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Toxic Sludge Is Good for You: Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry

John Stauber, Author, Mark Dowie, Photographer, Sheldon Rampton, With Common Courage Press (236p) ISBN 978-1-56751-061-4 © 1995

26 years old book! Things are much, much worse (last 2 decades) per Shoshana Zuboff's *Surveillance Capitalism – The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* © 2019

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/04/shoshana-zuboff-surveillance-capitalism-assault-human-automomy-digital-privacy>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIXhnWUmMvw>

Shoshana Zuboff, named "the true prophet of the information age" by the Financial Times, has always been ahead of her time. Her seminal book *In the Age of the Smart Machine* foresaw the consequences of a then-unfolding era of computer technology. Now, three decades later she asks why the once-celebrated miracle of digital is turning into a nightmare. Zuboff tackles the social, political, business, personal, and technological meaning of "surveillance capitalism" as an unprecedented new market form. It is not simply about tracking us and selling ads, it is the business model for an ominous new marketplace that aims at nothing less than predicting and modifying our everyday behavior--where we go, what we do, what we say, how we feel, who we're with. The consequences of surveillance capitalism for us as individuals and as a society vividly come to life in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism's* pathbreaking analysis of power. The threat has shifted from a totalitarian "big brother" state to a universal global architecture of automatic sensors and smart capabilities: A "big other" that imposes a fundamentally new form of power and unprecedented concentrations of knowledge in private companies--free from democratic oversight and control.

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Abstract

Stauber and Rampton cite a classic example of image manipulation in this chilling analysis of the PR business. During the aftermath of the 1975 Three-Mile Island nuclear accident, a company spokesman said that a spark in the accumulated hydrogen bubble could result in a "spontaneous energetic disassembly"--otherwise known as an explosion. The authors trace certain specious practices of the \$10 billion PR business to P.T. Barnum, who in 1836 wrote anonymous pro and con letters to editors about himself, generating heated interest. Modern public relations has evolved "crisis management" and "anti-" PR campaigns including sabotaging the tours of authors who challenge industry clients, for example, Jeremy Rifkin, author of *Beyond Beef*. The new euphemism for sewage sludge, "biosolids," is part of a campaign to convince the public that municipal sludge, replete with an astounding array of toxic substances, is good for farm soil. The authors point to Business for Social Responsibility, an organization that includes The Body Shop, Ben & Jerry's and others, as now containing "some of the most environmentally destructive corporations on the planet." Giant agencies extend their contracts to selling national policies, as Hill & Knowlton did in selling the Gulf war to the American public. Although most large news organizations at least rewrite PR materials, many smaller markets "rip and read" prepackaged video news releases. This is a cautionary reminder that much of the consumer and political world is created by for-hire mouthpieces in expensive neckties.

The Water Environment Federation's elaborate effort to rename sewage sludge as "biosolids" is an example in practice of the "propaganda model" of communications, which sees its task as indoctrinating target audiences with ideas favorable to the interests of the communicators. The propaganda model assumes that members of the public are irrational and focuses therefore on symbolic and emotional aspects of communication. This approach to communicating arouses public resentment rather than trust. In place of a "propaganda model," public officials should adopt a "democratic model,"

which assumes that audiences are rational and intellectually capable of meaningful participation in decision-making.

Toxic Sludge is Good for You is an accumulation of real life PR situations that depict the worst of the worst in the American public relations industry. The authors tell one side of the story by naming names and revealing how they worked their magic to manipulate and deceive the public. The book exposes bogus news, made up ‘grassroots’ organizations, public relation spies, and other methods to demonstrate how information that comes from corporations, politicians, and other governments can be skewed and controlled before it reaches the masses. Toxic Sludge is designed to shock readers by stressing the negative side of each circumstance; even though the information presented is a left wing point of view I do believe the work is a justifiable criticism of the PR industry because the tactics used were harmful to American democracy and in some cases the health and wellbeing of the public at large. According to an analysis by Dr. Donn Tilson, accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), not all PR practitioners utilize such tactics, however, many do and that type of PR poses a threat to democratic values, he goes on to state, “it is ultimately a manifestation of the deeper contradictions in corporate America...the road back to a truly democratic society lies in educating ourselves about the power of propaganda in our lives” (Tilson, 1997). As the general public continues to educate itself about the practices (good and bad) in the field of PR it is even more important that our firm maintain professional procedures that are in-line with the PRSA code of ethics. The authors do eventually (pg. 205 @96% done!) acknowledge that some may see the book as trying to enrage the public just to sell books rather than offering a balanced view. In fact, Ron Levy, Pres. of North American Precis Syndicate <https://naprecis.com/> wrote re “conflict of interest” btwn. our “moral obligation to tell the truth” & hoped for book sales. To judge this, Levy suggests that readers decide whether the book “(a) says only nasty things about the great PR firms, or (b) presents both sides, incl. how much good Prs are doing. . .to save lives, avoid health care tragedies, & help people get more happiness out of life.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaMh8KGfkTM>

