



A DECADE OF DIRTY TRICKS

*Exxon Mobil's attempts to stop the world
tackling climate change*

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Overview

When President Bush announced that the US would be pulling out of the Kyoto Treaty in March 2001, the mark of the fossil fuel industry was all over his policy. One company stands out from the rest in its efforts to bring about Bush's climate climb-down. For more than a decade, ExxonMobil¹ (or Esso in Europe) has been working consistently and systematically to derail any international action to tackle global warming. While ExxonMobil's opposition to Kyoto is no secret, this briefing shows how it has made a concerted effort to turn its interests into government policy, steering the US away from international action, not only through direct lobbying but also through covert funding and support for industry lobbying organisations and climate-sceptic scientists.

As Frank Sprow, ExxonMobil's Vice President (HSE), has admitted: '*Companies that produce and use fossil fuels, oil, coal and gas, have a vested interest in the outcome of the climate change debate.*'² None more so than ExxonMobil, which puts around \$8 billion a year into oil and gas exploration and production and not one dollar into renewable forms of energy. While agencies such as the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirm that the implementation of international measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions could have positive economic impacts,³ they could well have a considerable negative impact on ExxonMobil's value, relying as it does on the narrow energy base of fossil fuel production. Faced with this possibility, ExxonMobil seems prepared to stoop to any level to protect its profit rather than the planet.

ExxonMobil has engaged in more than a decade of dirty tricks. It has a two pronged strategy of attack:

- undermining the accepted scientific consensus on climate change
- deliberately misleading the public and policy makers over the economic implications of tackling global warming

In Bonn in July 2001, the international community finally agreed the rules for implementing the Kyoto Protocol, but thanks to ExxonMobil's lobbying efforts, George W Bush – President of the world's biggest polluting nation – is still refusing to come on board.

¹ Exxon and Mobil merged in 1999 to form ExxonMobil. References in the body of the text refer to the pre-merger companies separately.

² Speech to Institute for the Study of Earth and Man, Dallas, 11 June 1998

³ Report of Working Group III (*Mitigation*) in the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2001

Undermining Climate Science

*'Exxon provides support to selected organisations that assess public policy alternatives on issues with direct bearing on the company's business operations and interests'*⁴

- ExxonMobil web site

Exxon's campaign of misinformation concerning the consensus on global warming and its manipulation and distortion of climate science can be traced back to May 1990, when it attempted to water down the conclusions of the first assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The IPCC – 2500 of the world's top scientists – was set up by the United Nations in 1988 to produce assessment reports on the science of global warming, the probable impacts and potential policy responses. Since this first report, Exxon has consistently followed a strategy of exploiting selective and outdated scientific studies to question the existence of global warming and the causal role of fossil fuels, in its efforts to undermine the emerging consensus from the IPCC on both the reality and the cause of climate change.

Exxon has also been funding some of the most visible and notorious 'climate sceptics', whose work it can use to back up its anti-Kyoto lobbying⁵, and has actively sought to use them publicly to distort the debate. Whether or not money from the fossil fuel industry can be said to have corrupted the findings of scientists, these climate sceptics have been given a voice and a global platform from which to deliver their opinion to the public. Their prominence and influence has been completely out of proportion both in terms of their contribution to the science and in the extent to which they represent wider scientific opinion. Scientists who have credibility in one field have often been hired to do PR work for the fossil fuel industry in another field, thereby parading opinion as scientific fact.

⁴ www.exxonmobil.com/contributions/public_info.html – all funding amounts that follow are taken from this document

⁵ Ross Gelbspan, *ExxonMobil emerges as major funder of greenhouse sceptics*, March 2001, www.heatisonline.org

ExxonMobil - funding the sceptics

One of the most high profile sceptics in the climate change debate, **S. Fred Singer**, has recently denied receiving any oil company money in the 20 years that he has been consulting for the oil industry.⁶ Yet Exxon's own documents⁷ show that in 1998, the company gave a grant of \$10,000 to the Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP), of which Singer is the founding president, and another \$65,000 to the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, which promotes and supports Singer's work.⁸ Exxon also gave \$135,000 to the Hoover Institution in the same year (1998) that Singer (a fellow of the institution at the time) published an article in the institution's journal, the Hoover Digest. Michael J. Boskin, a member of ExxonMobil's board of directors, is a Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution, which has consistently questioned the existence of global warming in its publications.

According to the Wall Street Journal,⁹ ExxonMobil also funds the ultra-conservative and anti-environmentalist Frontiers of Freedom Institute, of which Singer is a staff member.

