about_us_board_staff.aspx.

⁶⁷ <http://unfccc.int/cop6/pdf/lop6.pdf>, PDF file.

⁶⁸ <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/GlobalWarming/story?id=1770428&page=1>.

⁶⁹ <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=2119971&page=3>.

⁷⁰ <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/GlobalWarming/story?id=2242565&page=3>.

⁷¹ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/hotpolitics/etc/script.html>.

⁷² http://www.pbs.org/now/printable/transcriptNOW116_full_print.html.

⁷³ <http://www.heatisonline.org/ContentServer/objecthandlers/index.cfm?ID=3219&method=full>.

change story changed his life, converting him from a career journalist into an impassioned Cassandra....Freelancing in 1995, Gelbspan coauthored for The Washington Post a story on the health impacts of climate change, collaborating with Harvard University epidemiologist Paul Epstein. To Gelbspan's surprise, readers wrote to tell him he'd been misled, that there was no scientific evidence that global warming was taking place. At the letter writers' suggestion, Gelbspan looked into the work of climate-change dissenters.... Having prided himself on his accuracy throughout his long career, he began to feel alarmed, wondering whether he had in fact been duped. For a few days, he anguished over the possibility that Epstein had gulled him into some kind of fraud. Yet after carefully reviewing the evidence, he concluded that Epstein in fact belonged to the respectable mainstream of climate scientists At that point, Gelbspan's worry turned to outrage."

At a web site called "Americans Who Tell The Truth", Gelbspan says, "I'm a journalist, not an environmentalist. I didn't get into the climate issue because I love the trees. I got into this issue because I learned the coal industry was paying some scientists under the table to say climate change isn't happening. And I said to myself, "If there's this cover-up going on, what are they covering up?" So the impulse that propelled me into this work has nothing to do with a love of nature. It came from a deeply-held belief that in a democracy we need honest information on which to base our decisions."⁷⁴

From two partial quotations of a May 31, 1992 Boston Globe article he co-authored with Dianne Dumanoski titled "Racing to an environmental precipice Fear of future on deteriorating planet sets agenda for Rio de Janeiro summit" (a 3-article series, parts of which are written as a faux news report from the future), "Next on the 11 o'clock news for Aug. 22, 2030: Food riots erupt in Boston . . . Damage from superhurricane Edward may hit \$1 billion . . . Nature helps avert a water war between New York and Pennsylvania . . . Red Sox game smoked out in Chicago. Scenarios like these are being forecast by more and more scientists. Unless skyrocketing rates of pollution and population growth are reversed soon, they warn, many biological systems needed to sustain humans will collapse within the lifetimes of today's children."⁷⁵ Another quote of the article has more of the faux report, and Gelbspan's / Dumanoski own opinion in the last sentence, "Meteorologist Yojio Matsuma says the smog originated 1,000 miles away in the Saskatchewan prairie fires, which have seared several thousand square miles since lightning storms sparked an area left tinder-dry by a three-week heat wave and an unusually dry spring....Meanwhile, the commissioner's office says it is not yet ready to consider a resumption of day games, which were eliminated 15 years ago following widespread increases in skin cancer and immune diseases due to the depletion of the ozone layer..... By many measures, human activity since 1950 has damaged the planet more than in all previous history."⁷⁶

A quote from the second article in the series says, "Alone among the leaders of the industrialized nations, President [George H.W.] Bush was unwilling to set specific targets for

⁷⁴ http://www.americanswhotellthetruth.org/pgs/portraits/ross_gelbspan.php.

⁷⁵ <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-8744587.html>.

⁷⁶ <http://www.mediaresearch.org/notablequotables/1992/nq19920622.asp>.

limiting the heat-trapping gases linked to global warming.”⁷⁷ Another quote, from one of articles in the series, is aimed at skeptic scientists, as analyzed by the Media Research Center, “The Globe did devote a small box to critics. Wrote Gelbspan: “These voices are increasingly in the minority. And as evidence has accumulated, the tide of the debate has swung increasingly toward those who believe that the Earth’s ability to withstand untrammled human activity has reached the breaking point.” Gelbspan quoted greenhouse promoter Stephen Schneider: “It is journalistically irresponsible to present both sides as if it were a question of balance...It is irresponsible to give equal time to a few people standing out in left field.”⁷⁸

In a 2005 interview with the Mother Jones magazine, Gelbspan spoke of the revelation about skeptic scientists after writing a 1995 article, “I had done an article on the impact of climate change on public health in the Washington Post. After that piece ran, I got letters from readers who said, “Well, this is all well and good but we still don’t believe the climate is changing.” These letters referred me to the work of three prominent greenhouse skeptics: Fred Singer, Patrick Michaels, and Richard Lindzen. I read their work and I was persuaded that this issue was stuck in uncertainty, that there may not be a story here at all.”⁷⁹ Gelbspan repeated this again at his own web site in May 2010, saying of the skeptics, “They persuaded me that global warming was a non-issue. And emotionally, I was very relieved not to have to deal with such a heavy issue.”⁸⁰

QUESTION: Does the appearance of Gelbspan’s concern in his 1992 article series over extreme weather/global warming, along with his statements about skeptics there, contradict later narratives that seem to portray him as uncertain on the issue until he learned about the so-called corruption of skeptic scientists? How much significance is there to Gelbspan’s 1992 quote of Stephen Schneider about ‘irresponsible journalistic balance’, considering such remarks represent two out of the three main points of AGW believers - consensus and false journalistic balance?

