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# DARK MONEY

*How a SECRETIVE GROUP of  
BILLIONAIRES is TRYING to  
BUY POLITICAL CONTROL in the US*

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*'Utterly brilliant and chilling.'* Naomi Klein

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## The Fossils

IN THE FINAL MONTHS BEFORE THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, Michael Mann, a tenured meteorology and geosciences professor at Penn State University who had become a leading figure in climate change research, told his wife that he would be happy whichever candidate won. Both the Republican and the Democratic presidential nominees had spoken about the importance of addressing global warming, which Mann regarded as the paramount issue of the day. But what he didn't fully foresee was that the same forces stirring the Tea Party would expertly channel the public outrage at government against scientific experts like himself.

Mann had started out unconvinced by the science of climate change, but in 1999 he and two co-authors had published a study tracking the previous thousand years of temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere. It included a simple, easy-to-grasp graph showing that the earth's temperature had hovered in a more or less straight line for nine hundred years but then shot sharply upward, like the blade of a hockey stick, in the twentieth century. What came to be known as the hockey stick graph was so powerfully persuasive it gained iconic status within the climate debate. By 2008, Mann, like most experts, had long since concluded that the scientific evidence was overwhelming that human beings were endangering the earth's climate by burning too much oil, gas, and coal. The carbon dioxide and other gases these fuels released were trapping the earth's heat, with devastating effects.

As even the Pentagon, a cautious bastion of technological non-partisanship, concluded, "the danger from climate change is real,

urgent, and severe." An official U.S. National Security Strategy report declared the situation a growing national security threat, arguing, "The change wrought by a warming planet will lead to new conflicts over refugees and resources; new suffering from drought and famine; catastrophic natural disasters; and the degradation of land across the globe." The report unambiguously predicted that if nothing were done, "climate change and pandemic disease" would directly threaten "the health and safety of the American people."

The American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest and most prestigious scientific society, was equally if not more adamant. It warned that "we face risks of abrupt, unpredictable and potentially irreversible changes" with potentially "massively disruptive consequences."

Mann wasn't particularly political. Middle-aged, friendly, and balding, with a dark goatee shadowing his round face, he was a quintessential science nerd who had majored in applied math and physics at the University of California, Berkeley, got advanced degrees in geology and geophysics at Yale, and for many years didn't think scientists had much of a role to play in public policy. When Obama won, he recalls, "I shared the widespread view that we would see some action on the climate front."

Certainly this assumption seemed reasonable. On the night that Obama clinched the Democratic nomination, he spoke passionately about climate change, vowing that Americans would look back knowing that "this was the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal." Once in office, he pledged to pass a "cap and trade" bill forcing the fossil fuel industry to pay for its pollution, as other industries did, rather than treating it as someone else's problem. Cap and trade was a market-based solution, originally backed by Republicans, requiring permits for carbon emissions. The theory was that it would give the industry a financial incentive to stop polluting. It had worked surprisingly well in previous years to reduce industrial emissions that caused acid rain. By choosing a tested, moderate, bipartisan approach, the Obama administration and many environmentalists assumed a deal would be winnable.

"What we didn't take into account," Mann later noted, "was the ferociousness of the moneyed interests and the politicians doing their bidding. We are talking about a direct challenge to the most powerful





industry that has ever existed on the face of the earth. There's no depth to which they're unwilling to sink to challenge anything threatening their interests even if it's science and the scientists involved in it."

Mann contended that "the fossil fuel industry is an oligarchy." Some might dispute that American oil, gas, and coal magnates met the dictionary definition of a small, privileged group that effectively rules over the majority. But it was indisputable that they funded and helped orchestrate a series of vitriolic personal attacks that would threaten Mann's livelihood, derail climate legislation, and alter the course of the Obama presidency.

If there was a single ultra-wealthy interest group that hoped to see Obama fail as he took office, it was the fossil fuel industry. And if there was one test of its members' concentrated financial power over the machinery of American democracy, it was this minority's ability to stave off government action on climate change as science and the rest of the world were moving in the opposite direction. While Obama's health-care bill was useful in riling up Tea Party protesters, his environmental and energy policies were the real target of many of the multimillionaires and billionaires in the Koch circle. For most of the world's population the costs of inaction on climate change were far greater than those of action. But for the fossil fuel industry, as Mann put it, "it's like the switch from whale oil in the nineteenth century. They're fighting to maintain the status quo, no matter how dumb."

Coal, oil, and gas magnates formed the nucleus of the Koch donor network. Guest lists for the summits read like a *Who's Who* of America's most successful and most conservative fossil fuel barons, the majority of whom were private, independent operators of privately owned companies. They were men who had either made or inherited enormous fortunes in "extractive" energy without having to answer to public shareholders or much of anyone else. Among the group, for instance, was Corbin "Corby" Robertson Jr., the grandson of one of Texas's most legendary oil barons, Hugh Roy Cullen. Robertson, a former captain of the football team at the University of Texas, from which he graduated in 1969, had taken a bold, unorthodox risk with his inherited oil fortune. He had bet almost all of it on coal, reportedly accumulating by 2003 the single largest private cache of coal

reserves in America. He owned, by one count, twenty-one billion tons of coal reserves—enough to fuel the entire country for twenty years. Only the U.S. government reportedly owned more coal than his private, Houston-based company, Quintana Resources Capital.

Other donors in the network included Harold Hamm and Larry Nichols, two of the most successful pioneers in "fracking," the environmentally controversial process by which water and chemicals are injected underground into rock formations to extract oil and natural gas. Hamm, the founder of Continental Resources, was a self-made billionaire wildcatter whom the *National Journal* likened to John D. Rockefeller. While his nearly billion-dollar divorce settlement and amazing rise from being born the youngest of thirteen children in a family of sharecroppers made tabloid history, business journals were more focused on his company, which almost overnight had become the face of fracking in North Dakota's Bakken Shale.

Joining him in the network, on the opposite end of the social scale, was Larry Nichols, head of Devon Energy and later chairman of the American Petroleum Institute, the foremost trade association for the oil industry. A graduate of Princeton and a former Supreme Court clerk, Nichols had urged his family's Oklahoma energy company to buy Mitchell Energy after he noticed that its natural gas output was climbing because of fracking. Nichols combined the process with his own company's expertise in horizontal drilling to "unleash what became known as the unconventional gas revolution," as the energy industry historian Daniel Yergin wrote in *The Quest*. The Kochs, too, had investments in the chemicals, pipelines, and other aspects of fracking.

