

DeSmogBlog, Dr. Peter Gleick, and the Fakegate Scandal

By David Burton, www.sealevel.info

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If you spend any time studying the climate change debate, you will come across DeSmogBlog, a website devoted to smearing anyone who deviates from the Al Gore/Greenpeace line on climate change. However, you might not be aware of the fact that **the climate activists at DeSmogBlog have a long history of dishonesty**. DeSmogBlog has the same degree of trustworthiness as “Infowars,” “HotWhopper,” and “Principia-Scientific” (i.e., no credibility at all). Smearing good people with lies is their M.O..

The founders of DeSmogBlog were funded with “dirty money” from [convicted](#) Internet gambling [felon John Lefebvre](#).

Their co-founder, Ross Gelbspan, is a scam artist who intermittently claims to be a Pulitzer Prize winner. He’s not. Seven other reporters at the *Boston Globe* won the Prize, and he worked with them, and he apparently thinks he should have shared their Prize, so he just pretends that he did.

I’m not kidding; here are a couple of articles about it:

<http://gelbspanfiles.com/?p=434>

<https://junkscience.com/2014/05/ross-gelbspan-is-still-not-a-pulitzer-winner-not-even-for-just-4-days/>

Sympathetic former colleagues at the *Globe* tried to cover for Gelbspan, declaring him to be a “co-recipient” of the Prize, but that just proves they’re dishonest, too. The *Globe* doesn’t get to decide who the recipients of the Pulitzer Prize are, of course.

DeSmogBlog also conspired with Dr. Peter Gleick to smear The Heartland Institute with a **forged** “strategy memo,” in the **“Fakegate”** scandal.

In fact, DeSmogBlog still, to this very day, claims that **Gleick’s forgery** is legitimate. (I don’t think anyone else of consequence does.) They have a copy of it on their web site, linked from a [DeSmogBlog disinformation page which begins as follows](#):

Heartland Insider Exposes Institute’s Budget and Strategy

By Richard Littlemore • Tuesday, February 14, 2012 - 13:14

An anonymous donor calling him (or her)self “Heartland Insider” has released the Heartland Institute’s budget, fundraising plan, its Climate Strategy for 2012 and sundry other documents (all attached) that prove all of the worst allegations that have been levelled against the organization...

At the same time that DeSmogBlog was disseminating and defending Gleick's **forged & stolen** Heartland documents, their other co-founder, Jim Hoggan, was busy working on a book which lamented the "toxic rhetoric" and "the divisive state of public debate,"

<https://www.amazon.com/Im-Right-You%C2%92re-Idiot-Discourse/dp/0865718172>

How's that for truly world-class chutzpah?

The only reason Gleick didn't go to prison is that the sympathetic U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois stonewalled and refused to prosecute, until the statute of limitations had run out.

Adding extraordinary hypocrisy to his sins, Gleick was the Chairman of the American Geophysical Union's Scientific Ethics Task Force when he committed fraud, identity theft, forgery & defamation to smear Heartland! Believe it or not!

SYNOPSIS OF THE "FAKEGATE" CRIME:

First, Gleick looked up Heartland's Board of Directors, and picked a Board Member who lived out of town (i.e., far from Chicago), to be his identity theft victim. (I can guess who it was, but don't know with 100% certainty.) Then Gleick created a gmail account in the name of that person.

On Jan. 22, 2012, Gleick first emailed Heartland, using the new gmail account, impersonating his identity theft victim. This is what he wrote:

Can you please add (or have the appropriate staff member add) this personal email address to the Board mailing list for all future Board communications? Do not delete my _____ address -- just add this one as a duplicate.

And send a reply here, confirming?

Thank you,

Heartland Institute Board Member

On Feb. 2, 2012, Gleick again emailed Heartland, impersonating his identity theft victim. He wrote:

Can you update me on the current Board schedule, if there are any dates I should know about?

Also, can you send me the most recent Board minutes and agenda materials, if they are available?

Thank you.

On Feb. 4, 2012, Gleick again emailed Heartland, impersonating his identity theft victim. He wrote:

Thank you. I see the notice of the last meeting and the agenda, but not the actual minutes or the handouts (if copies are available electronically).

I will get back to you on the schedule when I'm back in the office.

(Those are the highlights; if you want the rest of the email conversation Heartland has it on their <http://fakegate.org/> site.)

In response, Heartland sent him all the materials he requested.

Gleick hoped to find something damaging, which he could use to expose wrongdoing by Heartland. But he was disappointed: there wasn't anything like that.

So Gleick fabricated it. Using information from those stolen documents, he forged an additional document, which he entitled "*Confidential Memo: 2012 Heartland Climate Strategy.*" The forged document contained real, confidential information, taken from the stolen documents, interspersed with fake evil plans, taken from Gleick's imagination.