Chapter Eight: The Sludge Hits the Fan

"The major public acceptance barrier which surfaced in all the case studies is the widely held perception of sewage sludge as malodorous, disease causing or otherwise repulsive. . . . There is an irrational component to public attitudes about sludge which means that public education will not be entirely successful."

--US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, 1981 public relations document

The German politician Otto von Bismarck once said that "those who love sausage and the law should never watch either being made." Something similar might be said about the process we've gone through in writing this book. Take, for example, our title. We knew we wanted to write an exposé of the PR industry, but our publisher felt that using "public relations" in the title would "put people right to sleep." His advertising timeline required that we furnish a title before the manuscript was actually finished. We went through weeks of constant brainstorming in search of a title that would say public relations without actually using those words. We searched dictionaries for interesting phrases, and badgered friends to ask how they felt about titles such as The Hidden Manipulators, Flack Attack, Sound Bites Back, or The Selling of the Public Mind. We seriously considered lifting the title from Arnold Schwarzenegger's 1994 film, True Lies, or from J. Edgar Hoover's classic 1950s anticommunist

diatribe, Masters of Deceit.

Our final title was borrowed from the "Tom Tomorrow" cartoon reprinted in chapter one. We tried it on a friend who thought Toxic Sludge Is Good For You sounded "too weird" to be taken seriously, but our publisher felt it would stick in people's heads and make the book easier to market. In the end, therefore, our decision boiled down to commercial calculations. We weren't planning to write about "toxic sludge" per se. We were trying to reach so-called "Generation X" readers with a "Generation X" title—a cynical, exaggerated parody of deceptive public relations.

Then Nancy Blatt called, and we discovered that our "parody" is no exaggeration.

Nancy Blatt is an aggressively perky woman who serves as Director of Public Information for the "Water Environment Federation" (WEF). She phoned to say that she had seen an advance notice mentioning our book, and she was concerned that the title might interfere with the Federation's plans to transform the image of sewage sludge. "It's not toxic," she said, "and we're launching a campaign to get people to stop calling it sludge. We call it 'biosolids.' It can be used beneficially to fertilize farm fields, and we see nothing wrong with that. We've got a lot of work ahead to educate the public on the value of biosolids." Blatt didn't think the title of our book would be helpful to her cause. "Why don't you change it to Smoking Is Good For You?" she suggested. "That's a great title. People will pick it up. I think it has more impact. You can focus in on all the Philip Morris money. I think it's a grabber."

We thanked her for the suggestion, but explained that we don't want our book to be confused with Christopher Buckley's hilarious satire of the PR industry, titled Thank You For Smoking.

Blatt took pains to insist that "I am not a flack for an interest that I don't believe in personally." She said she shared our dim view of PR representatives working to promote tobacco and other harmful products. She said the Water Environment Federation works to promote recycling by applying the nutrients in sewage waste as fertilizer to farm fields, a "natural process" that returns organic matter to the soil and keeps it from polluting water supplies.

"We were concerned that you might have heard some negative things about the campaign planned by our PR firm, Powell Tate," Blatt said.

