

MAP: THE CLIMATE CHANGE SCARE MACHINE — THE PERPETUAL SELF-FEEDING CYCLE OF ALARM

by Joanne Nova | October 6, 2011

Source: <http://joannenova.com.au/2011/10/map-the-climate-change-scare-machine-the-perpetual-self-feeding-cycle-of-alarm/>.

Two professors of sociology think they can explain why [“Climate Deniers” are winning](#). But Riley E. Dunlap and Aaron M. McCright start from the wrong assumption and miss the bleeding obvious: *the theory was wrong, the evidence has changed, and thousands of volunteers have exposed it.*

The real question sociologists will be studying for years to come is: how was an exaggerated scare, based on [so little evidence](#), [poor reasoning](#) and [petty namecalling](#), kept alive for two whole decades?

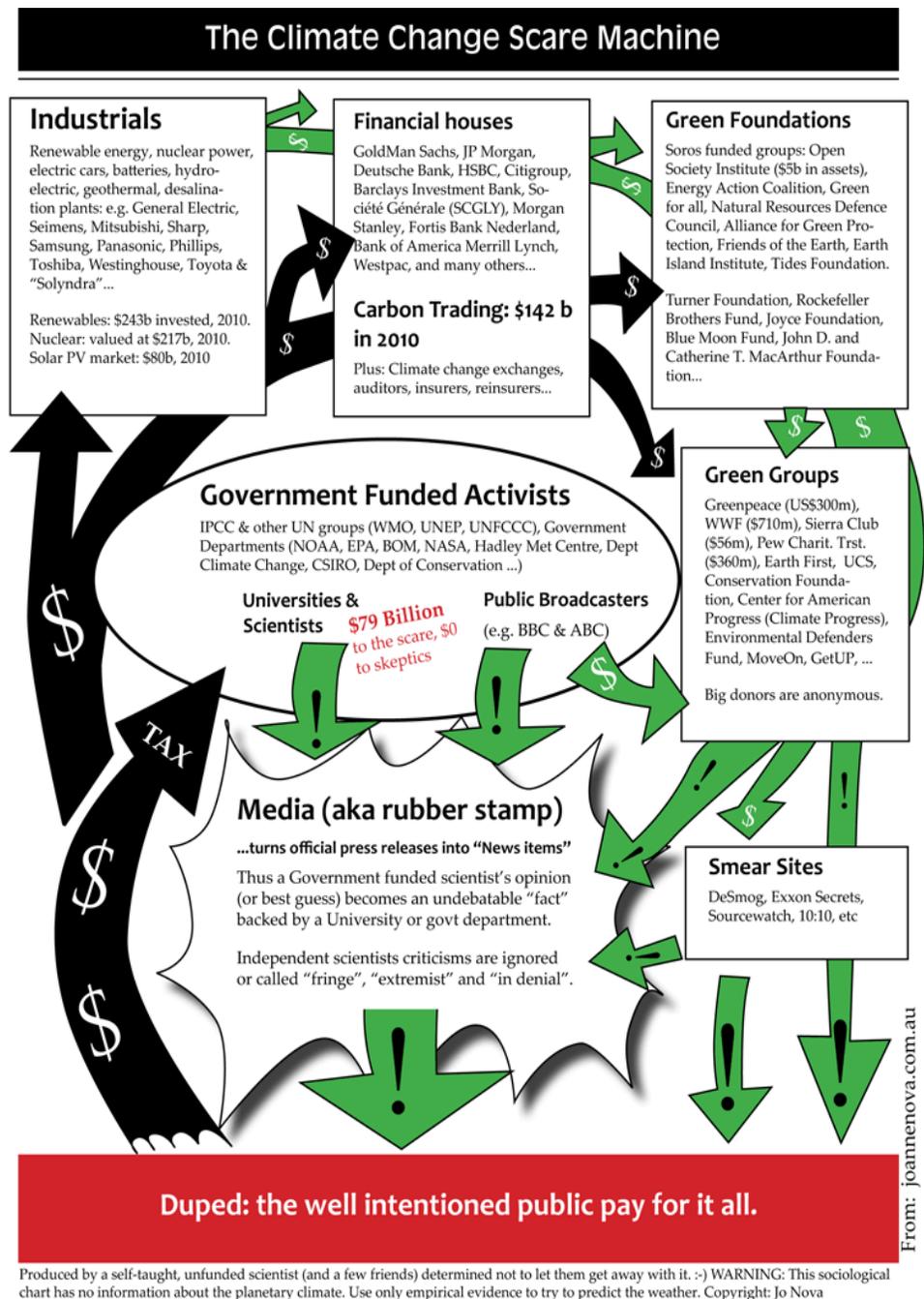
Climate Change Scare Machine Cycle: See how your tax dollars are converted into alarming messages

See your tax dollars converted into their scare. Click [image on next page] for a larger image. Reference: Climate Money, Science and Public Policy Institute, 2009.

The [Full PDF version](#).

The Key Points

1. The money and vested interests on the pro-scare side is vastly larger, more influential, and more powerful than that on the skeptical side. Fossil fuel and conservative-think-tanks are competing against most of the world financial houses, the nuclear and renewable energy industry, large well financed green activists (WWF revenue was \$700m last year), not to mention whole government departments, major political parties, universities dependent on government funding, the BBC (there is no debate), the EU, and the entire UN.



