THE RIVERKEEPERS

Two Activists Fight to Reclaim Our Environment as a Basic Human Right

JOHN CRONIN
AND
ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

339
0973
C947

SCRIBNER
think tanks gave business and the Far Right the capacity to circumvent the university system that was the traditional source of scientific research. Industry found that "scientists" came cheaper than lobbyists and began staffing them in Washington think tanks where they concentrated less on science and more on reducing corporate self-interest to palatable platitudes.

Instead of laboring on scientific research, these scientists produce two-page ideologically based briefing papers that are usable by the political system. The "science" is often erroneous and oversimplified, but a congressman can read it on his way to the airport and recite it in a speech. Busy journalists are grateful for the slick, easy-to-understand packaging. "At the shallowest level it's a cheap deception of the general public," says scientist Michael Oppenheimer. "You create high-sounding credentials and talk in tones that seem scientifically sensible while all the time you are just fronting for a political agenda."

One pro-nuke think tank, the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow, was founded in 1985 purportedly "to protect our fragile environment." C-FACT uses tax-deductible industry money to crank out "scientific" papers opposing garbage recycling, energy conservation, federal air and water quality standards, pesticide control, and efforts to protect the ozone layer; it fights to repeal the Endangered Species Act. These skeptical pronouncements are regularly repeated in the Moon-controlled Washington Times, in the Christian Coalition publications, and in the mainstream media.

Another oft-quoted source of misinformation is the Marshall Institute, which was the most aggressive promoter of Star Wars during the Reagan era and now publishes half-baked papers challenging ozone depletion and global warming. Marshall's seven-man board includes representatives from Lockheed and the Electric Power Research Institute, a research and lobbying arm of the electric power industry. These and dozens of other phony science groups work alongside PR firms to promote their environmental positions with the press and policy makers.

Among the most versatile sources of industry-sponsored counterculture is Fred Singer, a retired University of Virginia professor who makes his living posing as a neutral scientist while spouting pro-industry pronouncements on topics as diverse as whaling and fuel efficiency in automobiles. Singer's Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP) receives funding from the western coal industry, Exxon, Shell, ARCO, UNOCAL, Sun Oil, and others who profit from the burning of fossil fuels. SEPP's goal is to discredit global warming, ozone depletion, and acid rain as politically motivated fantasies. Singer claims that the peril of global warming is a fiction, or, eventually, that it will benefit the planet by increasing agricultural production. Conversely, he argues that environmental regulations "have catastrophic impacts on the world economy, on jobs, standards of living, and health care."

Singer is often quoted in the mainstream press as an expert on ozone depletion. A June 13, 1994, Business Week editorial, based on an interview with Singer, concluded that the chlorofluorocarbon ban resulted from "ozone depletion hysteria" and "speculative theorizing." Business Week identified Singer as the "University of Virginia scientist who invented the satellite ozone monitor" and says that Singer "has noted that no global reduction of ozone levels has been detected."

True, Singer was at the forefront of satellite probe technology during the late 1950s, but a computer search of peer-reviewed journals yields not one article by Singer on the ozone controversy in the last quarter of a century. He does not appear at recognized scientific conferences where ozone depletion is discussed. Instead, Singer publishes his work in pamphlets and press releases for public consumption.

While mainstream scientists publish quietly in peer-reviewed scientific journals like Nature and Science, reaching a tiny number of interested specialists, Mobil Oil pays for Fred Singer to appear on op-ed pages, television programs like Nightline, and before Congress.

Another master of the anti-environmental counterculture movement is Panamanian-born writer Rogelio Maduro, an editor of Lyndon LaRouche's periodical 21st Century and Technology, and coauthor of The Holes in the Ozone Scare, also published by LaRouche. LaRouche is a right-wing paranoid who believes the Queen of England runs the world drug trade and that the KGB—in cahoots with Jewish overlords—is using environmentalism to achieve a new world order; only LaRouche possesses the genius to avert this disaster. Rogelio Maduro is LaRouche's staff science advisor. He claims that DDT, PCBs, and CFCs are victims of slander concocted by sinister environmental "catastrophists" bent on depriving the world of refrigeration, malarial control, a reliable food supply, and safe electricity in an effort to reduce world population to facilitate the takeover.

Maduro's bizarre and demonstrably erroneous theory that ancient
volcanic eruptions, not man-made chemicals, caused the Antarctic ozone hole has made him a darling of the New Right. His theories have been trumpeted by right-wing gurus like the late Dixy Lee Ray and Rush Limbaugh. Maduro's convoluted fantasies are the basis of the environmental chapters in Rush Limbaugh's national best-seller, The Way Things Ought to Be.

Relying on Maduro's ravings, the right wing–dominated Arizona legislature passed a statute in 1995 allowing the manufacture of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons within the state in direct violation of federal laws and the Montreal Protocol, the international agreement to phase out production of ozone-depleting chemicals.

In September 1995, Republican Whip Tom DeLay sponsored a bill that would effectively repeal the Montreal Protocol. A more moderate bill by Representative John Doolittle, a California Republican, would push back the ban from 1997 to the year 2000. Later DeLay, Doolittle, and California Republican Dana Rohrabacher, Chairman of the House Science Committee's Energy and Environment Subcommittee, announced three special hearings on "Scientific Integrity and Public Trust." The ironic purpose of these hearings was to put an end, "once and for all, to faulty science" by environmental advocates.

During one heated exchange about the proposed bill, Indiana Democrat Tim Roemer asked DeLay if he'd read the Executive Summary of the World Meteorological Organization's 1994 assessment of stratospheric ozone science—widely considered the most authoritative examination of the ozone problem. DeLay said he had not read the paper. "My assessment is from reading people like Fred Singer," he trumpeted. John Doolittle also cited Fred Singer, who had earlier testified before the committee that policy makers had been "misled or bamboozled" by "twisted" science on ozone depletion. When Doolittle was asked whether his conclusions were based upon any peer-reviewed research, Doolittle replied with a verbatim quote by Rogelio Maduro in a recent article in LaRouche's Intellectual Review, "I do not get caught up in the mumbo-jumbo of peer-reviewed articles."

Thus, mainstream scientific findings about global warming, acid rain, and the ozone hole are attacked by fringe scientists like Singer and Maduro, who are in turn promoted by right-wing hate-radio hosts like Rush Limbaugh or by media hungry for a boxing match, and finally by government officials on the industry payroll. By using scient-