The donor network also boasted spectacularly successful oilmen like Philip Anschutz, heir to a western oil-drilling fortune, who himself discovered a fabled oil field on the Wyoming-Utah border in the 1980s, after which he diversified into ranches, railroads, and communications. The network included many smaller operators too. There were oilmen from Wyoming, Oklahoma, Texas, and Colorado and coal magnates from Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio. The largest distributor of propane canisters in the country was also involved. Participating, too, were many of those whose businesses provided ancillary support to America's energy sector. In addition to the Kochs there were numerous other owners of pipelines, drilling equipment, and oil service companies, including the legendary

Bechtel family, which made billions building refineries and pipelines in Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and elsewhere.

Most of the actual donors in this group preferred to keep low profiles, letting the politicians speak for them. They were expert in casting the group's reservations about government regulation in lofty philosophical terms. The politicians called them "job creators" and patriots, responsible for American energy independence. Clearly, though, there were few Americans for whom government caps on carbon posed a more direct financial threat.

The problem for this group was that by 2008 the arithmetic of climate change presented an almost unimaginable challenge. If the world were to stay within the range of carbon emissions that scientists deemed reasonable in order for atmospheric temperatures to remain tolerable through the mid-century, 80 percent of the fossil fuel industry's reserves would have to stay unused in the ground. In other words, scientists estimated that the fossil fuel industry owned roughly five times more oil, gas, and coal than the planet could safely burn. If the government interfered with the "free market" in order to protect the planet, the potential losses for these companies were catastrophic. If, however, the carbon from these reserves were burned wantonly without the government applying any brakes, scientists predicted an intolerable rise in atmospheric temperatures, triggering potentially irreversible global damage to life on earth.

As early as 1997, one member of the Koch group sounded the alarm about the coming regulatory threat. That year Lew Ward, the retiring chairman of the Independent Petroleum Association of America, the trade group of independent oil and gas producers, delivered a jeremiad as his swan song. Ward, who was himself an Oklahoma oilman, began by proudly ticking off the various tax loopholes he helped pass during his tenure. "We've been fortunate the past couple of years to have a Republican Congress," he noted. But he warned that the various policy "skirmishes" the industry had survived recently were nothing but "a dress rehearsal for the real show . . . the possible 'Carbon Tax' that could help pay the costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions." Ward perceived accurately that the climate change issue was coming and argued that if the "radical environmentalist 'off-oil' agenda" succeeded, "we can look down the road a little way and see an industry under siege." He vowed, "We are not going to let that happen. You can take that to the bank!"

Ward's swagger was well-grounded. The oil industry had held parochial but powerful sway over American politics for years. As early as 1913, the oil industry used its clout to win a special tax loophole, the "oil depletion allowance." On the theory that oil exploration was risky and costly, it enabled the industry to deduct so much income when it hit gushers that many oil companies evaded income taxes altogether. After the loophole was scandalously enlarged in 1926, liberals, stymied by the oil patch's defenders in Congress, tried unsuccessfully for five decades before they were finally able to close it.

No American politician's rise to power in the last century was more fueled by oil than that of Lyndon Johnson. As Robert Caro recounts in *The Path to Power*, starting in 1940 Johnson rose from a neophyte congressman to the Democratic Party's consummate power broker by handing out campaign contributions from his enormously wealthy backers in the Texas oil fields and defending their interests.

Although the oil industry benefited enormously from the federal government in the form of favorable tax treatment, huge government contracts, and aid in building pipelines, as well as other handouts, it became a bastion of antigovernment conservatism. In fact, as its wealth grew, the Texas oil patch was the source not only of an astounding amount of campaign lucre but also of a particularly extreme strain of right-wing politics. In his book about the state's oil fortunes, *The Big Rich*, Bryan Burrough speculates that what animated many of the magnates was "the deep-tissue insecurity of the nouveau riche" who were hell-bent on keeping all they had just gained.

If there was a progenitor of Texas's modern-day ultraconservative oil faction, it was Corby Robertson's grandfather Hugh Roy Cullen, who helped make Quintana a billion-dollar enterprise. With roots in the fallen gentry of the Confederacy, he belonged to a band of oilmen that loathed northern liberals, denigrated FDR's administration as the "Jew Deal," and formed a third party whose plank called for "the restoration of the supremacy of the white race." Cullen's political ambitions expanded with his fortune, and in 1952—half a century before the Kochs became giant political spenders—he was the single biggest donor in American politics and a key supporter of Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist crusade. But at the time, his brand of radically right-wing, oil-fueled politics was doomed to be marginalized. Burrough explains that "to succeed in politics Cullen needed a support organization of some kind, but building one was



something he was unwilling or incapable of doing." Half a century later, however, with the "Kochtopus" in place, Cullen's grandson and fellow oilmen would fare far better.

Opposition to curbs on carbon had long been building in the industry. The concept that the earth was warming, and mankind was causing it, first broke into the mainstream media in 1988 when the climate modeler James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, testified before a Senate committee about it, amid a nationwide heat wave. *The New York Times* played his dramatic findings on its front page. During his presidency, George H. W. Bush, like most political leaders of both parties at the time, accepted the science without dispute. He vowed to protect the environment, promising to fight "the Greenhouse Effect with the White House Effect" and sending his secretary of state, James Baker, to the first international summit of climate scientists, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Although Bush was a Republican, he was not an outlier in his party. For decades, the environmental movement had enjoyed bipartisan support.

As public opinion mounted in favor of climate action, however, the fossil fuel industry organized and financed a stealthy state-of-the-art counteroffensive. Despite the agreement of both parties' presidential candidates in 2008 that something needed to be done to stave off climate change, powerful outside interests had been working overtime to erode that consensus. The conservative infrastructure necessary to wage a war of ideas was already in place. All it took to focus the attack on climate science was money. And beneath the surface, it was pouring in.

Kert Davies, the director of research at Greenpeace, the liberal environmental group, spent months trying to trace the funds flowing into a web of nonprofit organizations and talking heads, all denying the reality of global warming as if working from the same script. What he discovered was that from 2005 to 2008, a single source, the Kochs, poured almost \$25 million into dozens of different organizations fighting climate reform. The sum was staggering. His research showed that Charles and David had outspent what was then the world's largest public oil company, ExxonMobil, by a factor of three. In a 2010 report, Greenpeace crowned Koch Industries, a company few had ever heard of at the time, the "kingpin of climate science denial."

