

*DAVID vs. GOLIATH:
VOLUNTARY PROFESSIONAL
SOCIETIES AND THE
INDUSTRIAL JUGGERNAUT*

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**GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY GROUP (GEIG)
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

*"THE COMMON GOOD: THE ROLE OF INTEGRITY IN THE SUPPORT OF LIFE AND
HUMAN SECURITY"*

**JUNE 29 - JULY 3, 2015
PARMA, ITALY**



ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DISCLOSURE

No financial conflict-of-interest is declared except to note that:

- ***I strive for professional service in the public interest; AND***
- ***As a professional legacy, I have been bankrolling this voluntary professional society (the IJPC-SE) for the past three years in the hope that it will become self-sustaining and endure.***

SOME LESS RECENT AND
MORE RECENT EXPOSÉS

OF RELEVANCE TO OUR
TOPIC

AND THAT WE CANNOT
DENY

JUDGE MILES W. LORD, MINN, 1982

ON CORPORATE ETHICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION:

“Corporations create 80% of our GNP. They, of all entities working, have the most potential for good or evil in our society.”

This was in 1982. Today it is surely more like 90%.

TOBACCO EXAMPLE IS BEST KNOWN

- **Full circle – ~50-year story now told**
- **Disinformation campaigns**
- **Lies, manipulation, deceit**
- **Co-option or appropriation of scientists to lie. Is this bad in itself?**
- ***The real tragedy is that scientists accept these monies and then proceed to please their sponsor. How and why will be addressed ...***

THE EDMONTON JOURNAL, MARCH 15, 1996

MAKER-SPONSORED STUDIES ARE FAVORABLE TO PHARMA

Drug studies published in symposia sponsored by pharmaceutical companies are more likely to show positive results about the drug than studies not backed by drug makers, researchers report.

[Annals of Internal Medicine]

CORPORATE CRIME

Enron executive begins 5½-year prison term

The Associated Press

HOUSTON

Former Enron Corp. executive Richard Causey has reported to prison to begin serving 5½ years for his role in the company's collapse, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Causey, 46, was listed Wednesday on the prison bureau's website as an inmate in the Bastrop Federal Correctional Institution, about 50 kilometres southeast of Austin.

Causey, the former chief accounting officer who pleaded guilty in 2005 shortly before he was scheduled to be tried

with other top Enron executives, had been listed on the website late Tuesday as "in transit."

Calls to the low-security prison weren't immediately returned early Wednesday.

The *Houston Chronicle* reported Tuesday that Causey, 46, was about to begin the term he was sentenced to in November for securities fraud.

His guilty plea came two weeks before he was to be tried along with Enron founder Kenneth Lay and former CEO Jeffrey Skilling on conspiracy, fraud and other charges related to the company's collapse. Causey admitted that he and other senior Enron managers made var-

ious false public findings and statements.

Enron, once the seventh-largest U.S. company, crumbled into bankruptcy proceedings in December 2001 after years of accounting tricks could no longer hide billions in debt or make failing ventures appear profitable. The collapse wiped out thousands of jobs, more than \$60 billion in market value and more than \$2 billion in pension plans.

After Causey serves his prison sentence, he will also have to serve two years' probation and pay a \$25,000 fine that will be distributed to Enron's victims.



ON DENYING CLIMATE CHANGE

Among others:

Born Lomborg (Denmark)

- *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (2001)

The Koch Industries (USA)

- Powerful interests (in particular, oil)
- One subsidiary is Georgia-Pacific (asbestos)

.....

▶ *Right-wing think tanks;
sociopaths?*

Climate change questioned in schools mailout

U.S. think-tank says it's trying to inject 'balance' by sending out 11,000 brochures and DVDs

MIKE DE SOUZA
Canwest News Service
OTTAWA

An American think-tank has sent out more than 11,000 brochures and DVDs to Canadian schools urging them to teach their students that scientists are exaggerating how human activity is the driving force behind global warming.

The Chicago-based Heartland Institute said its goal is to ensure that students are provided with a "balanced" education about "an important and controversial issue," but critics, including a leading climate scientist, described it as a campaign of misinformation.