Singer has a history of public attacks on the integrity of the IPCC process¹⁰ and has fabricated quotes from the former chair of the IPCC, Dr Bert Bolin, in an attempt to suggest that Dr Bolin had changed his mind about climate change.¹¹ Singer was also the brains behind taking fifty Republican American students, trained in the sceptics' arguments, to the climate negotiations in Bonn in 2001 to demonstrate in favour of Bush's abandonment of the Kyoto Protocol.¹²

Other prominent sceptics funded by Exxon include **Patrick Michaels**, **Robert Balling**, and **Sherwood Idso**. All are veterans of the 1991 coal industry funded sceptic campaign by the Information Council on the Environment (ICE). According to strategy papers developed for the campaign, the ICE campaign sought to 're-position global warming as theory (not fact)' and attempted to target 'older, less educated males from larger households who are not typically information seekers' and 'younger, lower income women'.¹³

In 1998, Exxon gave a grant of \$15,000 to The Cato Institute's Environment and Natural Resources programme, of which Patrick Michaels is a senior fellow. It also gave \$15,000 to The Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, which published Robert Balling's book on climate change, *The Heated Debate*.

Sherwood Idso is the scientific advisor for the Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change in Arizona, which received a \$10,000 grant from Exxon in 1998.

⁶ Washington Post, letter to the editor, 12 Feb 2001

⁷ www.exxonmobil.com/contributions/public_info.html

⁸ www.atlasusa.org/highlights/archives/1995/H1995-02-Environment.html

⁹ *Conservatives seek IRS enquiry on environmental group's status*, 21 June 2001

¹⁰ see interview with Singer, 'Hot Topics, Cold Truth', The New American, Jan 31 2000

¹¹ (www.heatisonline.org plus IPCC press release, 'IPCC Chair denies attack on VP Gore and Environmentalists', Geneva, 26 June 1997)

¹² *Pro-Bush students chant for capitalism*, The Independent, 19 July 2001

¹³ Campaign strategy papers quoted in *Ties that Bind: Industry Influence on Public Policy and our Environment*, Ozone Action, March 1996

Idso's past contribution to the climate debate was a 1991 coal industry funded video *The Greening of Planet Earth* – which claims that global warming is good for humanity. It was the subject of congressional hearings in the early 1990s.¹⁴

Misusing economics: counting the costs of climate action

As it becomes increasingly difficult to convince the public that climate change is not a problem, the fossil fuel industry, and ExxonMobil in particular, has begun to refocus its propaganda on the alleged costs of action.

Numerous deceptive arguments have been used to protect the corporate interests of the industry. Particularly in the US, urgent warnings are made of economic disaster, massive unemployment and loss of competitiveness if emissions reductions are accepted. Although developing countries emit only a fraction of global greenhouse gases, and the historical burden for emissions rests on the industrialised world, ExxonMobil continues to argue that developing countries should make the same binding agreements to immediate reductions in emissions as the industrialised world. At the same time, Exxon lobbies developing countries to reject any environmental obligations that might 'strangle economic growth'.¹⁵ It alleges heavy costs for developing countries of CO₂ reduction policies implemented by industrialised nations – in an effort to undermine developing nations calls for the rich to honour their commitments under the convention and act first.

Front Groups

Much of Exxon's work to undermine the climate negotiations has been carried out under the cover of industry lobby organisations. Since 1990, this network of fossil fuel industry umbrella groups has been attempting to undermine the scientific evidence and economic advice given to governments, and stall the climate negotiations.

As well as carrying out its own lobbying at the climate talks and in the media, ExxonMobil is, or has been, a member of the following organisations, and has played a central part in the planning and funding of their disinformation and propaganda campaigns. These lobby groups have worked hard both to undermine the climate science and overplay the economic implications of climate protection.

GCC – Global Climate Coalition	Set up in 1989, the GCC is the most outspoken and confrontational lobby group battling emissions reduction commitments. It has put enormous resources into full-scale attacks on international climate agreement, waging extensive, multi-million dollar disinformation campaigns. Both Exxon and Mobil were board members of the GCC. Taking the lead
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¹⁴ www.heatisonline.org