The first peer-reviewed academic study on the topic added further detail. Robert Brulle, a Drexel University professor of sociology and environmental science, discovered that between 2003 and 2010 over half a billion dollars was spent on what he described as a massive "campaign to manipulate and mislead the public about the threat posed by climate change." The study examined the tax records of more than a hundred nonprofit organizations engaged in challenging the prevailing science on global warming. What it found was, in essence, a corporate lobbying campaign disguised as a tax-exempt, philanthropic endeavor. Some 140 conservative foundations funded the campaign, Brulle found. During the seven-year period he studied, these foundations distributed \$558 million in the form of 5,299 grants to ninety-one different nonprofit organizations. The money went to think tanks, advocacy groups, trade associations, other foundations, and academic and legal programs. Cumulatively, this private network waged a permanent campaign to undermine Americans' faith in climate science and to defeat any effort to regulate carbon emissions.

The cast of conservative organizations identified by Brulle was familiar to anyone who had followed the funding of the modern conservative movement. Among those he pinpointed as the largest bank-rollers of climate change denial were foundations affiliated with the Koch and Scaife families, both of whose fortunes derived partly from oil. Also heavily involved were the Bradley Foundation and several others associated with hugely wealthy families participating in the Koch donor summits, such as foundations run by the DeVos family, Art Pope, the retail magnate from North Carolina, and John Templeton Jr., a doctor and heir to the fortune of his father, John Templeton Sr., an American mutual fund pioneer who eventually renounced his U.S. citizenship in favor of living in the Bahamas, reportedly saving \$100 million on taxes. Brulle found that as the money was dispersed, three-quarters of the funds from these and other sources financing what he called the "climate change counter-movement" were untraceable.

"Powerful funders are supporting the campaign to deny scientific findings about global warming and raise public doubts about the roots and remedies of this massive global threat. At the very least," he argued, "American voters deserve to know who is behind these efforts."

Instead, by the time Obama took office some of the biggest bank-

rollers of the war against climate science had, if anything, gone further underground. Rather than funding the campaign directly, a growing number of private conservative foundations and donors had begun directing their contributions through an organization called DonorsTrust that in essence became a screen for the right wing, behind which fingerprints disappeared from the cash. Housed in a humdrum brick building in Alexandria, Virginia, DonorsTrust and its affiliate, Donors Capital Fund, were memorably described by *Mother Jones's* Andy Kroll as "the dark-money ATM of the conservative movement."

Founded in 1999 by Whitney Ball, an ardent libertarian from West Virginia who had overseen development of the Koch-founded Cato Institute, DonorsTrust boasted one key advantage for wealthy conservatives. It made their contributions appear to be going to Ball's bland-sounding "donor-advised fund," rather than to the far more controversial conservative groups she distributed it to afterward. The mechanism thus erased the donors' names from the money trail. Meanwhile, the donors retained the same if not bigger charitable tax deductions. As the DonorsTrust Web site advertised, "You wish to keep your charitable giving private, especially gifts funding sensitive or controversial issues. Set up a DonorsTrust account and ask that your gifts remain anonymous. Know that any contributions to your DonorsTrust account that have to be reported to the IRS will not become public information. Unlike with private foundations, gifts from your account will remain as anonymous as you request."

Between 1999 and 2015, DonorsTrust redistributed some \$750 million from the pooled contributions to myriad conservative causes under its own name. Ordinarily, under the law, in exchange for their tax breaks, private foundations such as the Charles G. Koch Foundation were required to publicly disclose the charitable groups to whom they made their grants. It was one way to assure that these public service organizations were in fact serving the public. But donor-advised funds defeated this minimum transparency. Ball argued that the mechanism wasn't suspicious, or even unusual, and that liberals too had their own donor-advised fund, the Tides Foundation. DonorsTrust, the conservative answer to the Tides Foundation, however, soon had four times the funds and a far more strategic board. Its directors consisted of top officials of several of the most important institutions in the conservative movement, including the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the Institute for

Justice, the libertarian legal center whose start-up funds had been supplied by Charles Koch. They functioned as a central committee, coordinating grant making.

What Brulle noticed as he studied the money behind climate change denial was that as criticism of those blocking reform increased around 2007, tens of millions of dollars of contributions from fossil fuel interests like Koch and ExxonMobil seemed to have disappeared from the public fight. Meanwhile, a growing and commensurate amount of anonymous money from DonorsTrust started funding the climate change countermovement. In 2003, for instance, Brulle found that DonorsTrust money was the source of only 3 percent of the 140 groups whose financial records he studied. By 2010, it had grown to 24 percent. The circumstantial evidence suggested that the fossil fuel interests bankrolling climate change denial were deliberately hiding their hands, but Brulle couldn't prove it. "We just have this great big unknown out there about where all the money is coming from," he said.

Relations between the Kochs and DonorsTrust were close. Disclosures showed that the Kochs' foundations made sizable gifts to DonorsTrust, which in turn dispersed large amounts of cash to their favorite nonprofit groups. In 2010, for instance, the single largest grant that it made to any organization was a \$7.4 million gift to the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, whose chairman was David Koch. These funds accounted for about 40 percent of the AFP Foundation's funding that year, belying the notion that it was a genuine grassroots organization. AFP, meanwhile, not only took a lead role in organizing the Tea Party rebellion but also spearheaded a national drive to block action on climate change, aiming in every way possible to merge the two movements.

What much of the stealth funding bought was the dissemination of scientific doubt. The fossil fuel industry thus followed the same deceptive playbook that had been developed by the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton on behalf of the tobacco companies in the 1960s, in order to fabricate uncertainty about the science linking smoking to cancer. As the firm's memo had notoriously put it, "Doubt is our product." To add credibility to their side, the tobacco companies funded a network of official-sounding institutes and smokers' rights groups. This strategy soon characterized the global warming denial movement, too.

shut pivot

1



There was in fact some uncertainty about global warming, as there is about virtually every scientific hypothesis. Probability, rather than absolute certainty, is the nature of the scientific method. But as Dr. James Baker, former head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said in 2005, "There's a better scientific consensus on this than on any issue I know—except maybe Newton's second law of [thermo]dynamics."

Nonetheless, in 1998, the American Petroleum Institute, along with several top oil industry executives and conservative think tank officials, colluded on a secret plan to spend \$2 million to confuse the press and the public about this growing scientific consensus. The plan called for recruiting skeptical scientists and training them in public relations so that they could act as spokesmen, thereby adding legitimacy and cover to the industry's agenda.

According to *The Republican War on Science*, the plan was the brainchild of William O'Keefe, a former chief operating officer at the American Petroleum Institute and a lobbyist for ExxonMobil who became president of the George C. Marshall Institute, a conservative think tank in Virginia. O'Keefe continued to lobby for ExxonMobil while heading the research center. Described by *Newsweek* as a "central cog in the denial machine," the think tank specialized in providing contrarian scientific defenses for dubious clients. Funded by the Scaife, Olin, and Bradley Foundations, among others, it had begun as a center for Cold War hawks vouching for President Reagan's "Star Wars" missile shield, but expanded into debunking other scientific findings that could be construed as liberal or anticorporate. Money from threatened corporate interests, meanwhile, frequently funded the research.