The mailout, sent in February, included results from international surveys of climate scientists conducted in 1996 and 2003, along with a 10-minute DVD called *Unstoppable Solar Cycles, The Real Story of Greenland*.

"It took me a while to figure out what they were up to," said Eric Betteridge, who teaches at Hillcrest High School in Ottawa.

The Heartland Institute says that it purchased a database list of addresses of 11,250 schools from across the country, including about 10,000 private or faith-based schools, for a massive mail campaign aimed at Canadian children in all provinces.

"All the kids in our schools are being taught that climate change is a serious crisis and that we've got to reduce our CO₂ and they're being taught (that) quite falsely," said Jay Lehr, the science director at the Heartland Institute who sent the package.

"We would like to educate people and basically give them the other side of the issue, so we send out materials only in hope of a little balance."

The Sierra Club of Canada said that the Heartland Institute's information was far from being balanced.

"It's alarming that an American think-tank is distributing misinformation on the most important issue of our time in Canadian schools, to actually create an illusion that there is a scientific debate," said Emilie Moorhouse, a spokeswoman for the environmental group.

The Heartland Institute describes itself as a national non-profit research and education organization whose mission is "to discover, develop, and promote free-market solutions to social and economic problems."

The brochure and DVD said that scientists were "deeply divided" about "the notion that climate change is mostly the result of human activities." It also suggested that the sun was the main factor behind recent warming recorded on the planet.

The package does not make reference to the conclusions reached by governments and scientists from around the world in their 2007 assessment of the latest peer-reviewed research on climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change wrote that global warming is unequivocal and that there is a 90-per-cent chance it is being caused by humans.

After reviewing the Heartland Institute package, Betteridge said he was left feeling both amused and distressed that someone would try to promote this material to children in the classroom.

"I think I would be concerned because it was well written," he said.

The Heartland Institute has received \$791,000 in funding from Exxon-Mobil since 1998, according to a recent analysis by Greenpeace USA.

BENZENE AND WORKER CANCERS: 'AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY'

Internal documents reveal industry 'pattern of behavior' on toxic chemicals

A pattern of concealment from workers ...

By David Heath and Jim Morris

<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2014/12/04/16330/internal-documents-reveal-industry-pattern-behavior-toxic-chemicals>



CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY

WWW.PUBLICINTEGRITY.ORG

- **Industry Muscle Targets Federal**

“Report on Carcinogens” July 30, 2013

- *“Industry attacks on Public Health research have become more strident.”*

Linda Birnbaum, Director, US-NIEHS

NUTRITION SCIENTISTS ON THE TAKE FROM BIG FOOD

A report and article on how supposedly independent, scientific organisations and publications concerned with public health have betrayed their mission and the public interest by allowing financial conflicts of interest to influence their work and their policies.

- **Nutrition Scientists on the Take from Big Food. Has the American Society for Nutrition lost all credibility? Michele Simon, June 2015** <http://www.eatdrinkpolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/ASNReportFinal.pdf>
- **Is the Leading Nutrition Science Group in Big Food's Pocket? Mother Jones, Luke Whelan, June 15, 2015,** <http://www.motherjones.com/blue-marble/2015/06/big-food-has-more-influence-nutritional-science-then-you-think>

Michele Simon is a public health lawyer specializing in legal strategies to counter corporate tactics that harm the public's health. She is with www.eatdrinkpolitics.com

"SUM OF US" ON MONSANTO

JUNE 29, 2015 (1 OF 3)

Monsanto, one of the world's most evil corporations, just keeps getting worse. **Monsanto's latest victims? Poverty-stricken Indian farmers.**

In 2012, 13,754 farmers in India committed suicide. That's one suicide every 38 minutes.

Why? Massive, crippling debts, made worse by exorbitant annual fees charged by Monsanto for seeds.

There's no way poor Indian farmers can stand up to Monsanto alone. So we're launching a campaign to demand that Monsanto stop charging the crippling annual royalties causing so much suffering.