That caught our attention. Powell Tate is a blue-chip Washington-based PR/lobby firm that specializes in public relations around controversial high-tech, safety and health issues, with clients from the tobacco, pharmaceutical, electronics and airlines industries. Jody Powell was President Jimmy Carter's press secretary and confidant. Sheila Tate similarly served Vice-President George Bush and First Lady Nancy Reagan. Tate is also the chairperson of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Realizing we might be on to something, we asked Nancy Blatt to send more information about the Water Environment Federation. She dutifully mailed a glossy brochure and some other promotional materials, along with a letter reiterating her concern that our book might "do a disservice to the public and the environment." Her cooperation quickly turned to stonewalling, however, when we requested strategy documents, memos, opinion surveys and other materials from Powell Tate. Legally we are entitled to these documents, since the Water Environment Federation is partially funded at taxpayer expense. WEF's refusal to voluntarily produce them forced us to file a Freedom of Information Act request with the federal government. As this book goes to press, the EPA is still stalling on our information request.

Our investigation into the PR campaign for "beneficial use" of sewage sludge revealed a murky tangle of corporate and government bureaucracies, conflicts of interest, and a coverup of massive hazards to the environment and human health. The trail began with the Water Environment Federation—formerly known as the "Federation of Sewage Works Associations"—and led finally to Hugh Kaufman, the legendary whistleblower at the hazardous site control division of the Environmental Protection Agency.

In the 1980s, Kaufman refused to remain silent about the collaboration between EPA officials and leaders of the industries they were supposed to regulate. His courageous testimony exposed the agency's failure to deal with mounting chemical wastes and brought down Anne Burford, President Reagan's EPA administrator. "His active protest resulted in a secret campaign to track his whereabouts and find evidence to fire him," report Myron Peretz Glazer and Penina Migdal Glazer in their 1989 book, *The Whistle Blowers*. "The EPA's inspector general became implicated in this scheme. Silencing Kaufman became official policy even if it meant invading his privacy in the futile hope of uncovering some personal indiscretion. . . . Kaufman gained national prominence and became a symbol of an employee who refused to be cowed by an oppressive bureaucracy."

Today, Kaufman is attempting to raise a similar alarm about the so-called "beneficial use" of sewage sludge, a boondoggle he refers to as "sludge-gate . . . the mother lode of toxic waste."

A Brief History of Slime

Prior to the twentieth century, indoor plumbing was an almost unheard-of luxury. Common people used outhouses, while the wealthy used a primitive indoor system—bedpans, which were carried away by servants. In either case, the waste ultimately returned to the soil near its point of origin. In traditional, agricultural societies, human waste was prized as a prime ingredient in what the Chinese called "night soil"—artfully composted, high-grade fertilizer.

Things changed with the industrial revolution, which brought people together in congested cities, far away from farmlands, where composting and recycling were no longer practical. Open gutters were dug to carry sewage from city streets into nearby bodies of water. When populations were small and water supplies seemed unlimited, the wisdom of using fresh water as a vehicle and receptacle for human waste was not questioned. By the 1920s and 1930s, large cities were piping large quantities of untreated sewage into rivers and oceans, creating serious pollution problems. Septic systems in thousands of small and medium-sized communities were failing due to overloading. Thousands of industries were also producing chemical wastes and needed to dispose of them.

The environmentally sound approach would have been to develop separate treatment systems for human and industrial waste. Biological wastes should have been recycled through a system that returned their nutrients to the soil, and businesses should have been required to separately treat their chemical wastes on-site so that they could be contained and re-used within the industries from which they came. At the time, however, it seemed easier and cheaper to simply dump everything into a single common sewer system. For businesses, the system provided tax-based aid to help them dispose of their toxic byproducts. For people, indoor plumbing that magically "carried everything away" was a luxury that marked their escape from frontier hardship and their entrance into modernity. The system helped limit the spread of communicable diseases, and for many it symbolized the difference between primitive crudity and the civilized benefits of technological society.

The problem with this system, however, is that it collects, mixes, and concentrates a wide range of noxious and toxic materials which are then very difficult, if not impossible, to separate and detoxify.

According to Abby Rockefeller, a philanthropist and advocate of waste treatment reform, "conventional wastewater treatment systems . . . are not designed to produce usable end-products. Because this is so, it must be said that failure to solve the overall problem of pollution caused by the waste materials received by these systems is a function of their design."