Leading the charge against climate science were two elderly, retired physicists affiliated with the George C. Marshall Institute who had previously defended the tobacco industry, Fred Seitz and Fred Singer. As Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway write in *Merchants of Doubt*, the two Freds had been eminent physicists in their day, but neither had any expertise in either the environment or health, "yet, for years the press quoted these men as experts." What they were in fact expert in was converting a torrent of unseen funding into "fighting facts, and merchandising doubt," according to Oreskes and Conway.

But for the fossil fuel industry, winning over public opinion was no easy feat. As the new millennium dawned, the general public

was broadly in favor of environmental regulations. As late as 2003, over 75 percent of *Republicans* supported strict environmental regulations, according to polls. For help on their public relations campaign, in 2002 the opponents of carbon regulations hired Frank Luntz, who warned that "the environment is probably the issue on which Republicans in general—and President Bush in particular—is most vulnerable." To win, he argued, global warming deniers had to portray themselves as "preserving and protecting" the environment. In his confidential memo "Winning the Global Warming Debate," which eventually leaked to the public, Luntz stressed as his number one point that opponents of carbon regulations "absolutely" must "not raise economic arguments first." In other words, telling the truth about their financial interests was a recipe for losing.

The key, he went on, was to question the science. "You need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate," he advised. So long as "voters believe there is no consensus about global warming within the scientific community," he said, regulations could be forestalled. Language that "worked," he advised, included phrases like "we must not rush to judgment" and "we should not commit America to any international document that handcuffs us." Later, Luntz would switch sides and publicly admit that global warming was a real peril. But in the view of Michael Mann, whose scientific work soon became the target of climate change deniers, Luntz's 2002 memo served as a virtual hunting license. "It basically said you have to discredit the scientists and create fake groups. It doesn't say 'engage in character assassination,' but it was leaning in that direction."

On cue, organizations funded and directed by the Kochs tore into global warming science and the experts behind it. The Cato Institute, the libertarian think tank that Charles Koch founded, put out a steady stream of reports like *Apocalypse Not: Science, Economics, and Environmentalism* and *Climate of Fear: Why We Shouldn't Worry About Global Warming*. A grant from the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation, along with funds from ExxonMobil and the American Petroleum Institute, also helped pay for a non-peer-reviewed study claiming that polar bears, who were mascots of the global warming debate, were not endangered by climate change. It quickly drew criti-

cism from experts in the field like the National Wildlife Federation, which predicted that by 2050 two-thirds of the polar bear population would disappear because their habitat was melting. Nonetheless, the conclusions of the oil-financed study were echoed throughout the network of Koch-funded groups. "There are more polar bears today than there have ever been," Ed Crane, the head of Cato, insisted. He argued that "global warming theories just give the government more control of the economy."

It was the authors of the revisionist polar bear study who also took one of the first shots at Michael Mann's iconic hockey stick study, publishing a takedown in 2003. The credentials of the critics, Sallie Baliunas and Wei-Hock "Willie" Soon, looked impressive. Soon was identified as a scientist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. But it later emerged that he had a doctoral degree in aerospace engineering, not climate science, and had only a part-time, unpaid affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution. Without disclosing it, he had accepted more than \$1.2 million from the fossil fuel industry from 2005 to 2015, including at least \$230,000 from the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation. It was later revealed that some of the payments for his papers were marked as "deliverables" by the fossil fuel companies.

Soon's attack on Mann was so controversial that the editor and several other staffers sympathetic to Mann resigned in protest against *Climate Research*, the small journal that published it. Yet from that moment on, Mann, who was at the time an assistant professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia, had a target on his back.

As the scientific consensus grew in support of global warming, the industry's efforts to fight it became increasingly aggressive. The presidential candidacy of the environmental activist Al Gore in 2000 posed an obvious threat to the fossil fuel industry. That election cycle, Koch Industries and its employees disbursed over \$800,000 in support of his opponent George W. Bush and other Republicans. Koch Industries' political action committee was spending more on federal campaigns than any other oil and gas company, including ExxonMobil. The company's expenditures on Washington lobbying expanded more than twenty-fold from 2004 to 2008, reaching \$20 million. The

Kochs' corporate self-interest had by then thoroughly trumped their youthful disdain for engaging in conventional politics.

Political contributions from oil, gas, and coal companies became increasingly polarized during this period. In 1990, the oil and gas industry's political giving was skewed 60 percent in favor of Republicans and 40 percent in favor of Democrats. By the middle of the Bush years, 80 percent of the industry's giving went to Republicans. Giving from coal-mining firms was even more lopsided, with 90 percent going to Republicans, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

The investment soon paid off. As the Harvard political scientist Theda Skocpol writes in a study of climate change denial, the Republican Party, particularly in the U.S. Congress, soon swung sharply to the right on climate issues. Partisan differences remained small among the general public but grew into a gaping chasm among elected officials.

Conservative opponents of carbon regulations, like James Inhofe, a Republican senator from Oklahoma who received serial campaign donations from Koch Industries PAC, turned the rhetoric up to a boiling point. Global warming, he proclaimed, was "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people." Inhofe's spokesman, Marc Morano, had a reputation as a professional "pit bull," as Mann later put it, derived from his earlier role promoting the claims of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, a group that had smeared John Kerry's military record during his 2004 presidential campaign. At the time, Morano was working for a conservative news outlet that was funded in part by the Scaife, Bradley, and Olin Foundations.

By 2006, Morano had moved on to "swiftboating" scientists. "You've got to name names and you've got to go after individuals," he explained in an interview with the documentary filmmaker Robert Kenner. He seemed to relish making political disagreements personal, taunting and inflaming opponents with a grin in televised showdowns. Morano denounced James Hansen as a "wannabe Unabomber" and Mann as a "charlatan." He said of the scapegoating, "We had a lot of fun with it."

Morano charged that Mann was part of what he called "the 'climate con,'" which he described as "a lavishly funded climate machine that is lobbying for laws and uses every bit of data or new study to proclaim 'it's worse than we thought' or 'we must act now.'" Morano's background was in political science, which he studied at George



Mason University, not climate science. "I'm not a scientist but I play one on TV," he joked. Nonetheless, he asserted authoritatively that "man-made global warming fears are a grand political narrative, not science."