¹⁵ Lee Raymond, speech to the World Petroleum Congress, Beijing, Oct 1997

	from BP, which left in 1997 after admitting that climate change required action, a large-scale defection of companies such as Ford, Texaco and General Motors occurred in 1999-2000. Exxon was the last to leave, and only left then because the GCC ended its corporate members' programme, thereby excluding the company from eligibility. ¹⁶ In January 2002, the GCC announced it was 'deactivated' as it had 'served its purpose'. ¹⁷
API – American Petroleum Institute	ExxonMobil is a financial supporter of the API and sits on the board. Lee Raymond, CEO of ExxonMobil, is currently the chair of the board of the API. He is also chair of the Executive and Policy Committees and was previously the chair of the board from 1995-1997. ¹⁸ US Vice President Dick Cheney was on the board of directors until recently, and the API remains a member of the GCC.
ICC – International Chamber of Commerce	An industry lobby group that was active at COP 6 in The Hague, November 2000. ExxonMobil's Chief Scientific advisor, Brian Flannery, is one of their main spokespeople.
IPIECA – International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association	Exxon and Mobil were both members of the IPIECA in 1996 when it attempted to influence the December climate talks with economic scare stories. ExxonMobil remains a member.
BRT – US Business Round Table	The BRT is made up of CEOs from over 200 large corporations, including ExxonMobil. The agenda it pushes calls for global climate agreements that include developing countries, voluntary agreements for industry, 'flexible policies' and tradable emissions permits between countries. Tax and regulatory measures are strongly opposed. Its 1997 position statement proposed that ' a climate policy which fails to include all nations should be opposed.' ¹⁹
GCIP – Global Climate Information Project	In the run up to Kyoto in 1997, this industry coalition ran a \$13m advertising campaign in the US press, national and local TV and radio. It was sponsored by both the API while Lee Raymond was chair and the GCC.
USCIB – US Council on International Business	ExxonMobil is a member of this corporate lobby group that actively supported Bush's rejection of the Kyoto protocol.

¹⁶ *How ExxonMobil is misleading Shareholders, Policy makers and the Public about Global Warming*, Campaign ExxonMobil, 2001

¹⁷ Front page of GCC website: www.globalclimate.org

¹⁸ See Lee Raymond's speech to the Annual Meeting of the API, Chicago, 10 November 1997

¹⁹ Position statement, global climate change, February 1997 : www.brtable.org/document.cfm/26

A decade of dirty tricks

1990

Dirty Trick no.1

During the final drafting of the IPCC's First Scientific Assessment Report, Brian Flannery, Exxon's Chief Scientific Advisor and key lobbyist, took issue with the recommendation for 60%-80% cuts in CO₂ emissions in the light of what he suggested were 'uncertainties' about the behaviour of carbon in the climate system. The consensus of opinion remained against him, but he continued to demand that the Executive Summary state that the range of model results were 'quite scientifically uncertain'. He was unsuccessful; the summary concluded that greenhouse gas emissions at present rates would *certainly* lead to warming.²⁰

1992

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted in Rio de Janeiro. One hundred fifty-four countries, including the US, signed up to commitments to address climate change, to adapt to its effects and to report on the action they take. The agreement recognised the need to allow developing countries to increase their emissions temporarily. It recognised that the countries responsible for 80% of the current build up of greenhouse gases – the industrialised world– should be the ones to take the first steps to cut greenhouse gas emissions. This is the reason developing countries do not currently have binding targets under the Kyoto protocol.

Dirty Trick no.2

The GCC began using well-known climate sceptics like Patrick Michaels, Robert Balling and Fred Singer (all partly funded by Exxon) as 'experts' at press conferences in its attempts to undermine the credibility of accepted climate science and the findings of the IPCC.²¹

1994

Dirty Trick no.3

The GCC hired a PR firm to take climate sceptic Dr Sallie Baliunas on a media tour.²² Through the conservative think tank, The George C Marshall Institute, Baliunas has published several reports which attempt to show that human activities such as burning fossil fuels have no role in global warming, that science does not suggest dangerous

²⁰ Jeremy Leggett, *The Carbon War*, 2000 (pp2-3)

²¹ GCC press release: 'World's Energy Policy should not be based on feelings', Feb 27 1992

²² *Ties that Bind Ozone Action*, March 1996

climate change,²³ and that scientific findings do not support federal regulation.²⁴ Baliunas is an expert in astrophysics, not climate, and the reports were not subject to the peer review process.

1995

Dirty Trick no.4

The GCC sponsored and disseminated a report by a private weather forecasting firm – Accu-Weather – to counter the findings of a landmark study by the US National Climatic Data Center which documented the link between extreme weather events and climate change in the US over the previous two decades.²⁵ The Accu-Weather study disputed the suggestion that there had been more extreme weather events, drawing its data from only three US cities. Though the study was unsupportable scientifically, it gained considerable media and public attention when it was heavily promoted by the GCC.

The IPCC Second Assessment Report was released in December, concluding that ‘the balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on the global climate’ and that ‘significant reductions in net greenhouse gas emissions are technically possible and can be economically feasible’.²⁶

Dirty Trick no.5

The GCC attempted to orchestrate a character assassination of an IPCC scientist, Dr Benjamin Santer, whom it accused of ‘scientific cleansing’ – claiming in the press that he had secretly and substantially altered the 1995 IPCC report. Santer’s fellow IPCC scientists came out in his defence and confirmed that the allegations were false.²⁷

1996

Dirty Trick no.6

The API commissioned and funded an economic model to predict the costs of reducing carbon emissions. The model – produced by US consulting firm, Charles River Associates – predicted that any commitment to legally binding emissions targets within the next decade would entail large costs. This model omitted to factor in the economic (never mind the environmental and human) costs of inaction or delay on climate protection, nor did it incorporate the possibility that new markets and jobs could be created through emissions reduction policies and renewable energy. While

