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## **Reply to Union of Concerned Scientists, *Smoke, Mirrors, and Hot Air***

**Jeff Kueter, President, George Marshall Institute**

The George Marshall Institute is prominently mentioned in a Union of Concerned Scientists attack on organizations that accept ExxonMobil funding and dare to challenge their notion of how the climate operates and who suggest rational options instead of policies driven by alarmism. This report, *Smoke, Mirrors, and Hot Air*, fails to dispute our work; instead the UCS appears to pin their hopes on the public's willingness to simply accept their attacks on our character as true and ignore the substance of our work. I have greater faith in the public.

### ***Censorship is Dangerous***

In free and open societies, free speech and the right of dissent are virtues, not vices. Efforts to promote censorship, the use of terms like "deniers" and the equating of dissent on climate change with the tobacco industry are offensive and have a chilling effect on the willingness of scientists to speak out on these critically important issues. That is a clear and present danger to the integrity of science --the source of knowledge, innovation and progress.

The George C. Marshall Institute takes its mission seriously and, consistent with its principles, works diligently to publish reports that highlight honest assessments of the science. We support a scientific community that can do its work, generate data, test hypotheses, and educate free of politicization. This campaign to shut off funding of organizations that do not accept the global warming orthodoxy demonstrates that others do not.

We also want to be perfectly clear -- no grant to the Institute is contingent on us supporting a specific point of view or conclusion. Our views on climate change long pre-date any support from any corporate entity.

If we accept that the source of funding invariably affects – or taints – findings and opinions, then what should we make of the significantly greater amount of money spent by environmental advocacy groups that promote the notion of an impending climate catastrophe? Governments, private foundations, and non-profit institutions worldwide

spend orders of magnitude more to support a view of apocalyptic climate change if energy use is not significantly and immediately reduced, regardless of the consequences. Private foundations alone spend \$35-50 million each year on climate-related projects, which is substantially more than that allegedly spent on skeptical organizations.<sup>1</sup>

We would never call for organizations to stop their funding, even though they make statements that are clearly exaggerations and often the product of computer models that have never been validated and lack a scientific basis. Public policy institutes and think tanks play an important role in American policy making. Those organizations do not necessarily view the conduct of original scientific research as their mission; rather, they synthesize complex issues and support analyses to assist policy makers in making decisions. The public is free to disagree with the results just as these organizations should be free to make their views known.

Instead of addressing the substance of the Marshall Institute's work, the UCS is simply inferring motives and attacking sources of support to try to silence any voices of dissent. Unfounded allegations and unjustified attacks are a poor substitute for open and candid debate. This is unfortunate as well as dangerous.

More important than the source of funding is the substance of what an organization produces. What counts is whether the findings stand up to critical examination. Are they reproducible? Can they be verified or falsified? The UCS is vainly attempting to discredit the Marshall Institute because of whom we freely associate with rather than the substance of what we have published.

Ted Koppel best summarized the situation in 1994 when he criticized a similar effort by then Vice President Gore. His admonition applies to the UCS's goal:

“The measure of good science is neither the politics of the scientist nor the people with whom the scientist associates. It is the immersion of hypotheses into the acid of truth. That's the hard way to do it, but it's the only way that works.”<sup>2</sup>

If the UCS disagrees with the views of those they label “skeptics”, they should explain why instead of attempting to censure free speech.

### ***Flaws in the UCS Report***

Specific to its references to the Marshall Institute, the UCS makes basic factual errors and fails to deny the substance of our work:

- Sallie Baliunas is not a Marshall Institute board member or the Institute's Senior Scientist, as is stated on page 15. She stepped down from both those positions more than a year ago.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Funding Flows for Climate Change Research and Related Activities* (2005), <http://www.marshall.org/article.php?id=289>.

<sup>2</sup> Koppel, Ted. (1994). “Is Environmental Science for Sale?” *ABC News Nightline Transcript* (February 24, 1994).