The George W. Bush years, meanwhile, proved a bonanza for the fossil fuel industry, which had thrown its weight behind his election. The coal industry in particular had played a major role in delivering West Virginia's five electoral votes to Bush in 2000, sealing a victory that would have gone to Al Gore had he carried the formerly Democratic state instead. "State political veterans and top White House staffers concur that it was basically a coal-fired victory," *The Wall Street Journal* wrote. The industry was lavishly rewarded. Vice President Dick Cheney, a former CEO of the oil-field equipment and services company Halliburton, personally took charge of energy policy. Bush had vowed during the campaign to act on climate change by limiting greenhouse gas emissions, but once in office Cheney countermanded him. In what Cheney's biographer Barton Gellman describes as a "case study in managing an errant boss," Cheney shifted the administration's position to arguing that the science on global warming was "inconclusive," requiring "more scientific inquiry."

The 2005 energy bill, which Hillary Clinton dubbed at the time the "Dick Cheney Lobbyist Energy Bill," offered enormous subsidies and tax breaks for fossil-fuel-intensive companies. The Bush administration weakened regulations, for instance, on coal-fired power plants. Taking a position that was eventually overturned by the courts, it exempted mercury emissions from regulation under the Clean Air Act, reversing the position taken by the Clinton administration. Fracking got a boost too. Cheney used his influence to exempt it from regulation under the Safe Drinking Water Act, over objections from the Environmental Protection Agency. The fracking industry boomed. Within five years, Devon Energy, Larry Nichols's company, would rank as the fourth-largest producer of natural gas in the United States. Harold Hamm would become a multibillionaire. Cheney's former company Halliburton also became a major player in the fracking industry, illustrating that free-market advocates greatly benefited from government favors.

In all, the Bush energy act contained some \$6 billion in oil and gas subsidies and \$9 billion in coal subsidies. The Kochs routinely cast themselves as libertarians who deplored government taxes, regu-

lations, and subsidies, but records show they took full advantage of the special tax credits and subsidies available to the oil, ethanol, and pipeline business, among other areas of commerce in which they were engaged. In many cases, their lobbyists fought hard to protect these perks. In addition, their companies benefited from nearly \$100 million in government contracts in the decade after 2000, according to a study by Media Matters, a liberal watchdog group.

When Barack Obama took office, the fossil fuel industry was not only eager to preserve its perks but also more militant in its opposition to climate change science than ever. Skocpol notes that 2007 had been a turning point in the fight. That year, Al Gore was awarded both a Nobel Peace Prize and featured in an Academy Award-winning documentary film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. The film featured Mann's hockey stick graph. Gore's acclaim and Mann's simple chart helped raise concern about global warming to a new peak, with 41 percent of the American public saying it worried them "a great deal."

"At this critical juncture—when Americans in general might have been persuaded of the urgency of dealing with global warming," Skocpol notes, opponents fought back with new vigor. The whole ideological assembly line that Richard Fink and Charles Koch had envisioned decades earlier, including the entire conservative media sphere, was enlisted in the fight. Fox Television and conservative talk radio hosts gave saturation coverage to the issue, portraying climate scientists as swindlers pushing a radical, partisan, and anti-American agenda. Allied think tanks pumped out books and position papers, whose authors testified in Congress and appeared on a whirlwind tour of talk shows. "Climate denial got disseminated deliberately and rapidly from think tank tomes to the daily media fare of about thirty to forty percent of the U.S. populace," Skocpol estimates.

Climate contrarians also recruited conservative evangelical Christian leaders, who distrusted government in general and had impressive political and communications clout. One by-product of this pact was an organization in the Washington suburbs called the Cornwall Alliance, which released a hit film in evangelical circles called *Resisting the Green Dragon* that equated environmentalism with worship of a false god. It described global warming as "one of the greatest deceptions of our day." Climate change became such a hot-button issue for Christian fundamentalists that Richard Cizik, a vice president of the National Association of Evangelicals, who was considered among the

most powerful leaders in the movement, was forced to resign in late 2008 after publicly endorsing climate change science.

Before long, public opinion polls showed that concern about climate change among all but hard-core liberals had collapsed. As the 2008 presidential campaign played out, the issue grew increasingly polarized. Just before the election, with the economy in tumult, John McCain, the Republican presidential candidate, reiterated that the climate problem was real. He also said that green jobs would lead the way to economic recovery. But his choice of Sarah Palin as his running mate, one of whose mantras was "Drill, Baby, Drill," indicated just how influential the voice of climate extremism was becoming within the Republican Party.

As Obama took office, America derived over 85 percent of its total energy from oil, gas, and coal. The business was enormous, with profits and influence to match.

Conventional wisdom nonetheless held that Obama's election portended well for environmentalists. Mann, too, was optimistic, but he worried about what he regarded as a "troubling complacency" among his colleagues. He knew that the Obama administration posed two huge threats to the fossil fuel industry, and he doubted the industry would just roll over. The first threat was Obama's Environmental Protection Agency, Lisa Jackson, the EPA administrator, announced that she intended to treat greenhouse gas emissions as hazardous pollutants, regulating them for the first time under the Clean Air Act. It was an authority that the Supreme Court had upheld in 2007. But no previous administration had tried to take on the industry so frontally. The second was the Democrats' plan to introduce the long-incubating cap-and-trade bill to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Even before Obama was inaugurated, Americans for Prosperity had begun taking aim at the cap-and-trade idea, circulating a pledge requiring elected officials to oppose new spending to fight climate change. Koch Industries, meanwhile, began lobbying against government mandates to reduce carbon emissions. Then, soon after Obama was inaugurated, an odd television ad popped up around the country that seemed strangely off message. While most Americans were transfixed by the unfolding economic disaster that was preoccupying the Obama administration in its first few months, out of nowhere,

it seemed, was a discordant television spot about a spoiled slacker named Carlton.

"Hey there," said a louche-looking young man, plucking away at a plate of canapés. "I'm Carlton, the wealthy eco-hypocrite. I inherited my money and attended fancy schools. I own three homes and five cars, but always talk with my rich friends about saving the planet. And I want Congress to spend billions on programs in the name of global warming and green energy, even if it causes massive unemployment, higher energy bills, and digs people like you even deeper into the recession. Who knows? Maybe I'll even make money off of it!"

"Carlton" was, in fact, the creation of Americans for Prosperity, the nonprofit "social welfare" group founded and heavily funded by David Koch, who of course had inherited hundreds of millions of dollars, attended Deerfield Academy, owned four homes (a ski lodge in Aspen; a Belle Epoque mansion, Villa el Sarmiento, in Palm Beach; a sprawling beach house in the Hamptons; and an eighteen-room duplex at 740 Park Avenue in Manhattan), and drove, among other cars, a Land Rover and a Ferrari.