Monsanto's GMO crops were introduced in India in 2002, and since then there's been a sharp rise in the suicide rate among Indian farmers -- and it's not hard to see why.

For centuries, farmers made a living by saving seeds from one year's crop to the next.

But today, Monsanto is claiming patent rights over seeds -- the fundamental source of all plant life -- and forcing farmers to pay for new seeds every single year.

The result is a crippling cycle of poverty, from which farmers see no way out. 13



ONE CURRENT EXAMPLE OF DAVID VS. GOLIATH (2 OF 3)

Mega-corporations like Monsanto act like they can destroy people's lives as long as they're improving shareholder returns. But **time and again we're showing these corporations that we will shine a light on the practices they want to hide in the shadows.**

Like when Newmont mining company sent a private security firm to intimidate Máxima Acuña Chaupe, thousands of us chipped in to bring her allies to Newmont's shareholder meeting where the CEO pledged to stop development of the mine.

As Vandana Shiva has said, **when corporations control seeds, they control life.** Monsanto is taking a renewable common resource and turning it into a non-renewable, patented commodity.

We know that Indian farmers can't fight Monsanto alone. That's why SumOfUs was created -- to leverage the global power of consumers from around the world to fight multinational corporations together.

ONE CURRENT EXAMPLE OF DAVID (INDIANS) VS. GOLIATH (MONSANTO) (3 OF 3)

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SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS TO TAME GOLIATH



The Center for Public Integrity, Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and The Graduate Center at the City University of New York are making public some 20,000 pages of benzene documents – the inaugural collection in Exposed, a searchable on-line archive of previously secret oil and chemical industry memoranda, emails, letters, PowerPoints and meeting minutes that will grow over time.

NEW GROUP AIMS TO REVEAL TRUTHS, PROTECT WHISTLEBLOWERS

Like WikiLeaks, but better:

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2014/06/04/whistleblowers>

What separates a democracy from a dictatorship?

Government transparency, among other things. The new organization's mission is to “shed light on concealed activities that are relevant to human rights, **corporate malfeasance, the environment**, civil liberties, and war” by calling on Americans to share “official information—whether governmental or corporate—that the public has a right to know.” The bottom line for **ExposeFacts** is in its tagline: ***Whistleblowers Welcome.***

THE ROLE OF ANY PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY

***TO SERVE AS A TRANSPARENT VOICE FOR
ADVANCING THE DISCIPLINE BY PROVIDING A
FORUM TO***

- **Facilitate networking to maximize engagement at multiple levels and scales in the public interest**
- **Foster the development of uni-, multi- and trans-disciplinary research methods**
- **Incentivize personal and professional integrity in both research and practice by setting normative standards for ethics, peer over-site, and accountability**
- **Provide a public face**



EPIDEMIOLOGY

→ **Our focus in epidemiology is on community health; on the *prevention* of disease, disability and premature death in communities**

→ **We study health problems with a view to developing policy interventions to correct the problem**

→ **There are many competing interests in the work done by epidemiologists**

IN WHOSE BEST INTERESTS?

- **Public interest vs any other interest(s)?**
- **In whose best interests do epidemiologists work? Is there any allowance for variation in this view?**
- **In whose best interest is research done? Is every research question framed to serve one interest or another?**
- **Whose interests are being served when research is funded by public funds?**
- **And, whose best interests are being served when research is funded by private/corporate dollars?**
- **Are both appropriate? Is there any moral tension in choosing a public over a private/corporate source of funds to address a particular scientific question?**

SOCIETY/ASSOCIATION CORE VALUES & MISSION STATEMENTS

- They provide the anchor for our activity and collective motivation
- In **EPIDEMIOLOGY:**

*... maintain, enhance, and promote health in communities worldwide ...
work to protect the public health interest above any other interest ...*

EPIDEMIOLOGY AS AN APPLIED SCIENCE

Because it is possible to manipulate experimental and control groups in ways that introduce bias and thus fail to serve the public interest through the pursuit of truth (as expected of scientists), it is recognized that ethical training and oversight are crucial.