"Today," observe environmental writers Pat Costner and Joe Thornton, "waterless treatment systems-on-site composting and drying toilets that process human wastes directly into a safe, useful soil additive-are available. These dry systems are more economical than water-flushed toilets and their attendant collection and treatment systems. However, water-flushed toilets are so entrenched in the cultural infrastructure that the transition to alternative waste systems has been blocked. Instead, billions of dollars are spent on perfecting the mistake of waterborne waste systems: wastes are first diluted in water and then, at great expense, partially removed. The products of this treatment are sludge-which requires even further treatment before disposal-and treated effluent, which carries the remaining pollutants into receiving waters."

To cope with the mounting problem of water pollution, the United States launched what has become the largest construction grants program in US history, linking millions of homes and tens of thousands of businesses into central treatment facilities. As the 1970s dawned, front-page headlines across America told stories of polluted drinking water and quarantined beachfronts. Pressure from environmentalists spurred Congress to pass the Clean Water Act of 1972, which according to US Senator Max Baucus, "put us on the course to fishable and swimmable rivers at a time when one river was known as a fire hazard and others hadn't seen fish in a generation." 6 The Clean Water Act required communities to make sure that by 1977 their sewage plants could remove at least 85 percent of the pollutants passing through them, and allocated funding to pay for the additional treatment and filtering technologies needed to achieve this goal. By 1976, the federal government was spending \$50 billion per year to help cities achieve water purity goals.

In the 1980s, however, politicians responded to pressure for reduced federal spending by cutting funds for water treatment, and by the 1990s the money had been virtually eliminated.⁸ In the meantime, the push for clean water had created another problem- tons of pollution-laden sewage sludge generated as a byproduct of the treatment process.

According to Abby Rockefeller, the hundreds of billions of dollars spent purifying water through central sewage processing plants has largely been wasted. "Leaving aside the immense costs of this option, both in energy and in money, there is the critical though inadequately recognized problem of the sludge," Rockefeller states. "The more advanced the treatment of the sewage (the more successful the separation), the more sludge will be produced, and the worse-the more unusable and dangerous-it will be. That is, the 'better' the treatment, the greater the range of incompatible materials that will have been concentrated in this highly entropic gray jelly."

MEMORABLE QUOTES

"It is the absolute right of the State to supervise the formation of public opinion." Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Propaganda Minister.

"The values that dominate our lives today are corporate, not democratic, values. Our system is first and foremost defined by the rules and regulations we follow as employees, customer, and consumers. Public relations firms are themselves corporations which exist to serve the propaganda interests of their clients. And as everyone who works for a corporation knows, democracy does not exist at the

workplace. Nor is democracy working in Washington and state capitols where corporate special interests control the political purses that put candidates in office and keep them there. Public relations exists to manufacture the necessary illusions that bridge the gap between the dream and the reality of American society. In those illusions, however, the dream remains visible."

Every big media event needs what journalists and flacks alike refer to as the "the hook." An ideal hook becomes the central element of a story that makes it newsworthy, evokes a strong emotional response, and sticks in the memory. In the case of the Gulf War, the "hook" was invented by Hill & Knowlton [a PR firm]. In style, substance and mode of delivery, it bore an uncanny resemblance to England's World War I hearings that accused German soldiers of killing babies.

"... Lying under oath in front of a congressional committee is a crime; lying from under the cover of anonymity to a caucus is merely public relations."

In fact, the emotionally moving testimony on October 10 came from a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl, known only by her first name of Nayirah. According to the Caucus, Nayirah's full name was being kept confidential to prevent Iraqi reprisals against her family in occupied Kuwait. Sobbing, she described what she had seen with her own eyes in a hospital in Kuwait City. Her written testimony was passed out in a media kit prepared by Citizens for a Free Kuwait [a front group created by the PR firm]. "I volunteered at the al-Addan hospital," Nayirah said. "While I was there, I saw Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns, and go into the room where ... babies were in incubators. They took the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the cold floor to die."

Three months passed between Nayirah's testimony and the start of the war. During those months, the story of the babies torn from their incubators was repeated over and over again. President Bush told the story. It was recited as fact in Congressional testimony, on TV and radio talk shows, and at the UN Security Council. "Of all the accusations made against the dictator," MacArthur observed, "none had more impact than the one about Iraqi soldiers removing 312 babies from their incubators and leaving them to die on the cold hospital floors of Kuwait City."