²³ *Are Human Activities Causing Global Warming?* Published by George C Marshall Institute, 1996, and ‘*Human Activity is not the cause of global warming*’ Press Release from the Marshall Institute, 10 April 1996

²⁴ Sallie Baliunas, *Ozone and Global Warming: Are the Problems Real?* December 1994

²⁵ Ross Gelbspan *GCC targets landmark study*, www.heatisonline.org

²⁶ Scientific-Technical Analyses of Impacts, Adaptations and Mitigation of Climate Change: Summary for Policymakers – IPCC Working Group II, 1995

²⁷ Ross Gelbspan, *The Heat is on*, 1997, pp78-81

these omissions are not surprising given who funded the work, it is rarely cited with any reference to the API.

The author of the model, David Montgomery, spoke at a briefing organised by the US Council for International Business and chaired by the head of the International Chamber of Commerce (both of which ExxonMobil is a member) at the UN climate negotiations in Geneva in December 1996. He was quoted widely in the media throughout that year.²⁸

Dirty Trick no.7

At the December 1996 climate talks, the IPIECA circulated a briefing paper which concluded: '*Current proposals for near term (10-20 years) emissions reductions in developed countries, which imply curbs on fossil fuel based energy use, would result in substantial costs that would inhibit economic growth and negatively affect trade, investment, competitiveness, employment and lifestyles.*'²⁹ Exxon and Mobil were both members at this time.³⁰

By the end of 1996, the Clinton Administration's own position statements had started to echo those of Montgomery and the lobby groups: '*We re-iterate that short-term targets (i.e. before 2010) are unrealistic, and we cannot accept them. Short-term targets would be unnecessarily burdensome to national and global economic growth and development.*'³¹

²⁸ Ozone Action, *Ties that Bind: Industry influence on Public Policy and our Environment*, 1997

²⁹ IPIECA, 'Critical issues in the Economics of Climate Change' – Key conclusions, Nov-Dec 1996

³⁰ see *Industry and the Climate Debate*, Greenpeace International, March 1997

³¹ US State Department, Climate Change: US Non-Paper, December 1996. Quoted in *The Scourge of the Sceptics*, Greenpeace International, July 1996.

1996 – the beginnings of the Exxon / Bush special relationship

The relationship between George W Bush and Exxon began when Bush was Governor of Texas, during which time Exxon was a key player in weakening state environmental regulatory policy on air quality.

Bush was coming under increasing pressure from the public and environmentalists to close a loophole in the 1971 Texas Clean Air Act, which effectively exempted the older ‘Grandfathered’ power plants (responsible for 30% of the state’s industrial air pollution) from pollution control. Seeing an opportunity to paint himself green in the run up to his presidential campaign, but keen not to alienate his old colleagues in the oil and energy industry, Bush asked two oil company presidents – V.G. Baghini of Marathon Oil Company and Ansel Condray of Exxon USA – to draft a programme tailored to the needs of the industries involved. Baghini, Condray and Bush’s environmental director met in secret for the first six months of 1997 to develop a working proposal for legislation that would not disadvantage them. Their completed product – a completely voluntary scheme – became law in 1999, following a sham public consultation.³²

As Bush’s democrat opponent in the 1998 governor election, Land Commissioner Garry Mauro commented, Bush has ‘given these polluters a corporate loophole they can drive a Cadillac through.’³³

Bush heralded his success in having achieved a major environmental policy without needing to resort to a ‘command and control’ approach. It was exactly the kind of policy that he would later propose in place of the Kyoto protocol’s binding emissions reduction targets.

Sharing the platform at a press conference in January 1998 with Ansel Condray, Bush claimed that he already had 26 industry volunteers for his Clean Air Programme signed up.³⁴ **By the end of that year however, only three companies had actually reduced emissions, and then only by a sixth of the promised amount.**³⁵

Ansel Condray is now head of Esso UK.

³² records of meetings and memos obtained from the TNRCC by the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development Coalition – SEED

³³ ‘28 Companies volunteering emissions cuts’, Houston Chronicle, 4 January 1998

³⁴ ‘28 Companies volunteering emissions cuts’, Houston Chronicle, 4 January 1998

³⁵ ‘How a Bill Becomes Law’, Nate Blakeslee, Texas Observer, June 11 1999

1997

In February, 2000 top economists (including six Nobel Laureates) signed a statement affirming that many potential climate protection policies ‘would slow climate change without harming American living standards, and these measures may in fact improve US productivity in the long run’. They urged the US to take a leadership role at the Kyoto negotiations.³⁶

The Senate Vote

The argument ExxonMobil uses again and again in order to try and prove its case both on the legitimacy of its economics and the long-term position of the US government, is the 1997 Senate Resolution 98. The vote went 95-0 in favour of a resolution by Senators Hagel and Byrd recommending that the US should not sign an international agreement on climate unless it contained specific new commitments for developing countries.