Our ethics and values determine in large part our behaviours.

WHILE EPIDEMIOLOGISTS DO THEIR RESEARCH

- **Who takes the risks while who derives the benefits? Or, whose interests are being served in this or that policy?**
- **Does the burden of proof of safety lie on the proponent of a new product, or on John and Jane Public?**

All sorts of pressures operate on the applied health scientist ... and the have implications in the policy domain



→ **There are many competing interests in the work done by epidemiologists**

TO UNDERSTAND INFLUENCE AND ITS IMPACT WE MUST UNDERSTAND

- **The Dominant Paradigm**
- **The Contextual Narrative**
- **The Role of Impartial Science in
the Public Interest**

PRIMARY PRINCIPLES IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Protect the most vulnerable in society (e.g., unborn, children, Inuit, frail elderly) - beneficence

Involve communities in our research (ensure community relevance of our work) - autonomy

Integrity in Public Health (serve the public health interest above any other interest) - beneficence and non-maleficence

WHAT ARE WE UP AGAINST?

What creates/drives misconduct in science?

What tempts scientists away from the pursuit of truth?

How does misconduct derail scientific discourse?

How does misconduct influence public policy and hence population and global environmental health?

Confrontation, and the challenge of speaking truth to power!

“Industry’s offensive against the regulation of health and safety hazards uses academics to downplay or deny the seriousness of the hazards...”

Clayson and Halpern
J. of Public Health Policy
September, 1983



INTERNATIONAL
JOINT POLICY COMMITTEE
OF THE SOCIETIES OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

PERVASIVE INFLUENCES AND PRESSURES ON SCIENTISTS

- **From funding sources to peer review**
- **From the questions we ask through access to data**
- **From study design to data analysis and interpretation**
- **From dissemination to job security**

PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY / ETHICS / MORALITY / LAW:

- **The defining influences in our behaviour / conduct as people ... and as research scientists ... in the social context in which we live, work and play**

BUT TEMPTATION LURKS



MANUFACTURING DOUBT

▶ **Samuel Epstein.**

The Politics of Cancer, 1978

▶ **Devra Davis.**

When Smoke Ran Like Water: Tales of Environ Deception ..., 2002

The Secret History of the War on Cancer, 2007

Disconnect: The Truth About Cell Phone Radiation ..., 2010

▶ **David Michaels.**

Doubt is their Product: How Industry's Assault on Science..., 2008

▶ **McCulloch & Tweedale.**

Defending the Indefensible: The Global Asbestos Industry ..., 2008

The policy-maker's conundrum ▶ **the fomentation of uncertainty by vested interests.** By increasing uncertainty, the policy-maker's ability to implement health policy is made all the more difficult.



HUMAN AND SYSTEM FRAILTIES

- **Junk science:** Our professional obligation to be vigilant and especially careful in peer review
- **Need for oversight (as in Human Research Ethics Boards/IRBs)**
- **The need to keep ourselves on track with ETHICS GUIDELINES and related activities**

WE MUST NOT BE NAIVE

Be aware of forces at play that influence both science and policy.

... Great vigilance and personal integrity are required to counter the influence of financially interested parties and corrupt / morally bankrupt governments.

RELENTLESS PRESSURE FROM VESTED INTERESTS

- Manoeuvre their way onto review panels, influence Boards of our professional associations, and infiltrate the literature with junk science
- Expert witness tensions arise between the plaintiff and defence sides of the argument in tort actions where the rubber hits the road concerning policy decisions
- David vs Goliath?
- Current major initiative of the IJPC-SE is its Working Group on *Conflict-of-Interest and Disclosure*

IJPC-SE AND ITS MISSION:

- **Volunteer-driven, not-for-profit consortium, currently comprising 19 national and international member-professional societies/associations**
- **Impartially generate, report and apply epidemiological methods to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of evidence for use in informing health policy**

IJPC-SE GOAL & APPROACH

- **Goal is to serve the public interest by informing health policy and related areas of endeavour through its work at the nexus of research and policy**
- **Coordinates inter-professional society activities that are related to research and practice in the generation of evidence, as well as in evidence-based policy application, formulation, implementation and evaluation**
- **Promotes epidemiological best practices to inform policy**