At the Human Rights Caucus, however, Hill & Knowlton and Congressman Lantos failed to reveal that Nayirah was a member of the Kuwaiti Royal Family. Her father, in fact, was Saud Nasir al-Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to the US, who sat listening in the hearing room during her testimony. The Caucus also failed to reveal that H&K vice-president Lauri Fitz-Pegado had coached Nayirah in what even the Kuwaiti's own investigators later confirmed was false testimony.

Chapter Ten, The Torturers' Lobby

In fact, the corporate victory [over the greens] was so complete that the public relations industry was quietly advising its corporate clients to refrain from gloating.

Chapter Nine, Silencing Spring

Corporations have found that one good way to curry favors with the media is to court individual journalists who have become media celebrities, offering them large sums of money for a brief appearance and talk. ... More recently, *Political Finance & Lobby Reporter* noted in June 1995 that "ABC News' Cokie Roberts accepted a \$35,000 fee for a speech last May to the Junior League of Greater Fort Lauderdale that was subsidized by JM Family Enterprises, a privately-held \$4.2 billion company that distributes Toyotas. ... Roberts refused to discuss her speaking fee. 'She feels strongly that it's not something that in any way, shape or form should be discussed in public,' ABC

spokeswoman Eileen Murphy said when *American Journalism Review* reporter Alicia Shephard requested an interview.”

Chapter Eleven, All the News That's Fit to Print

John Stauber & Sheldon Rampton's *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You!: Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry*

reviewed by Don Fitz, *Gateway Green Alliance*

In 1962, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* dramatically documented effects of toxic herbicides such as DDT. The chemical industry hit back with a vengeance. "Even before her book was published, Velsicol chemical company tried unsuccessfully to intimidate its publisher into changing or canceling publication. The National Agricultural Chemical Association doubled its PR budget and distributed thousands of book reviews trashing *Silent Spring*." (p. 124) The war against *Silent Spring* illustrates the new PR mode of operation.

The foundations for modern PR were laid in the 1830's when "penny presses" began receiving most of their revenue from advertisements. Within a few decades, corporations were paying for advertisements designed as news articles. Today, corporations accomplish a much more sophisticated version of the same technique with the "video news release" or VNR. Hi-tech corporate studios manufacture news releases that look authentic enough for distribution to newsrooms. TV viewers often get the corporate picture while thinking they are watching film produced by the station.

"The 150,000 PR practitioners in the US outnumber the country's reporters."

News giants have been carrying out "bottom line journalism" for decades. A major corporation buys up a small or medium sized newspaper, promising no threat to local editorial policy. But as they slowly tighten restrictions, lower pay, and increase workloads, the old editorial staff leave and are replaced by those experienced at taking stories from national press syndicates. Those who produce syndicated stories often find that if they write in ways favorable to corporations, they receive speaking invitations which pay thousands of dollars. Thus, canned PR plugs replace local, in-depth reporting. Currently, ". . . the 150,000 PR practitioners in the US outnumber the country's 130,000 reporters."

Book provides seemingly endless accounts of PR firms' trying to convince

people of the virtue of things that anyone in their right mind would perceive as a vice.

Not limiting themselves to consumer products, PR firms have had major roles in gaining US support for right wing military dictatorships. "In 1933, the Nazis turned for guidance to Ivy Lee, the U.S. pioneer in public relations." Lee told Congress that ". . . he had advised the Germans to abandon their persecution of the Jews." Not convinced, Congress passed the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) which required those working for a foreign government to register with the Criminal Division of the Justice Department.

Since World War II, the FARA has been systematically ignored by those working for regimes using torture and mass murder in Turkey, Guatemala, Nigeria and Haiti. Right wingers hired PR firms to manufacture a picture of Nicaraguan contras as a bastion of freedom and twist the image of democratic elections held by the Sandinistas.

Perhaps the crowning jewel of PR military images was the Gulf War. Since Iraq's Saddam Hussein had previously been portrayed as a great friend of the Free World, it was necessary to do a 180o turn of the public's eye. The PR firm Hill & Knowlton (H & K) produced and placed dozens of VNRs on US TV stations while rarely (if ever) identifying their client as the corrupt Kuwait government.