- Neither of the pieces by Baliunas cited in footnote 78 merit the weak criticism delivered by the UCS. Most significantly, both pieces were written before the Institute received any corporate support. The Marshall Institute did not begin accepting corporate contributions until 1999, while both pieces were published in 1995 & 1996.<sup>3</sup> Second, both pieces are intended to review aspects of the scientific debates of the time for the general public. They review a series of claims about climate, including solar influences, the Arctic, severe weather, and much more.
- A National Academy of Sciences panel endorsed the core premise of the Baliunas-Soon analysis in its examination of the past temperature record (critiqued on page 15). The NAS panel concluded that Earth's temperatures were relatively warmer during the Medieval Warm Period (approx. 1000 A.D.), then cooler during the Little Ice Age (approx. 1700 A.D.), and have increased since then. Sparse data coverage for the period before 1600 A.D. prevented the Academy from reaching definitive conclusions about temperature trends before that date; however some reconstructions before 1000 A.D. show surface temperatures comparable in warmth to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Academy also expressed “less confidence” in the original conclusions of the Mann et al “hockey stick” used by the IPCC because “the uncertainties inherent in temperature reconstructions for individual years and decades are larger than those for longer time periods, and because not all of the available proxies record temperature information on such short timescales.”<sup>4</sup>

An independent review of the statistical methods used in constructing the “hockey stick” revealed additional shortcomings. An independent methodological review led by Professor Edward Wegman of George Mason University concluded that the “assessment that the decade of the 1990s was likely the hottest decade of the millennium and that 1998 was likely the hottest year of the millennium cannot be supported by their analysis.”<sup>5</sup>

- John Christy and Steven McIntyre are not “affiliated” with the Marshall Institute as is suggested on pages 23-24. They have participated in our public events as invited guests and both wrote chapters for book, *Shattered Consensus*, but neither is formally affiliated with the Institute

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<sup>3</sup> See a statement by a past Institute Executive Director discussing the topic at <http://www.marshall.org/article.php?id=17>, which is a reprint of an op-ed appearing in the *Wall Street Journal* on July 2, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Committee on Surface Temperature Reconstructions for the Last 2,000 Years, National Research Council, *Surface Temperature Reconstructions for the Last 2,000 Years* (<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/11676.html>), pg 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ad Hoc Committee Report on the ‘Hockey Stick’ Global Climate Reconstruction, [http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/home/07142006\\_Wegman\\_Report.pdf#search=%22wegman%20report%20pdf%22](http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/home/07142006_Wegman_Report.pdf#search=%22wegman%20report%20pdf%22), pg. 4-5.

- There is no evidence to suggest that the work undertaken by Dr. Seitz, one of America's most noted scientists and the Institute's emeritus chair, adhered to anything but the highest standards (see page 16); a fact which even the UCS acknowledges before continuing to sully the reputation of a distinguished past president of the National Academy of Sciences.
- The Marshall Institute did not provide a grant to the Tech Central Science Foundation in 2004 as is asserted on page 32. We received a grant for \$12,602 from them.
- The Institute's book, *Shattered Consensus*, is cited as an example of "information laundering" (pg. 12) yet the UCS provides no refutation of the contents of the 10 chapters in this well-reviewed book. Should the rights of these authors to publish a book be left to the UCS to decide? The authors of *Shattered Consensus* are experienced scholars with recognition and credits meriting attention to their views. They each have significant qualifications in their fields. For example, the book's editor, Patrick Michaels, was a co-author of the climate science paper of the year for 2004 recognized by the Association of American Geographers.

I will leave it to others to decide whether the UCS deserves further attention. In my judgment, if other parts of the UCS report are as error-riddled as the section dealing with the Marshall Institute, it should be consigned to the trash heap of distortions and pseudo-analysis.

*The George C. Marshall Institute, a non-profit research group founded in 1984, is dedicated to fostering and preserving the integrity of science in the policy process. The Institute conducts technical assessments of scientific developments with a major impact on public policy and communicates the results of its analyses to the press, Congress and the public ([www.marshall.org](http://www.marshall.org)).*