2. Despite this highly asymmetrical arrangement, the skeptics are winning simply because they're more convincing — they have the evidence. The other team avoid debate, try to shut down discussion (only their experts count), they imply the audience is too stupid to judge for themselves, and then call everyone who disagrees rude names. The dumb punters are figuring them out. Vale free speech.

The evidence changed, but who wanted to know?

When the evidence began rolling in showing how the [assumptions were wrong](#), the [graphs were flawed](#), the [thermometers were biased](#), and the “expert” scientists were [behaving badly](#) — who exactly would benefit from risking their career, cutting off the cash cow, being exiled from friends and colleagues, and being called a “Denier” for speaking the truth?

The perpetual self-feeding cycle of alarmism has its own momentum — Create a scare and siphon up the taxes, fees, fines, charges and donations. As a bonus, activists feel like heroes, some collect awards and tributes while they [trash the tenets](#) of reason and logic, and hail false Gods of Science (as if any authority is above question). Others gratify base desires by pouring scorn on giants of science, dismissing 40 years of top service with one tenuous association (there’s a certain kind of appeal to a certain kind of person.)

How could such poor reasoning triumph for so long in the “modern” era?

The key is that so many benefit from the status-quo once the alarm is raised. There is no need for a global conspiracy, and most of the organizations and groups named here are doing honest work with respectable intentions. The problem is not conspiratorial, its *systemic*. [Monopoly-science is not the way to seek the truth](#). Monopolies don’t deliver: not in markets, religion, or government either (think “EU”). We need competition.

Once an alarmist cycle is set up, with international bureaucracies, industries, taxes, associations, and activists in place, with careers riding on the perpetual alarm, what stops it? [Volunteers?](#)

Which university or government department do skeptical scientists apply to? What grant do they apply for?

The money, power, and influence is vastly larger on the side that benefits from the alarm

On the skeptical side, Exxon chipped in all of \$23 million over ten years, but it’s chump-change. The fossil fuel industry doesn’t like carbon legislation, but it’s not life or death, unlike the situation for wind and solar, which would be virtually wiped out without the subsidies provided by the scare.

The US government has poured in [\\$79 billion](#) and then some. But the pro-scare funding is pervasive: for example — the Australian government spent [\\$14 million](#) on a single Ad campaign, and [another \\$90 million every year](#) on a Department of Climate Change. The UK government [paid for lobbyists](#) to lobby it, and the BBC “partners” with the lobby groups. The EU doesn’t just subsidize renewables, it also pays them [to push for more subsidies](#). Even the dastardly Exxon paid more than 20 times as much for a single [renewables research project](#) than it did to skeptics.

Last year in carbon markets [\\$142 billion dollars](#) turned over, and [\\$243 billion](#) was invested in renewables. If the carbon market idea went global it was projected to reach [\\$2 trillion a year](#). Every banker and his dog has a bone in this game. Why wouldn't they?

Curiously, some just can't see the vested interest of global financial houses and government bureaucrats in these policies. Andy Revkin suggests that the [opposition to the alarmist juggernaut](#) is "well coordinated" and "not contentious". But how well coordinated are the IPCC? Which think-tank has two week long junkets for tens of thousands of people including media reps from all over the world? Not skeptics.

The money side of the equation is so lop-sided, and egregiously dominated by pro-scare funding at every level, that skeptics can thank Dunlap-McCright for bringing it up. *We'll take your minor millions and vague allusions to "influence" and up the ante a magnitude, so to speak. Yes, let's talk about the vested interests?*

As I wrote in early 2010:

Somehow the tables have turned. For all the smears of big money funding the "deniers", the numbers reveal that the sceptics are actually the true grassroots campaigners, while Greenpeace defends Wall St. How times have changed. Sceptics are fighting a billion dollar industry aligned with a trillion dollar trading scheme. Big Oil's supposed evil influence has been vastly outdone by Big Government, and even those taxpayer billions are trumped by Big-Banking.

The namecalling has to stop

It's absurd self-satire when [mere sociologists and journalists](#) casually call [Nobel Physics Prize winners](#): *Deniers*? These "deniers" are guys who figured out things like tunneling electrons in superconductors. Just because they won a Nobel doesn't make them right, but wouldn't a true investigative reporter's curiosity pique a little as skepticism rose and rose? Isn't there a moment when it occurs to any open mind that it might be a good idea to actually [phone up a NASA astronaut](#) who walked on the moon and has spoken out as a skeptic and ask: Why?

*No a "consensus" is not evidence of how the climate works, and nor is a map of funding, they're "evidence" of how human society works. They make good case studies of group-think-in-action. Sociologists and journalists who make the mistake of confusing one type of evidence for the other merely help to perpetuate the alarm. The answer to planetary climate sensitivity won't be found by following dollars.

UPDATE:

ClimateMadness did a fast "[parody of the same "Denier" chart](#) and another [cartoon parody](#) today. 😊

The [Science and Public Policy Institute](#) reports that the New American [responded to the Time Magazine article](#) that sprang from the under-researched, name-calling "Denier Chart".

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?”



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