The title of their book comes from brilliant description of the sludge industry. The problem began with the modern sewage system, which never bothered to separate human from industrial wastes. According to Stephen Lester of the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, U.S. sewage sludge contains over 60,000 toxic substances.

U.S. cities are desperate to find something to do with mountains of sludge. New York City tried ocean dumping. But fishermen complained of decreased catches and diseased fish. As Congress voted to protect fish, the sludge industry decided that the most profitable approach would be to spread sludge on farm fields.

The first step was to clean up the name of the industrial representative. In 1960, the "Federation of Sewage and Industrial Wastes Associations" became the "Water Pollution Control Federation." Today it is the "Water Environment Federation" (WEF). With a clean name, it went to work finding a nice word to replace "sludge." After rejecting 250 bids, it settled on the term "biosolids."

When the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency modified its standards in 1992, it replaced the word "sludge" with "biosolid," which comes under regulations for fertilizers rather than hazardous waste. The WEF currently has a massive campaign to persuade farmers and regulatory agencies that using sludge in fields is the economically healthy route. Communities in Bowie, Ariz., Sierra Blanca, Texas, Sparta, Mo. and Lynden, Wash. are on the front

line of battles to prevent themselves from being dumped on.

In Islip, NY, 25-year-old Harry Dobin ran a coffee truck at a Long Island Railroad station 1,000 feet away from a sludge composting site. In July 1991 he began suffering health problems. Doctors treated him for asthma, arthritis, Weggener's disease, Lyme disease, kidney disorder and bronchitis. Finally in January 1992 when he could no longer breathe, they performed a lung biopsy and discovered *Aspergillus fumigatus*, a common product of sludge composting. By the time the disease was diagnosed, it was unstoppable, spreading to his spine, his legs, and finally his heart, leading to his death on September 23, 1992. (pp. 119-120)

WEF's "Biosolid Public Acceptance Campaign" has successfully persuaded Del Monte, Heinz and Nestlé to reduce their opposition to sludge-grown fruits and vegetables. While the PR industry has an image of euphemizing that which is vile, the industry devotes at least as much energy to vilifying virtues. Their exposé of how PR firms systematically sabotage the opposition to corporate America makes their work a landmark contribution.

*The public relations industry carefully cultivates activists who can be coopted.***

David Steinman documented that US foods contain hundreds of pesticides and other cancer-causing contaminants. His book, *Diet for a Poisoned Planet*, recommended that readers stick to organically grown raisins. The California Raisin Advisory Board (CALRAB) hired the PR firm Ketchum to deal with the crisis. Months before the publication of *Diet*, Ketchum had attempted to obtain a copy of the book's galleys and publisher's tour so that the PR firm could shadow Steinman's appearances by having pro-pesticide spokespersons in town before or during his book promotion. EPA science advisor Dr. William Marcus authored the introduction to *Diet*. After resisting attempts to remove his introduction, Marcus was fired from the EPA. Similar campaigns to burn books before they were printed were directed against John Robins' *May All Be Fed* and Jeremy Rifkin's *Beyond Beef*.

PR tactics have not been foreign to the nuclear industry, especially in its beginning years, when the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was promising electricity which would be "too cheap to meter." In 1957, the AEC commissioned a study by the Brookhaven National Laboratory. It found that "An accident at a larger, 1,000-megawatt reactor could kill as many as 54,000 people, cause property damage of nearly \$300 billion, and radioactively contaminate an area the size of the state of Pennsylvania." (p. 36) Stunned, the AEC became determined to counter the view that nuclear reactors were unsafe. It withheld publication of the Brookhaven study, claimed that it had never been

completed when reporters heard of it, and similarly covered up major power plant disasters.

Not limiting themselves to undermining books and suppressing information, PR firms carry out espionage campaigns against environmental groups, with aims of coopting their leaders. Corporations wishing to do "opposition research" can contact PR firms who advertise their extensive files on progressive organizations.