But a closer look at the political context of the time reveals extensive lobbying by Mobil, and by Exxon’s trade and lobby groups in favour of the resolution, and close links between Chuck Hagel, Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations, and the oil industry.

Dirty Trick no.8

Mobil took out full-page adverts in the US press in June 1997, ahead of the senate vote advocating that *‘Instead of rigid targets and timetables, governments should consider alternatives... encourage voluntary initiatives.’* It highlighted the upcoming senate vote, and concluded: *‘By early next century, fast-growing developing nations will be the largest carbon emitters. That is why it is incumbent on all nations to participate in the solution even in the short term.’³⁷*

After the vote, it took out further advertisements expressing support for the concerns raised by the senate vote over the equity of a climate treaty that excluded developing countries and might result in *‘serious harm to the economy of the United States’*. It suggested that *‘when the congress speaks this forcefully, the American public as well as the administration should take notice’*.³⁸

Dirty Trick no. 9

Mobil gave Chuck Hagel \$5000 during the 1997-1998 election cycle, the maximum donation allowed from a company to a single candidate. During the same period, William O’Keefe, Chair of the GCC, gave Hagel \$2000 – the maximum an individual donor is permitted to give.³⁹

³⁶ *Economists Statement on Climate Change*, Redefining Progress, 13 February 1997

³⁷ *Climate Change: Let’s get it right* – op-ed in Denver Post, June 20 1997

³⁸ *The Senate Speaks*, New York Times op ed, 31 July 1997

³⁹ Political Money Line www.tray.com

Dirty Trick no.10

The API signed a US newspaper advertisement on 23 June 1997, in the run up to the senate vote, addressed to President Clinton and stating its support for the anti-Kyoto resolution by Byrd and Hagel.⁴⁰ Hagel had close links with the API at this time; he spoke at its conference in November that year, just before Lee Raymond, who quoted Hagel's resolution in his speech.⁴¹

Dirty Trick no.11

The BRT ran a \$1m advertising campaign on climate change in June 97, urging the US administration not to rush into policy commitments without fully understanding the consequences. This included full-page advertisements in the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post, signed by both Exxon and Mobil.⁴² The BRT also sent a letter to Chuck Hagel on 8 July 1997, supporting his upcoming senate resolution, on the basis that 'the science is less than compelling.'⁴³

Dirty Trick no.12

Following the Senate vote, the GCIP began a \$13m advertising campaign in the US press, national and local TV and radio, sponsored by the API while Lee Raymond was chair of the API and by the GCC. Ahead of the Kyoto climate talks, the advertisements claimed that '*the UN Global Climate Treaty isn't global...and it won't work,*' suggesting that '*Americans will pay the price...50 cents more for every gallon of gasoline*'.⁴⁴

Dirty Trick no.13

In October 1997, in the run up to Kyoto, Exxon CEO Lee Raymond urged Asian governments at the World Petroleum Congress in Beijing to continue to fight emissions regulations for at least the next two decades. Having previously argued that the lack of developing country participation was unfair on the US, he now threatened that developing countries would lose foreign investment if binding targets were agreed at Kyoto: '*It would be tragic indeed if the people of this region were deprived of the opportunity for continued prosperity by misguided restrictions and regulations.*'

Claiming that '*the case for global warming is far from airtight,*' Raymond also peddled the scare story that emissions reductions would entail '*energy rationing administered by a vast international bureaucracy responsible to no-one.*' Yet, by simultaneously suggesting that the US must not act unless developing countries join them, and that developing countries should not reduce their emissions because it would hinder economic development, Exxon, and the rest of the industry, had effectively created an impasse from which the only policy that could emerge was inaction.

⁴⁰ *Industry and the Climate Debate – updated appendix*– Greenpeace International 1997

⁴¹ Lee Raymond's speech to API annual meeting, November 1997

⁴² *Industry and the Climate Debate*, Greenpeace International, 1997

⁴³ letter to Hagel from Robert Burt, Chairman, Environment Task Force, Business Round Table, 8 July 1997. See www.brtable.org

⁴⁴ Advertisement reprinted in *The Oil industry and Climate Change*, Greenpeace International, 1998

By November, Raymond was arguing: *'While the 'petro-phobia' seems irrational of course to us all, we cannot take for granted that it will go away without our diligent efforts to dispel it.'*⁴⁵

Dirty Trick no.14

During the Kyoto negotiations in December 1997 the GCC produced a press briefing stating: *'Economic damage [of Kyoto] could empty American pockets... millions of job losses, higher gasoline, food and heating bills.'* It claimed that *'US sovereignty is at risk'*, that *'Negotiating test gives a UN body – dominated by developing countries – permanent license to control US economic growth, without senate ratification or domestic legislation'*⁴⁶

The outcome of the third Conference of the Parties (COP) in Kyoto in 1997 was that all developed countries were to be legally bound by targets for cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, under the Kyoto Protocol. The cuts agreed by the developed countries averaged 5% off 1990 levels, to be achieved by 2008-2012.