INCONSISTENT NARRATIVES

Continuing in the above web page at note #80, Gelbspan spoke at a May 2010 event, “A few years ago I asked a top editor at CNN why, given the increasing proportion of news budgets dedicated to extreme weather, they did not make this connection. He told me, “We did. Once.” But it triggered a barrage of complaints from oil companies and automakers who threatened to withdraw all their ads from CNN if the network continued to connect weather extremes to global warming.” During a September 2006 speech, he offered a slightly different version. “A few years ago I asked an editor at a major news network why, given the increasing incidence of natural disasters, they did not make this connection. He told me: ‘We did that. Once.’ I think it was a major flood in 2000 in Mozambique. I said, ‘What do you mean, once?’ The editor

⁷⁷ <http://books.google.com/books?id=vngGt6mA30AC&pg=PA188#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁷⁸ <http://www.mrc.org/mediawatch/1992/watch19920601.asp>.

⁷⁹ <http://motherjones.com/politics/2005/04/hot-and-bothered-interview-ross-gelbspan>.

⁸⁰ <http://www.heatisonline.org/contentserver/objecthandlers/index.cfm?id=7743&method=full>.

explained that after a broadcast suggested a possible link to global warming, several auto and gasoline industry representatives threatened to withdraw their advertising from the network if it persisted in making that connection.”⁸¹ In his 2004 Boiling Point book, pages 79-80, he phrased it this way, “A few years ago, a top editor at a major TV network was asked why, given the increasing proportion of news budgets dedicated to weather disasters, the network news broadcasts did not make this connection. The editor said, “We did that. Once.” But it triggered a barrage of complaints from the Global Climate Coalition to our top executives at the network... The editor agreed that it would be very useful to the public in covering severe floods, droughts, and storms to not that ‘scientists associated this **pattern** of violent weather with global warming.’” His endnote for that comment on page 223 was “...Author’s private conversation with a news network executive, October 1999”.

CNN reported on the Mozambique flood on March 15, 2000, with a photo captioned “Flooding in Mozambique left tens of thousands homeless”, and noted within the first two paragraphs “we will see more extreme weather events in a warmer world.”⁸² Only two weeks earlier on March 1, 2000, CNN reported about several large corporations leaving the GCC, “Texaco has quit the Global Climate Coalition (GCC). The oil giant is the third Fortune 500 to quit the group in recent months, joining Ford and Daimler/Chrysler.” The article later stated, “Environmentalists are celebrating Texaco’s announcement. “It’s virtually over for the Global Climate Coalition,” said John Passacantando of the environmental group Ozone Action. “This has been the lead organization running the misinformation campaign on global warming.”⁸³

A quote similar to Gelbspan’s about a pattern of violent weather is seen in an August 12, 1999 news analysis about water demand by CNN Executive Producer Peter Dykstra, who noted that “if predictions of climate change prove true, more erratic weather will bring more frequent droughts, with changing weather patterns bringing more rain to some portions of the world while possibly turning others into deserts.”⁸⁴ Peter Dykstra was formerly a media director at Greenpeace, and currently is the Deputy Director at the Pew Environment Group,⁸⁵ the same group where former Ozone Action employees Brandon MacGillis and Kymberly Escobar now work, as seen in my note #66.

QUESTIONS: Why would Gelbspan say in a May 2010 speech that he spoke to the CNN editor ‘a few years ago’, when it appears that he was talking about an event that happened over 10 years earlier? Why leave out the detail of the GCC in subsequent narratives? How significant is it that Dykstra was formerly associated with Greenpeace? If the Mozambique reference was an error on Gelbspan’s part, what CNN report on a natural disaster was he and the editor referring to?

⁸¹ <http://www.capefarewell.com/climate-science/comment-opinion/scepticism.html>.

⁸² <http://www.edition.cnn.com/2000/NATURE/03/15/climate.enn/index.html>.

⁸³ <http://edition.cnn.com/2000/NATURE/03/01/tex.climate/>.

⁸⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/views/y/1999/08/dykstra.water.aug12/>.

⁸⁵ <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/peter-dykstra/10/964/917>.

CLOSING REMARKS

This collection of red flags is not the end by any means, there are plenty more. For example, no evidence found that Fred Singer ever worked for ICE, the actual extent of ICE's activities compared to Gelbspan's characterizations, other questionable associations of individuals with Gelbspan, the pre-1996 arguments between John Passacantando and Dr S. Fred Singer over ozone depletion science, and Bob Burton & Sheldon Rampton (seen at note #52), who source their information from Gelbspan, but who also made an inexplicable (now retracted) association of the GCC to the Burson-Marsteller PR agency.

What I've shown here is a hazy picture of the whole situation, the questions I ask need to be posed by professional journalists. I'm not a journalist, but Gelbspan was. The latter point poses one further problem, as Dr S. Fred Singer described in the press release I referred to at note #32, "We have yet to catch a glimpse of Gelbspan here at SEPP. In gathering material for his book, he never visited our offices, spoke to no one on staff, and never contacted Fred Singer for an interview to cover point-by-point the claims he later made in his book. He has had no contact with the Project whatsoever."

The three points I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, which are arguably the three points that support Gelbspan's two books, fundamentally rely on the central accusation that skeptic scientists were under a directive to 'reposition' the public's perception of global warming. Otherwise, they would be free to question the theory of AGW without discrimination, and the media would allow them to discuss their criticisms in order to get to the bottom of the problem of whether this is a human-caused problem or not.

QUESTIONS: *How did Gelbspan get as far as he has, in the face of so many easily found problems? Without the "reposition" accusation as a barrier to skeptic scientists, what happens to the entire theory of AGW?*



Russell Cook is a semi-retired graphic artist, and is the author of a series of online articles at AmericanThinker.com about the Gelbspan / Ozone Action / Greenpeace accusation against skeptic scientists: http://www.americanthinker.com/russell_cook/.



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