

Esso: can't change the science? Then change the scientists... Document exposes Exxon effort to remove boss of international global warming panel.

A leaked memo published on the internet today demonstrates that Esso, the world's biggest oil company and a major Capitol Hill donor, has been pushing the Bush administration to oust the head of the UN's global warming panel, the IPCC – and it looks its pressure is paying off.

The Stop Esso campaign (Greenpeace, FoE, People & Planet) is running a consumer boycott of Esso products because of its attitude to global warming – Esso doesn't give a damn about climate change.

The document shows that Esso (ExxonMobil) wanted the US government to use its influence to oust Dr Robert Watson, a British American scientist, head of the UN's International Panel on Climate Change. Watson, a climate scientist who is also head of the World Bank Environmental Department, has been outspoken about the need to act on climate change and has criticised the US.

One year ago, Dr. Arthur G. Randol III, senior environmental adviser for ExxonMobil, sent a memo to the White House saying Dr. Watson used leaks of drafts of his panel's climate reports to further his "personal agenda."

"Can Watson be replaced now at the request of the U.S.?" read the letter. Watson's term is expiring soon and, low and behold, the US State Dept has followed ExxonMobils advice and will not renominate him for the post.

According to US sources, the State Dept met this week with oil lobbyists who are expected to push for Watson to be replaced.

Exxon's campaign to block scientific 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.

Since then, ExxonMobil has consistently followed a strategy of exploiting selective and outdated scientific studies to question the existence of global warming and the causal role of fossil fuels, in its efforts to undermine the emerging consensus from the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.

ExxonMobil has funded some of the most visible and notorious 'climate sceptics', whose work it can use to back up its anti-Kyoto lobbying, and has actively sought to use them publicly to distort the debate. One of them, Richard Lindzen, is named in the ExxonMobil memo

The StopEsso campaign, with Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and People & Planet, is running a boycott of ExxonMobil in protest at its dirty tricks campaign.

Esso has ten years of form - Previous Exxon Dirty Tricks Around IPCC

[taken from "A Decade of Dirty Tricks" report

http://www.stopesso.com/pdf/Dirty_Tricks.pdf]

- **In the early 1990's**, 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.

- **Ten years later**, in September 2001, the IPCC met in London to agree its latest report on climate change. The IPCC's draft final report contained the following 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.

Other dirty tricks

- The Exxon-led Global Climate Coalition 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.
- In April 1998 Exxon took part in the planning of a \$7 million industry PR offensive - the American Petroleum Institute's "Global Climate Science Communications Action Plan. This was 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. 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.'

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.'

ExxonMobil CEO and chair Lee Raymond is chairman of the API board, a director and a member of the Executive Committee and Policy Committee.

- 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. 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'