1998

Dirty Trick no.15

The GCIP took out a full page Washington Post advertisement in March 1998, following the opening of the Kyoto agreement for ratification. The advert referred back to the outcome of the senate vote: *'Now that 95 Senators have showed their hand, it's time for the president to show his'*. Below the text was a picture of a thumbs down hand.⁴⁷

Dirty Trick no.16

In April 1998 Exxon took part in the planning of a \$7 million industry PR offensive – the API's *Global Climate Science Communications Action Plan*, aimed at re-injecting uncertainty into the US public's perception of climate science in the run up to the climate negotiations in Buenos Aires in November 1998.⁴⁸ The plan stated:

'Victory will be achieved when:

- *Average citizens understand (recognise) uncertainties in climate science, making them stronger ambassadors to those who shape climate policy*
- *Industry senior leadership understands uncertainties in climate science, making them stronger ambassadors to those who shape climate policy*
- *Those promoting the Kyoto treaty on the basis of extant science appear to be out of touch with reality.'*

⁴⁵ Speech to the API annual meeting, November 1997, Chicago

⁴⁶ GCC press briefing: *December 10 Talking Points*, Kyoto, 1997

⁴⁷ *Oil industry and climate change* – Greenpeace International, 1998, p34

⁴⁸ leaked memo to the New York Times, reprinted in *The Oil Industry and Climate Change*, Greenpeace International, 1998

Part of the strategy was to coordinate ‘*a complete scientific critique of the IPCC research and its conclusions*’ and to enable decision makers to raise ‘*such serious questions about the Kyoto treaty’s scientific underpinnings that American policy makers not only will refuse to endorse it, they will seek to prevent progress towards implementation at the Buenos Aires meeting in November, or through other ways*’. This would be achieved by recruiting and training five ‘independent’ scientists – ‘*new faces... without a long history of visibility in the climate debate*’ to participate in media outreach. The API aimed to ‘*maximise the impact of scientific views consistent with ours, with Congress, the media and other key audiences*’ and admitted shamelessly that it would target teachers and students, in order to ‘*begin to erect a barrier against further efforts to impose Kyoto-like measures in the future.*’

Dirty Trick no.17

In June 1998, at the pre-COP climate negotiations in Bonn, the GCC distributed pamphlets to diplomats, entitled *Climate change: the case against scientific certainty*. It argued: ‘*While it is certain that the Protocol would impose enormous burdens on America’s economy, there is no scientific certainty that human activity affects global climate.*’⁴⁹

2000

Dirty Trick no.18

An ExxonMobil Op-Ed advertisement in the New York Times in March 2000 misrepresented a recent report from the US National Research Council, suggesting that climate science is still ‘unsettled’. The claims Exxon made in the ad have since been subjected to a full scientific rebuttal using the IPCC findings.⁵⁰

One of the studies referred to in the advertisement, and used by Lee Raymond at the May 2000 ExxonMobil shareholder meeting was a chart of temperature data for the Sargasso Sea. This was used by Exxon to refute the claim that global warming worldwide was occurring. The author of the study later said ‘*I believe ExxonMobil has been misleading in its use of the Sargasso Sea data... I think the sad thing is that a company with the resources of ExxonMobil is exploiting the data for political purposes*’⁵¹

Dirty Trick no.19

At the same meeting, Raymond questioned the scientific consensus by citing a petition signed by ‘17,000 scientists’ dismissing global warming. The petition had been discredited in the national press two years earlier after it was found not to have been organised by climate scientists and to have misled recipients into thinking it came from America’s respected National Academy of Sciences, which it did not. Signatories included fictional TV characters.⁵²

⁴⁹ *The Oil Industry and Climate Change*, Greenpeace International, August 1998

⁵⁰ www.campaignexxonmobil.org/learn/unsettledscience.shtml and www.heatisonline.org

⁵¹ Dr Lloyd Keigwin, December 2000, quoted in *How ExxonMobil is misleading Shareholders, Policy makers and the Public about Global Warming*, Campaign ExxonMobil, 2001

⁵² *ibid*

Dirty Trick no.20

Reliance on such dubious scientific sources has led Exxon to claim in a company report on climate change that *'we do not now have sufficient understanding of climate change to make reasonable predictions and/or justify drastic measures... Some reports in the media link climate change to extreme weather and harm to human health. Yet experts see no such pattern.'* Moreover, they still refuse to acknowledge the link between their oil and climate change: *'science is not now able to confirm that fossil fuel use has led to any significant global warming.'*⁵³

