

'The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars: Dispatches from the Front Line' by Michael Mann

You might be interested in a powerful book on climate change that has just been released - 'The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars: Dispatches from the Front Line' by Michael Mann (Columbia University Press).

I thought I already knew a lot about the attack on climate science and scientists but this is a gripping account of the battle in which Mann masterfully demonstrates the strength of climate science, the sheer dishonesty and flawed science of the deniers and saboteurs (sceptics is far too honourable a term for them), the unending ruthlessness of the fossil-fuel industry inspired and funded onslaught, and the support it receives from influential media outlets. Yet, despite all that he has had to endure, Mann emerges stronger and relatively optimistic.

He does a particularly good job of de-bunking two pillars of the denial movement, Richard Lindzen and Stephen McIntyre. Both are shown to have links with the fossil fuel industry, and neither Lindzen's attempts to find important negative feedbacks, nor McIntyre's criticism of the hockey stick graph stand up to the test of scientific scrutiny. McIntyre's criticism of the hockey stick graph, for instance, "*removed from our network two-thirds of the proxy data we had used for the critical fifteenth-sixteenth century period*" while Lindzen claimed the graph for the period prior to 1400 was based only on tree rings from just four location while it was, in fact, based on tree ring data from 34 sites and on ice cores.

Worryingly, Roger Harrabin, in his 'Uncertain Climate' programmes on Radio 4 in August 2010, used Lindzen and McIntyre as two of his star witnesses. I remember being incredulous at the time that he gave the hockey stick graph coverage without interviewing any of the three scientists who devised the original graph nor any of the scientists who largely replicated it in another dozen studies. So I did a quick Google search which threw up an email from Harrabin to the USA's top denialist website, Watts Up With That, which said: "*I am trying to talk to UK scientists in current academic posts who are sceptical about AGW. I'm struggling to find anyone – but there may of course be a number of reasons for this. Please could you post my request on your website*". So, it seems that he could not find a credible scientist so decided to run with discredited ones. Even the title of the programme plays right into the hands of the deniers who have based their campaign on creating doubt. A leaked 2002 memo from Republican consultant Frank Luntz calling for a full frontal attack on climate science stated, "*you will need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate*".

The dear old Guardian is also, and in my opinion quite correctly, criticised by Mann, and other climate scientists at Realclimate, for its reporting of the UEA email hacking. According to Mann, the Guardian, in a series of articles by Fred Pearce, "*mangled the facts, distorting key details such as the chronology of events, to fit a preconceived narrative of conspiracy and corruption*". I was, at the time, very disappointed in the Guardian and gave up on reading the articles. I noticed that Fred Pearce had written a Guardian article entitled, '*How the 'climategate' scandal is bogus and based on climate sceptics' lies*' before, shortly afterwards, taking a conspiratorial approach. I could not help wondering whether the prospect of a Guardian contract persuaded him to change tack.

Mann, correctly, praises the BBC's excellent environment correspondent, Richard Black.

The Harrabin and Guardian incidents were a while ago but it is worrying that people we would normally trust seem to have got things so badly wrong.

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