By creating "Carlton" as a decoy, the Kochs and their allies evidently hoped to convince the public that government action on climate change posed a threat to "people like you" or ordinary Americans' pocketbooks. But it of course posed a far greater threat to their own. With ownership of refineries, pipelines, a coal subsidiary (the C. Reiss Coal Company), coal-fired power plants, fertilizer, petroleum coke manufacturing, timber, and leases on over a million acres of untapped Canadian oil sands, Koch Industries alone routinely released some 300 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere a year. Any financial penalty that the government placed on carbon pollution would threaten both their immediate profit margins and the long-term value of the enormous investments they had in still-untapped fossil fuel reserves.

The Kochs themselves said little about their views on climate change at the time.

But in one interview, David Koch suggested that if real, it would prove a boon. "The Earth will be able to support enormously more people because a far greater land area will be available to produce food," he argued. Charles's thinking was reflected in the company's in-house newsletter, which featured an article titled "Blowing Smoke." "Why are such unproven or false claims promoted?" it asked.



Rather than fighting global warming, the newsletter suggested, mankind would be better off adapting to it. "Since we can't control Mother Nature, let's figure out how to get along with her changes," it advised. A similar line was subtly argued in the David H. Koch Hall of Human Origins at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, which opened in March 2010. The message of the exhibition, funded by his fortune, was that the human race had evolved for the better in response to previous environmental challenges and would adapt in the face of climate change, too. An interactive game suggested that if the climate on earth became intolerable, people might build "underground cities" and develop "short, compact bodies" or "curved spines" so that "moving around in tight spaces will be no problem."

Soon the climate issue was creeping into Tea Party rallies, too. As protesters erupted in generalized rage in the spring and summer of 2009, Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks, and the other secretly funded Tea Party groups succeeded to a remarkable extent in channeling the populist anger into the climate fight. At the first big "Tax Day" Tea Party rallies on April 15, 2009, while most protesters were flaying Obama's bank bailouts and stimulus plan, the staff of Americans for Prosperity handed out free T-shirts and signs protesting what would ordinarily seem to be an arcane issue for most people in the streets, the cap-and-trade bill. "The Obama budget proposes the largest excise tax in history," the advocacy group's talking points stressed.

To dramatize the issue, offshoots of Americans for Prosperity sent "Carbon Cops," who pranced into Tea Party rallies pretending to be overreaching emissaries from the EPA, warning that backyard barbecues, churches, and lawn mowers were about to be shut down because of new, stricter interpretations of the Clean Air Act. The advocacy group also launched what it called the Cost of Hot Air Tour to mock the cap-and-trade proposal. It featured a seventy-foot-tall bright red hot-air balloon on whose side was emblazoned a slogan reducing the argument against the cap-and-trade proposal to six scary words. Cap and trade, it said, means "higher taxes, lost jobs, less freedom." Americans for Prosperity sent the balloon to so many states in 2009 that the group's president, Tim Phillips, later admitted, "I rode more hot-air balloons in that year-and-a-half period than I ever want to ride again. I do not like hot-air balloons."

The public campaign was accompanied by a darker covert one. Tom Perriello, a freshman Democratic congressman from Charlottesville, Virginia, who favored the cap-and-trade bill, discovered this in the summer of 2009 when constituents started bombarding his office with angry missives. Reams of faxes arrived from voters, many representing local chapters of ordinarily supportive liberal groups like the NAACP and the American Association of University Women. Under official letterheads, they argued passionately that the cap-and-trade legislation would raise electric bills, hurting the poor. But an effort by the congressman's staff to reach the angry constituents revealed that the letters were forgeries, sent on behalf of a coal industry trade group by Bonner and Associates, a Washington-based public relations firm.

After the fraud was exposed, the firm fired an employee. But it wasn't an isolated incident. Perriello, like many other elected officials that summer, also found himself heckled during town hall meetings. One such heckler called him a "traitor" for supporting the cap-and-trade bill, while another videotaped the showdown. Later one of the disruptive members of the audience admitted to the investigative reporter Lee Fang that he had been put up to it by the Virginia director of Americans for Prosperity. Similar outbursts took place all over the country that summer. Mike Castle, a moderate Republican congressman from Delaware, was accosted by voters demanding to know how he could even consider voting for such a "hoax," according to Eric Pooley's account in *The Climate War*. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Petroleum Institute, and other industry representatives, it turned out, had created a "grassroots" group called Energy Citizens that joined Tea Party organizations in packing the town halls with protesters.

Fanning the flames were the right-wing radio hosts. "It's not about saving the planet," Rush Limbaugh told his audience. "It's not about anything, folks, other than raising taxes and redistributing wealth." Glenn Beck warned listeners it would lead to water rationing. "This is about controlling every part of your life, even taking a shower!" Torquing up the fear, Republicans in Congress quoted from a study by the Heritage Foundation that predicted it would add thousands of dollars to Americans' energy bills and lead to devastating unemployment. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office put out an authoritative study contradicting this, demonstrating that the average

cost to Americans would be the same as buying a postage stamp a day. But John Boehner, the Republican minority leader in the House, dismissed the real numbers, suggesting anyone who believed them could "go ask the unicorns."

Despite the inflammatory atmosphere, the House passed a bill to cap and trade carbon dioxide emissions on June 26, 2009. The process wasn't pretty. It took an extraordinary push from its sponsors, Congressmen Henry Waxman of California and Ed Markey of Massachusetts, and an epic amount of horse-trading between environmentalists and the affected industries. Many environmentalists thought the final product was so flawed that it wasn't worth the trouble. But for those looking for Congress to reach the kind of moderate compromises Obama had been elected to deliver, it was a first step.

Rather than causing elation, though, the victory was clouded by trepidation. Supporters, particularly Democrats from conservative, fossil-fuel-heavy states like Perriello and Rick Boucher of Virginia, feared there would be a steep price to pay. As the threat to the industry grew, so would its determination to stop them.

That fall, television ads began appearing in states like Montana, where the Democratic senator Max Baucus was already under attack from members of the Koch network on the health-care issue. "There is no scientific evidence that CO<sub>2</sub> is a pollutant. In fact higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels than we have today would help the Earth's ecosystems," the ads said, urging viewers to tell Baucus not to vote for the cap-and-trade bill, which would "cost us jobs." The sponsor for the ad was a group curiously called CO<sub>2</sub> Is Green. Quietly funding it, according to Steven Mufson, the energy reporter for *The Washington Post*, was Corbin Robertson, owner of the country's largest private cache of coal.