Dirty Trick no.21

COP 6 in the Hague in November 2000 was the deadline the countries had given themselves in Buenos Aires two years previously to agree on the mechanisms to achieve emissions reductions. One of the most visible lobby groups was the ICC, with over 100 lobbyists. While it put great effort into positioning itself (and business in general) as environmentally responsible, it lobbied hard to prevent binding government regulation, and worked to encourage only voluntary action by industry, instead promoting unlimited use of the protocol's market based mechanisms – emissions trading and the Clean Development Mechanism.⁵⁴

ICC Vice President, Richard McCormick, warned during the negotiations against *'a quick fix, look good' deal that would cause a dramatic and costly shift in the way industrialized countries use energy'*.⁵⁵

One of the main ICC spokespeople at COP 6 was Brian Flannery, the chief scientific adviser of ExxonMobil. On one hand he talked the ICC's rhetoric of free market environmentalism to the media, but his real motives – and those of the ICC - shone through when he switched hats to speak out as a lobbyist for ExxonMobil. He confirmed to the Earth Times: *'ExxonMobil is firmly against the Kyoto protocol... it achieves very little and costs too much.'* He claimed too that emissions reductions were unfeasible: *'You are going to need to expand the supply to meet the pressing future needs for energy, for things like the modern internet, the 'e' economy.'*⁵⁶

The Hague talks collapsed without agreement when the US delegations refused to compromise over their demand for the use of 'carbon sinks' to meet US reduction targets.

Dirty Trick no.22

The US Presidential elections took place in November. Bush's route to office was paved with oil money, and Exxon gave more than any other oil company to the Republicans in 2000 – over \$1 million. Of its total political donations for that year, 89% went to the Republicans.⁵⁷

⁵³ Global Climate Change – a better path forward. ExxonMobil, April 2000

⁵⁴ Corporate Europe Observatory, Climate Update, 2001 – www.xs4all.nl/~ceo

⁵⁵ 'Charting a new course for the environment and the economy' - International Herald Tribune, 18-19 November 2000

⁵⁶ 'Kyoto Treaty flawed says top Exec of ExxonMobil', Earth Times, 15 November 2000

⁵⁷ see The Centre for Responsive Politics web site for a breakdown of the donations: www.opensecrets.org

In January and February 2001 the IPCC's drafts of its Third Assessment Report were published, stating the existence of 'new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities'.⁵⁸ The estimated temperature increase expected over the next 100 years is now double what the panel predicted in its 1995 report.

The IPCC also confirmed that 'using known and currently available technologies, global greenhouse emissions can be reduced below year 2000 levels in the period 2010-2020 at zero net costs, with at least half of this achievable at negative costs (i.e. at a profit).'⁵⁹

The Bush Era

With the announcement of President Bush's cabinet in January, it emerged that over half the members (including Vice President Cheney) were drawn from the oil and gas industry. Bush's under secretary for Economic Affairs in the Commerce Department was the former Chief Economist for Exxon, Kathleen Cooper. Lobbying soon began in earnest to get Bush to withdraw the US from the Kyoto protocol.

Dirty Trick no.23

Two days before the President's inauguration, Exxon published advertisements in the US press outlining its recommendations for 'An Energy Policy for the New Administration' which stated that '*the unrealistic and economically damaging Kyoto process needs to be rethought.*'⁶⁰ Another more recent advertisement declared that '*the Kyoto Protocol would be a serious mistake.*'⁶¹

Dirty Trick no.24

Within days of Bush entering the White House, Esso faxed the new Bush administration with a hit list of scientists it wanted removed from international climate negotiations. At the head of this list was the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Dr Robert Watson. Dr Watson is a well-respected, former NASA climate scientist who has held the unpaid post for nearly six years and is vocal about the IPCC's conclusions on the causal role of fossil fuels in climate change.

The fax sent by Arthur G. Randol III, senior environmental adviser for ExxonMobil, was prefaced with a comment that he would '*call to discuss the recommendations regarding the team that can better represent the Bush Administration.*' Randol went on to specifically ask '*Can Watson be replaced now at the request of the US?*' The US did not re-nominate Watson for the post and successfully lobbied to have him removed at an IPCC meeting in April 2002.

