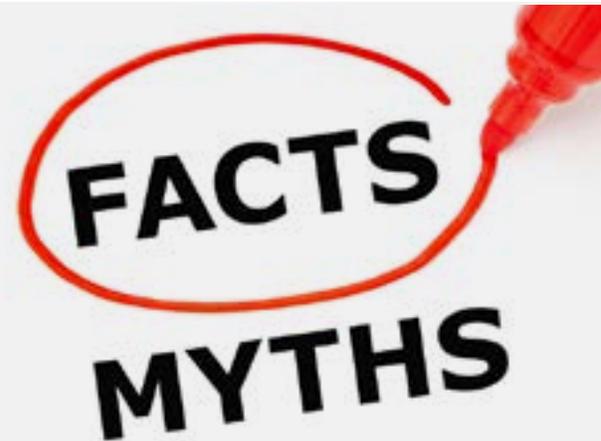


HOW INSIDECLIMATE NEWS AND LA TIMES CHERRY-PICKED DOCUMENTS IN CLIMATE SERIES



InsideClimate News (ICN) and the *LA Times* recently released a series of articles claiming that scientists and researchers from ExxonMobil knew that man-made emissions caused global climate change, and that this posed a risk to society, but decided to keep those findings secret. If the reports were true, it would mean that ExxonMobil's climate scientists were decades ahead of where the mainstream scientific community was at the time.

But a closer look at the facts and the full, unedited source documents reveal that ICN and the *LA Times* cherry-picked the documents in order to manufacture a predetermined narrative.

ICN CLAIM: "Exxon's research laid the groundwork for a 1982 corporate primer on carbon dioxide and climate change prepared by its environmental affairs office. Marked 'not to be distributed externally,' it contained information that "has been given wide circulation to Exxon management."

FACT: The document itself states that the content was meant to be shared widely. What ICN doesn't include is the sentence before, which reads, "It may be used as a basis for discussing the issue with outsiders as may be appropriate."

ICN CLAIM: "Glaser's primer drew from the best research of the time, including Exxon's, to explain how global temperatures would rise considerably by the end of the 21st century. Because of the warming, 'there are some potentially catastrophic events that must be considered,' including sea level rise from melting polar ice sheets, according to the document. It noted that some scientific groups were concerned 'that once the effects are measurable, they might not be reversible.' Reining in 'the greenhouse effect,' the primer said, 'would require major reductions in fossil fuel combustion.'"

FACT: ICN is actually suggesting that ExxonMobil's 1982 primer had come to unequivocal conclusions about climate change even though the world's top climate scientists had not even done so. In fact, the 1982 primer — or as ICN calls it, "the best research at the time" — was largely uncertain about the effects of climate change. Here are a few passages that reveal that:

"Fossil fuel combustion and the clearing of virgin forests (deforestation) are believed to be the primary anthropogenic contributors although the relative contribution of each is uncertain."

"Considerable uncertainty also surrounds the possible impact on society of such a warming trend should it occur. At the low end of the predicted temperature range there could be some impact on agricultural growth and triumphal patterns which could be beneficial in some regions and detrimental in others. At the high end some scientists suggest there could be considerable adverse impacts including flooding of some

coastal land masses as a result of a rise in sea level due to melting of the Arctic ice sheet. Such an effect would not take place until centuries after a 3 C temperature increase actually occurred."

"Given the long term nature of the potential problem and the uncertainties involved it would appear that there is time for further study and monitoring before specific actions need be taken. At the present time that action would likely be curtailment of fossil fuel consumption which would undoubtedly seriously impact the world's economies and societies. Key points needing better definition include the impact of fossil fuel combustion and the role of the oceans in the carbon cycle and the interactive effect of carbon dioxide and other trace atmospheric gases on climate." (emphasis added)

ICN CLAIM: "Knisley projected that unless fossil fuel use was constrained, there would be 'noticeable temperature changes' and 400 parts per million of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the air by 2010, up from about 280 ppm before the Industrial Revolution. The summer intern's predictions turned out to be very close to the mark. Knisley even concluded that the fossil fuel industry might need to leave 80 percent of its recoverable reserves in the ground to avoid doubling CO₂ concentrations, a notion now known as the carbon budget. In 2013, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change formally endorsed the idea."

FACT: Again, what ICN leaves out is that the Knisley report also states: "However, the quantitative effect is very speculative because the data base supporting it is weak. The CO₂ balance between the atmosphere, the biosphere and the oceans is very ill-defined. Also, the overall effect of increasing atmospheric CO₂ concentration on the world environment is not well understood. Finally, the relative effect of other impacts on the earth's climate, such as solar activity, volcanic action, etc. may be as great as that of CO₂."

ICN Claim: "The potential problem is great and urgent,' Knisely wrote. 'Too little is known at this time to recommend a major U.S. or worldwide change in energy type usage but it is very clear that immediate research is necessary."

FACT: ICN leaves out the last sentence of that paragraph, which actually reads,

"The potential problem is great and urgent. Too little is known at this time to recommend major U.S. or worldwide change in energy type usage but it is very clear that immediate research is necessary to better model the atmospheric/terrestrial/oceanic CO2 balance. Only with a better understanding of the balance will we know if a problem truly exists." (emphasis added).

ICN CLAIM: "By 1977, Black had become a top technical expert at Exxon Research & Engineering, a research hub based in Linden, N.J., and a science advisor to Exxon's top management. That year he made a presentation to the company's leading executives warning that carbon dioxide accumulating in the upper atmosphere would warm the planet and if the CO2 concentration continued to rise, it could harm the environment and humankind."

FACT: Here's the part from the Black report that ICN left out: "A number of assumptions and uncertainties are involved in the predictions of the Greenhouse Effect. The first is the assumption that the observed Co2 increase can be attributed entirely to fossil fuel combustion. At present, meteorologists have no direct evidence that the incremental CO2 in the atmosphere comes from fossil carbon. The increase could be at least partly due to changes in natural balance. There is considerable uncertainty regarding what controls the exchange of atmospheric CO2 with oceans and with carbonaceous materials on the continents." Models which predict the climatic effects of a CO2 increase are in a primitive stage of development. The atmosphere is a very complicated system, particularly on a global scale." (emphasis added)

LA Times CLAIM: "Duane Levine, Exxon's manager of science and strategy development, gave a primer to the company's board of directors in 1989, noting that scientists generally agreed gases released by burning fossil fuels could raise global temperatures significantly by the middle of the 21st century – between 2.7 and 8.1 degrees Fahrenheit – causing glaciers to melt and sea levels to rise, 'with generally negative consequences.'"

FACT: LeVine had not come to unequivocal conclusions – far from it. Here's what the primer actually said:

"The greenhouse gas effect if real...has existed throughout man's history...and in fact...without it current life could not exist. Today's concerns are about the enhancement of this effect due to human activities. So I'll refer to these concerns collectively as "Potential Enhanced Greenhouse" or PEG. It has been under intensive scientific study for over a decade before it recently leaped to the front page.

In spite of the rush by some participants in the Greenhouse debate to declare that the science has demonstrated the existence of PEG today...I do not believe this is the case. Enhanced Greenhouse is still deeply embedded in scientific uncertainty, and we will require substantial additional investigation to determine the degree to which its effects might be experienced in the future."

LeVine continues,

"The second misconception is that enough research on the basic problem has been done. Failure to understand the need for substantial advances in science to reduce the uncertainty and extreme variability in the projections can lead to premature limitations on fossil fuels."

"Arguments that we can't tolerate delay and must act now can lead to irreversible and costly Draconian steps."

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