The public relations industry . . . carefully cultivates activists who can be coopted into working against the goals of their movement. This strategy has been outlined in detail by Ronald Duchin, senior vice-president of PR spy firm Mongoven, Biscoe and Duchin [MBD]. . . In a 1991 speech to the National Cattlemen's Association, he described how MBD works to divide and conquer activist movements. Activists, he explained, fall into four distinct categories: 'radicals,' 'opportunists,' 'idealists,' and 'realists,.' He outlined a three-step strategy: (1) isolate the radicals; (2) 'cultivate' the idealists and 'educate' them into becoming realists; then (3) coopt the realists into agreeing with industry. **

According to Duchin, radical activists 'want to change the system; have underlying socio/political motives' and see multinational corporations as 'inherently evil. . . These organizations do not trust the . . . federal state and local governments to protect them and to safeguard the environment. They believe, rather, that individuals and local groups should have direct power over industry. . .

Duchin defines opportunists as people who engage in activism seeking 'visibility, power, followers and, perhaps, even employment. . . The key to dealing with opportunists is to provide them with at least the perception of partial victory. . . If your industry can successfully bring about these relationships, the credibility of the radicals will be lost and opportunists can be counted on to share in the final policy solution.' (pp. 66-67)

While PR firms hold one hand outstretched to "realistic" activists, their other hand beckons right-wing hate groups. ". . . Many of the same companies that are funding *anti*-environmental extremists are also pouring money into mainstream environmental groups. Joe Lyford, Jr. reports in *Propaganda Review* that corporate sponsors of the World Wildlife Fund, Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, National Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Audubon Society and National Wildlife Federation also funded about one-quarter of the 37 organizations described in the *Greenpeace Guide to Anti-Environmental Organizations*."

Perhaps the most grotesque pattern of cooptation is that of Earth Day:

. . . Earth Day USA began . . . to make April 22, 1995 the biggest eco-publicity blast of all time. . . What about decisions by previous national Earth Day groups to screen large corporate contributions? According to board member Jerry Klamon, that approach was *passé*. 'We would work with companies others probably wouldn't, because we see the need for the "carrot" approach. These companies need to be . . . brought along.' Klamon's St. Louis group accepted funding from Monsanto. . . [Klamon said] 'These PR people are obviously good at penetrating the American consciousness.'

Jerry was one of the four people who formed the Gateway Green Alliance. Political greens should never forget that Newt Gingrich began his career as a liberal environmentalist and it was only after realizing which side his bread was buttered on that he evolved (devolved?) into what he is today.

Activists often become demoralized by what seems like endless infighting with those who want an "understanding" approach towards corporations. One of the most frequent complaints is "I expect the attacks we get from the polluters. But I can't take what happens inside our own organization." Though people who have been coopted by corporate "nurturing" probably vastly outnumber those who intentionally try to undermine groups, their effect can be just as devastating. Activists can become worn out haggling with those who say they want to protect the environment but who continuously make excuses for the corporations which are destroying it. Organizers can be the target of whispering campaigns that they are "paranoid" for not showing trust. Activist meetings can be disrupted by screaming tirades against those who "block consensus" to work with polluters. In extreme cases, organizers are subjected to threats of lawsuits by corporate sympathizers.

The first impulse for many is simply to leave. Of course, there is nothing that would please polluters more than for activists to walk away. *Toxic Sludge* hammers home that PR firms relentlessly study how to discredit, disrupt and demoralize movements which threaten their clients. As firms increase the sophistication of their "low intensity warfare," progressives will find that the struggle to keep their organization together is identical to the struggle to protect public health.

** Ch. 6

RADICAL ACTIVISTS seek to change the system but have underlying socio/polit motives, not trusting of govt. but believing individuals & local groups should have direct power over industry - "social justice & political empowerment".

IDEALISTS also hard to deal w/ as well. They want perfect world which is easily marred by "evil companies". They have an intrinsic altruism & due to no perceptible gain from their position, idealists believed by media, public, even politicians. Their vulnerability is that if their position in opposition to an

industry or its products creates harm to others & cannot be ethically justified, they are forced to change their position.

REALISTS can be negotiated w/, idealists must be educated. In contrast, OPPORTUNISTS & REALISTS easier to manipulate. Former are activist seeking visibility, power, followers, & maybe employment. So give them a partial victory. REALISTS able to live w/ tradeoffs, willing to work within the system, not interested in radical change; pragmatic. Therefore, REALISTS get the highest priority in any PR strategy dealing w/ public policy issues. If your industry can create these relations, RADICAL'S credibility lost & OPPORTUNISTS will share in the final solution.

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