Robertson's fingerprints were detectable behind another anti-climate-change front group, too, the Coalition for Responsible Regulation. As soon as Obama's EPA took steps to regulate greenhouse gases, the previously unknown group took legal action to stop it. The group's private e-mails surfaced later, revealing how it successfully egged on Texas's bureaucrats to join the lawsuit, despite the state's own climatologist's belief that man-made global warming posed a real danger and that the EPA's scientific findings were solid. Neither Robertson's name nor that of his company appeared in the papers incor-

porating the organization. But its address and its top officers were the same as those of Robertson's company, Quintana.

Following hard on the summer's raucous Tea Party protests, things got uglier in Washington as well. As Obama addressed a joint session of Congress laying out his health-care proposal in September 2009, his speech was interrupted by Joe Wilson, a Republican congressman from South Carolina, shouting, "You lie!" from the well of the House. Congress rebuked Wilson for his extraordinary breach of decorum, but within a month, climate skeptics were echoing Wilson's belligerence. One posted a report titled "UN Climate Reports: They Lie!"

The opposition grew as the Obama administration got ready to head to Copenhagen in December 2009 for its first international climate summit. World leaders expected the United States would finally commit to serious reform. Previously, the United States had declined to join other developed nations in agreeing to limit greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto Protocol. Given Obama's position, time seemed to be running out for the fossil fuel forces and their free-market allies. Then, on November 17, 2009, an anonymous commenter on a contrarian Web site declared, "A miracle has happened."

With lethal timing, an unidentified saboteur had hacked expertly into the University of East Anglia's Web site and uploaded thousands of internal e-mails detailing the private communications of the scientists working in its famed Climatic Research Unit. The climatologists at the British university had been in constant communication with those in America, and now all of their unguarded professional doubts, along with their unguarded and sometimes contemptuous asides about their opponents, stretching all the way back to 1996, were visible for the entire world to read.

Chris Horner, a conservative climate contrarian working at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, another pro-corporate think tank subsidized by oil and other fossil fuel fortunes, including the Kochs, declared, "The blue dress moment may have arrived." But instead of using Monica Lewinsky's telltale garment to impeach Bill Clinton, they would use the words of the world's leading climate scientists to impeach the climate change movement. If edited down and taken out of context, their exchanges could be made to appear to suggest



a willingness to falsify data in order to buttress the idea that global warming was real.

Dubbing the alleged scandal Climategate, they went into overdrive. The web of organizations, funded in part by the Kochs, pounced on the hacked e-mails. Cato scholars were particularly energetic in promoting the story. In the two weeks after the e-mails went public, one Cato scholar alone gave more than twenty media interviews trumpeting the alleged scandal. The story soon spread from obviously slanted venues to the pages of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, adding mainstream credence. Tim Phillips, the president of Americans for Prosperity, jumped on the hacked e-mails, describing them to a gathering of conservative bloggers at the Heritage Foundation as "a crucial tipping point" and adding, "If we win the science argument, I think it's game, set, and match for them."

Eventually, seven independent inquiries exonerated the climate scientists, finding nothing in the e-mails to discredit their work or the larger consensus on global warming. In the meantime, though, Michael Mann's life, along with the environmental movement, was plunged into turmoil.

Mann was among the scientists most roiled by the mysterious hacking incident. Four words in the purloined e-mails were seized upon as evidence that he was a fraud. In describing his research, his colleagues had praised his use of a "trick" that had helped him "hide the decline." Mann's detractors leaped to the conclusion that these words proved that his research was just a "trick" to fool the public and that he had deliberately hidden an actual "decline" in twentieth-century temperatures in order to fake evidence of global warming.

The facts, when fully understood, were very different. It was a British colleague, not Mann, who had written the ostensibly damning words, and when examined in context, they were utterly mundane. The "trick" referred to was just a clever technique Mann had devised in order to provide a backup data set. The "decline" in question was a reference to a decline in available information from certain kinds of tree rings after 1961, which had made it hard to have a consistent set of data. Another scientist, not Mann, had found an alternative source of data to compensate for this problem, which was what was meant by "hide the decline." The only genuinely negative disclosure from the e-mails was that Mann and the other climatologists had agreed among themselves to withhold, rather than share, their research with

some of their critics, whom they disparaged. Given the harassment they had been subjected to, their reasoning was understandable, but it violated the customary transparency expected within the scientific community. Other than that, the "Climategate" scandal was, in other words, not one.

It took no time, nevertheless, for the hacked e-mails to spur a witch hunt. Within days, Inhofe and other Republicans in Congress who were recipients of Koch campaign donations demanded an investigation into Mann. They sent threatening letters to Penn State, where he was by then a tenured professor. Later, Virginia's attorney general, Ken Cuccinelli, a graduate of the George Mason School of Law, would also subpoena Mann's former employer, the University of Virginia, demanding all records relating to his decade-old academic research, regardless of libertarians' professed concerns about government intrusion. Eventually, Virginia's Supreme Court dismissed its own attorney general's case "with prejudice," finding he had misread the law.

By New Year's Eve 2009, Mann was feeling under attack from all sides. Conservative talk radio hosts lambasted him regularly. Contrarian Web sites were lit up with blog posts detailing his iniquity. A self-described former CIA officer contacted colleagues in Mann's department offering a \$10,000 reward to any who would provide dirt on him, "confidentiality assured." Soon after, Mann asserts, a think tank called the National Center for Public Policy Research led a campaign to get Mann's National Science Foundation grants revoked. As Mann recounts in his book *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars*, two conservative nonprofit law firms, the Southeastern Legal Foundation and the Landmark Legal Foundation, brought legal actions aimed at him. The think tank and the two law firms were funded by combinations of the same small constellation of family fortunes through their private charitable foundations. Omnipresent were Bradley, Olin, and Scaife.

Charles Koch's foundation also was engaged in piling on. It helped subsidize the Landmark Legal Foundation. The Kochs evidently admired Landmark's president, Mark Levin, a longtime associate of the former attorney general Edwin Meese III. In 2010, Americans for Prosperity hired Levin to promote it on his nationally syndicated talk radio show, thereby copying the deal that FreedomWorks had struck with Glenn Beck. Levin was a curious choice of spokesman for

the buttoned-down, erudite Koch brothers. His style was incendiary, even rude. He later called Kenneth Vogel, the *Politico* reporter who broke the news of the deal with Americans for Prosperity, "a vicious S.O.B." and told a female caller, "I don't know why your husband doesn't put a gun to his temple. Get the Hell out of here!" His attacks on Obama's policies were similarly heated, particularly regarding climate change. He said Mann "and the other advocates of man-made global warming" did not "know how to conduct a correct statistical analysis" and accused "enviro-statists" of inventing global warming in order to justify a tyrannical government takeover. Their "pursuit," he claimed, "after all, is power, not truth."