⁵⁸ Report of Working Group I of the IPCC – *The Scientific Basis*, 2001

⁵⁹ Report of Working Group III of the IPCC – *Mitigation*, 2001

⁶⁰ Op ed, 18 January 2001

⁶¹ Moving Past Kyoto, op ed, 17 April 2001

Dirty Trick no.25

Following Bush's statement in March 2001 of his formal opposition to the Kyoto Protocol, the Chief Executive of the API wrote a letter of support and congratulation to the Chair of the Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee, Congressman Joe Barton, thanking him for the 'strong leadership' he had demonstrated on the issue. It indicated that **the API had been asked by Barton for its view on the status of the international negotiations to implement the Kyoto protocol on 26 March, days before Bush's climb-down.** The letter re-stated the usual sceptic's arguments against Kyoto (the economic implications and lack of developing countries participation), much of the language echoing that of both Bush ('the Kyoto Protocol represents a *fundamentally flawed* approach...') and of Exxon's statements ('the long term challenge of *potential* climate change') (emphases added). Like ExxonMobil, the API still calls for more research to reduce '*the scientific gaps and uncertainties surrounding the potential of human impacts on the climate*'.⁶²

Dirty Trick no.26

ExxonMobil is also a member of the USCIB, another corporate lobby group, that actively support the Bush administration's rejection of Kyoto. It wrote to Bush on 11 April 2001, after his withdrawal, suggesting that '*the US should move quickly to chart a path forward that will avoid the Kyoto protocol's unrealistic targets, timetables and lack of developing country participation*'.⁶³

Dirty Trick no.27

In September 2001, the draft final report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change included the line: '*The Earth's climate system has demonstrably changed on both global and regional scales since the pre-industrial era, with some of these changes attributable to human activities*'. Esso lobbied to amend the text by deleting '*with some of these changes attributable to human activities*'. The IPCC rejected the amendment. Not only has the IPCC considerably strengthened its opinion that the recent warming is mostly due to human activities, it links this increase principally to the burning of fossil fuels.

Dirty Trick no.28

The American Petroleum Institute was the lead organisation in the energy task force brought together by US Vice President Dick Cheney to formulate an energy plan for the US. Lee Raymond, CEO/Chair of ExxonMobil, was a board member of the API at the time, and is now chair of the board, the Executive Committee and the Policy Committee. ExxonMobil admitted, under pressure from the US media, that it was involved in the plan's drafting and at least one direct consultation between Lee Raymond and Cheney's office has been disclosed. Unsurprisingly, the Energy Plan, released in May 2001, advised building new oil and gas power stations, gave oil companies new powers to explore in protected nature reserves and gave renewed support to the coal and nuclear industries.

⁶² Letter from Red Cavaney, President and CEO of API, to Congressman Joe Barton, 11 April 2001

⁶³ letter from Thomas Niles, USCIB president, to George Bush, 11 April 2001

2002

Dirty Trick no.29

On 22 January Lee Raymond spent an hour at No. 10 Downing Street with UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair. A senior government official later told The Guardian newspaper that Raymond's visit was to persuade Blair to support Bush's alternative to Kyoto which was about to be announced.⁶⁴

Dirty Trick no.30

In October 2001, Mr Rene Dahan, Executive Vice President ExxonMobil, predicted that the long-promised US Government's alternative to Kyoto "*will not be very different from what you are hearing from us*".⁶⁵

George Bush unveiled his plan in February 2002, which mirrored every Exxon policy on climate change. Bush's approach is entirely voluntary and would result in an increase in US carbon emissions of around 29% on 1990 levels.

Dirty Trick no.31

Having succeeded in getting the US to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol, ExxonMobil is now lobbying to get the Canadian Government to reject the treaty. In March 2002, Bob B. Peterson, the Chairman and CEO of Imperial Oil, the ExxonMobil subsidiary in Canada, told the Canadian Press, "*Kyoto is an economic entity. It has nothing to do with the environment. It has to do with world trade. This is a wealth-transfer scheme between developed and developing nations. And it's been couched and clothed in some kind of environmental movement. That's the dumbest-assed thing I've heard in a long time.*"⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Eco soundings* – Guardian; January 30th 2002

⁶⁵ *Oil group calls for drive on saving energy* - Financial Times; 30th October 2001

⁶⁶ *Imperial Oil executives mince no words on Kyoto or anything else* - Globe and Mail, Canada; March 13th, 2002

Conclusion

One hundred seventy-eight nations have now agreed on legally binding emissions reductions. However, with the US still refusing to take any part in the Kyoto agreement, ExxonMobil bears significant responsibility for the current, weakened state of the only international agreement to tackle global warming. Not only does the company's core business add to the problem of global warming on a daily basis, it has been the most active company deliberately undermining international climate negotiations and the Kyoto protocol itself. As *The Economist* notes, ExxonMobil as the world's biggest oil company is also 'the world's most powerful climate change sceptic'.⁶⁷ The amount of influence it wields over President Bush should not be underestimated. While Bush claims he wants to lead the world on climate change, it is clear that he is the one being led by ExxonMobil, who has, in effect, both written and funded his climate policy.

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⁶⁷ *The Economist*, December 2000