IJPC-SE BRIEF HISTORY

- Formed in Seattle in 2006 at the 2nd (5-yearly) North American Congress of Epidemiology
- It is now in its 9th year of operation
 - 1st Chair: Roberta Ness (2006 - 2007)
 - 2nd Chair: Susan Sacks (2008 - 2009)
 - 3rd Chair: Stanley H. Weiss (2010 - 2013)
 - 4th Chair: Colin L. Soskolne (2014 - 2015)
 - Chair-Elect: Wael Al-Delaimy (2016 - ?)
- Website, Founding Bylaws, related policy documents, and Not-for-Profit status set in motion in 2012-2015
- A major initiative was the launch in 2012 of its *Position Statement on Asbestos*

ON THE JPC-SE 2012 POSITION STATEMENT ON ASBESTOS

“The JPC Position Statement on Asbestos was an important act of collaboration and leadership by societies of epidemiology in calling for national and international policy to be based on the scientific evidence. While the asbestos industry spends millions of dollars on marketing and political lobbying, they are losing the battle of credibility, thanks to organizations such as the IJPC-SE speaking up to defend epidemiologic evidence and public health policy. More organizations have since joined the IJPC-SE, in part, I believe, because they see that the IJPC-SE is playing a positive and meaningful role in serving the public good.”

Kathleen Ruff, quoted in The Epidemiology Monitor, June 2015

CLASSICAL TECHNIQUES THAT SKEW RESULTS: FROM BIASED METHODS TO JUNK SCIENCE

- **Linear reductionism without post-normal science to complement quantitative methods**
- **Under-powered studies**
- **Inadequate follow-up methods**
- **Inadequate follow-up time**
- **Contaminated controls**
- **Unbalanced discussion**
- **Selective disclosure of competing interests**

BIASES COUNTER TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST

- **Publication Bias**
- **Suppression Bias**
- **Repression Bias**
- **Funding Bias**

ONE FORCE INFLUENCING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Differing Journal policies exist on the mention of policy-related implications of any research paper's findings

A TENSION ARISES BETWEEN THE NEED, ON THE ONE HAND, FOR ARMS-LENGTH SCHOLARLY ENDEAVOUR AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

IJPC-SE'S CURRENT INITIATIVE

A current initiative of the JPC is to create a position statement on conflict-of-interest and disclosure.

The need to address conflict-of-interest and disclosure issues more forthrightly was brought about by high-profile failures of epidemiologists to fulfill norms and expectations in these areas.

TWO POSSIBLE MODELS OF VOLUNTARY GOVERNANCE

- **BENEVOLENT DICTATORSHIP**
- **DEMOCRACY**
- **HOW SUSTAINABLE AND ENDURING IS EITHER MODEL?**
- **IS ONE MODEL MORE SUITED TO ANY PARTICULAR MISSION?**



ADVANTAGES OF EACH MODEL

BENEVOLENT DICTATORSHIP

- Driven by a single powerful leader, it requires far less reliance on volunteer commitment
- Ease of decision-making

DEMOCRACY

- Devolved roles should spread the load
- Shared decision-making leading to greater buy-in and a broader base of support
- Appeal to funders to support the mission



DISADVANTAGES OF EACH MODEL

BENEVOLENT DICTATORSHIP

- **The question of continuity**
- **Lack of appeal to sponsors**

DEMOCRACY

- **Adherence to processes defined in Bylaws**
- **Volunteerism means limited availability to contribute to the mission**
-

THE WAY FORWARD

True democracy through a well-informed public, underscored by an improved government science, technology and innovation strategy that should:

- Offer ***incentives*** to non-profit professional organizations in support of capacity-building to expose junk science, particularly where applied science works at the nexus of policy; and
- Introduce ***disincentives*** (i.e., regulatory penalties) for those engaging in producing junk science.

DISCUSSION

www.ijpc-se.org

www.colinsoskolne.com