An especially grave attack on Mann's livelihood was launched, meanwhile, by yet another group, the Commonwealth Foundation for Public Policy Alternatives in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The self-described think tank belonged to a national web of similar conservative organizations known as the State Policy Network. Much of Commonwealth's financial support came through DonorsTrust and Donors Capital Fund, making it impossible to identify the individual backers. But because it was based in Scaife's home state, Commonwealth had particularly deep ties to his family foundations. Michael Gleba, the chair of Commonwealth's board of directors, was also the president of the Sarah Scaife Foundation and treasurer of Scaife's Carthage Foundation and a trustee of both. This arrangement gave Commonwealth unusual clout, particularly over Pennsylvania's state legislature.

The Pennsylvania think tank waged a campaign to get Mann fired and successfully lobbied Republican allies in the legislature to threaten to withhold Penn State's funding until the university took "appropriate action" against Mann. With the public university's finances held hostage, it agreed to investigate Mann. Meanwhile, the think tank ran a campaign of attack ads against him in the university's daily newspaper, as well as helping to organize an anti-Mann campus protest.

"It was nerve-racking to be under that pressure at Penn State," recalls Mann. "There were these nebulous accusations based on stolen e-mails. Ordinarily, it would have been clear there were no grounds for investigation. But it was promoted by the Commonwealth Foundation, which seems to almost have a stranglehold on Republicans in the state legislature. I knew I had done nothing wrong, but there was this uncertain future hanging over me. There was so much political

pressure being brought to bear on Penn State I wasn't sure if they'd cave."

In the meantime, death threats began appearing in Mann's inbox. "I tried to shield my family as much as I could," he says. But this became impossible when one day he opened a suspicious-looking letter without thinking, only to have it release a cloud of white powder into his office. Fearing anthrax, he called the campus police. Soon the FBI quarantined his office behind crime tape, disrupting the whole department. The powder turned out to be harmless, but, Mann recalls, "it was a spectacle. There was a point where I had the hotline number for the chief of police on our fridge, in case my wife saw anything unusual. It felt like there was a very calibrated campaign of vilification to the extent where the crazies might go after us."

It was particularly disturbing to Mann that there appeared to be overlap between hard-core climate change deniers and Second Amendment enthusiasts, whipped up, he came to believe, by "cynical special interests." Mann says, "The disaffected, the people who have trouble putting dinner on the table, were being misled into believing that action on climate change meant that 'They' want to take away your freedom and probably your guns, too. There was a very skillful campaign to indoctrinate them," he said. "We've seen Second Amendment enthusiasts take action against abortion doctors. There's an attempt to paint us as villains in the same way."

He was not alone in receiving death threats. Several climatologists, he said, including Phil Jones, director of the hacked Climatic Research Unit in Great Britain, felt compelled to hire personal bodyguards. "Luckily," Mann relates, both the Penn State investigations—which the legislature required to be done a second time in greater depth—and another one by the inspector general of the National Science Foundation, essentially the highest scientific body in the United States, exonerated Mann. "It lasted two years. It came out well. But two years is a long time," he says. "I never imagined I'd be at the center of some contentious debate. It's not why you study what I did. What worries me," he adds, "is that this circus-like atmosphere may have scared off many young scientists. It actually has a chilling effect. It prevents scientists from participating in the public discourse, because they fear they, or their department head, will be threatened."

By the time Mann's scientific research was upheld, underscoring his integrity as well as the genuine danger posed by climate change, it



hardly mattered. By then, the percentage of Americans who believed the world was warming had dropped a precipitous fourteen points from 2008. Almost half of those polled by Gallup in 2010—48 percent—believed that fears of global warming were “generally exaggerated,” the highest numbers since the polling firm first posed the question more than a decade before. Watching from afar, Mann could see no cause for the United States to move in the opposite direction from science other than money. “In the scientific community, the degree of confidence in climate change is rising,” he said. “In the public, it’s either steady or falling. There’s a divergence. That wedge is what the industry has bought.”

Although the cap-and-trade bill moved to the Senate, it was already dead. At first, Lindsey Graham, the independent-minded Republican from South Carolina, took a courageous leadership role in the fight, offering to co-sponsor the legislation with the Democrat John Kerry and the Independent Joe Lieberman after declaring, to the surprise and delight of environmentalists, “I have come to conclude that greenhouse gases and carbon pollution” are “not a good thing.”

Graham, however, feared pressure from his right flank. He warned the Democrats that they had to move fast, before Fox News caught wind of the process. As he feared, in April 2010, Fox News attacked him for backing a “gas tax.” A vitriolic Tea Party activist immediately held a press conference in his home state denouncing him as “gay,” and a political front group called American Solutions launched a negative campaign against him for his climate stance in South Carolina. American Solutions, it later turned out, was funded by huge fossil fuel and other corporate interests, many of whom were in the Koch fold. Among them were Larry Nichols of Devon Energy, Dick Farmer of Cintas, Stan Hubbard of Hubbard Broadcasting, and Sheldon Adelson, chairman of the Las Vegas Sands Corporation. Within days of the drubbing, Graham withdrew from the process. Harry Reid, the Democratic majority leader from Nevada, dealt the final blow to the cap-and-trade bill. Facing a tough reelection himself and worried about making Democrats walk the plank for the bill, he refused after Graham backed out to bring the legislation to the Senate floor for a vote.

Opponents of climate change reform got their wish. “Gridlock

is the greatest friend a global warming skeptic has, because that’s all you really want,” Morano later acknowledged. “There’s no legislation we’re championing. We’re the negative force. We are just trying to stop stuff.”

Asked why the climate legislation failed, Al Gore told *The New Yorker’s* Ryan Lizza, “The influence of special interests is now at an extremely unhealthy level. It’s at a point,” he said, “where it’s virtually impossible for participants in the current political system to enact any significant change without first seeking and gaining permission from the largest commercial interests who are most affected by the proposed change.”

As the first legislation aimed at addressing climate change sputtered out, the Massey mine in West Virginia collapsed in a methane explosion, killing twenty-nine miners. Soon after, a leak from the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico triggered the largest accidental oil spill in history, killing and causing birth defects in record numbers of marine animals. A grand jury would charge the owner of the Upper Big Branch mine with criminally conspiring to evade safety regulations, while a federal judge would find the oil rig’s principal owner, British Petroleum, guilty of gross negligence and reckless conduct.

Meanwhile, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was already above the level that scientists said risked causing runaway global warming. Obama acknowledged at this point that he knew “the votes may not be there right now,” but, he vowed, “I intend to find them in the coming months.” The conservative money machine, however, was already far ahead of him on an audacious new plan to try to ensure that he would never succeed.