

FLAT WHITE

Where is the Dark Money?

Thoughts on the Senate Select Committee on Information
Integrity on Climate Change and Energy

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Did anyone else tune into the hearings of the Senate inquiry into ‘misinformation and disinformation which relates to climate change and energy’?

No, I didn’t think so.

It was handled by a duet comprising the Chair, Greens Senator Whish-Wilson, and Deputy Chair, newbie ALP Senator Ananda-Rajah.

The inquiry came just after President Donald Trump at the United Nations, urged countries to abandon the 'green scam' or risk collapse, accusing the UN of making incorrect and alarmist predictions.

He said wind turbines were 'pathetic' and other clean energy sources were 'a joke ... not strong enough to fire up the plants that you need to make your country great'.

Trump also said that climate change was a politically correct fraud, and the concept of a carbon footprint was a 'hoax made up by people with evil intentions'.

This was much to the dismay of American linked witnesses, including Melbourne University's John Cook, who was among those who popularised the myth that 97 per cent of scientists, (which he now claims is 98.4 per cent) are on board with the dangerous human-induced global warming fiction.

The Chairing Senators were unperturbed.

Trawling the 169 submissions from around the world, they selected 13 to deliver presentations. These lucky 13 were invited on the basis that they would best support the presiding Senators' agendas.

Chief among those is a goal of suppressing dissent from their favoured climate narrative and pinpointing the funding and the octopus head controlling the tentacles that are manipulating a popular revolt against the costs, national and local, of Australia's attack on fossil fuels and subsidies to renewables.

The hearing heard much talk of Dark Money financing agitprop from the fossil fuel industry but no identification of the funding.

This is unsurprising since it does not exist – the combined budgets of the two major deregulatory think tanks, the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) and the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), is less than \$15 million a year to support an agenda four fifths of which is unrelated to energy.

The hearing failed to inveigle any of the witnesses into naming the puppet master.

Gina Rinehart was mentioned as a possible key income source. Frequently suggested (largely by the Senators themselves) as pulling the IPA and CIS strings was the US Atlas Foundation and the Heartland Foundation. *The Spectator Australia* and the ‘Murdoch owned’ *Australian* and *Sky News Australia* television were seen as willing accessories.

In spite of hundreds of ardent staff employed by the government and wind/solar-financed interests, the Klondike gold seam financing influence-peddling remains elusive.

The procession of the like-minded invited to the hearing railed against those who opposed the ‘science’ as they defined it (actually only one of the 25 people giving evidence had a doctorate in climate science and even he acknowledged that he’d not practiced the discipline for a quarter of a century).

One set of witnesses even advocated, in the name of democracy no less, the appointment of an information commissar, possibly leveraging off the philosophy of the East German leader, Erich Honecker, who announced after anti-government riots that his citizens now, ‘have to re-earn the trust of the government’.

Although those witnesses’ submission was an outlier, all of the 13 submissions invited to present to the Committee advocated restraints to the dissemination of information that they disapproved of. Some, including

the Chairing Senators, justified this by referring to the damage done by not suppressing the marketing of tobacco companies and, unless some restraint was to be enforced, the damage would be even greater than that from tobacco use.

Several of the witnesses suggested that there was an association of the people messaging against the climate 'science' with other right wing 'hateful messages'.

Only Nationals Senator Matt Canavan, occasionally Zooming in from Queensland, amidst constant interference from Senator Ananda-Rajah, sought to examine the internal consistency of invitees' calls for more support for renewables on the basis of saving the world and stimulating world-beating new green industries and the increasing costs of such measures. And he – too forcefully for Senator Ananda-Rajah – queried witnesses that were seeking to educate the public on the merits of wind and solar and on suppressing 'ill-informed' dissent.

Though the Chairing Senators' search for the cash that they allege is funding Australian climate denialism and the maintenance of fossil fuel proved fruitless, the Page Research Centre (sub 140), did the hard yards and identified an unexpected source of funding. This, at over \$170 million a year, was unveiled as being to disseminate false narratives praising renewables and condemning coal and nuclear energy.

This aspect of Dark Money by commercial interests, intent on retaining the subsidies which underpin their business model was not something the Greens/ALP alliance wanted to be revealed. It is doubtful that their rusted-on ideology will be influenced by this or any other material the inquiry turns up.