An example of the latter was Heartland's supposed plot for "*dissuading teachers from teaching science.*" Believe it or not, those were the actual words Gleick used, when trying to impersonate an unnamed Heartland leader. Apparently Gleick suffers from the bizarre delusion that climate realists actually oppose science, and actually talk like that.

Gleick (anonymously) **via DeSmogBlog** (supposedly not knowing where it came from) then distributed the entire trove of documents, including both the stolen ones and the forged one, far and wide, to smear Heartland.

CHRONOLOGY OF "FAKEGATE":

Nov. 22, 2011: "AGU's new task force on scientific ethics and integrity begins work," by Peter Gleick (chairman) and Randy Townsend:
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1029/2011EO470009/full>

Jan. 22 thru Feb. 4, Gleick uses a fake email account to impersonate a Heartland Board Member, to steal the documents intended for that Board member (see "Synopsis," above).

Feb. 14, 2012, **DeSmogBlog releases the documents**, the stolen ones and the fake one, under the headline, "Heartland Insider Exposes Institute's Budget and Strategy." Hundreds of other outlets picked up the story. To this day, more than five years later, DeSmogBlog still pretends that the forgery is genuine:
<https://www.desmogblog.com/heartland-insider-exposes-institute-s-budget-and-strategy>

On Feb. 16, 2012 Steve Mosher (of Berkeley Earth / BEST) recognized Gleick as the probable forger, from distinctive characteristics of his writing style, which led to his identification as the source of the documents:
<http://rankexploits.com/musings/2012/tell-me-whats-horrible-about-this/#comment-89957>
<https://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/02/15/notes-on-the-fake-heartland-document/#comment-895176>

On Feb. 20, 2012 Ross Kaminsky wrote in *The American Spectator* about his suspicion that Gleick was the forger:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20120220214839/https://spectator.org/blog/2012/02/17/theft-and-apparent-forgery-of>

Feb. 20, 2012 (and updated w/ formatting changes only, the next day): Gleick's attempt at damage-control, in *Huffington Post* — he confessed to stealing the documents, but not to the forgery:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-h-gleick/heartland-institute-documents_b_1289669.html

AGU's Feb. 21, 2012 announcement that Gleick had resigned as chair of AGU's Task Force on Scientific Ethics:

https://web.archive.org/web/20120224171347/http://www.agu.org/news/press/pr_archives/2012/2012-11.shtml

Feb. 21, 2012: *The Atlantic* had a pretty good article on Gleick's crimes, though they didn't mention DeSmogBlog's role:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/02/peter-gleick-confesses-to-obtaining-heartland-documents-under-false-pretenses/253395/>

Feb. 22, 2012: NPR All Things Considered soft-peddles Gleick's crimes:

<http://www.npr.org/2012/02/22/147263862/climate-scientist-admits-to-lying-leaking-documents>

AGU on Feb. 27, 2012: "We Must Remain Committed to Scientific Integrity" — while whitewashing Gleick's crimes:

<http://about.agu.org/president/presidents-message-archive/remain-committed-scientific-integrity/>

Dec. 5, 2012: AGU honors Gleick with an invited speaking engagement at AGU12:

<https://climateaudit.org/2013/01/05/agu-honors-gleick/>

<http://fakegate.org/american-geophysical-union-welcomes-back-disgraced-peter-gleick-gives-him-speaking-slot/>

Feb. 8, 2013: National Geographic rewards Gleick for his crimes with a new blog at their ScienceBlogs subsidiary:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20130215065235/http://scienceblogs.com:80/significantfigures/index.php/2013/02/08/welcome-to-significant-figures/>

Feb. 2017: Federal five-year statute of limitations expires, with U.S. Attorney Zachary Fardon still refusing to bring charges against Gleick for his crimes.

GLEICK'S IMPLAUSIBLE "DAMAGE CONTROL" STORY

Gleick eventually confessed to impersonating a Heartland Board member, to steal the genuine documents.

Gleick's "damage control" story is that he (and, inexplicably, he alone) was anonymously snail-mailed a copy of the "strategy memo," and that is what prompted him to impersonate a Board member and steal the documents: to try to verify that the strategy memo was genuine.

However that is implausible, because:

1. There's no evidence at all that the forged "strategy memo" even existed before Gleick stole the other documents. We know from the timestamp on it that it was scanned after Gleick stole the other documents.
2. The forgery which Gleick distributed relied on information in the documents that he, himself, had stolen. By including bits of information from the stolen documents, he attempted to make the forged document seem genuine. It is not plausible that the forgery could have been created without access to the documents which he stole, and nobody else outside of Heartland had those documents.
3. Gleick apparently has not shown anyone the "original" copy document or envelope, which he claimed he received, nor offered to cooperate with any sort of investigation to determine who actually wrote it or sent it to him.
4. It was the idiosyncrasies of Gleick's own writing style in the forged "strategy memo," noticed by Steve Mosher (of Berkeley Earth / BEST) and others, which first cast suspicion on Gleick as the likely forger. Here's Mosher:

<http://rankexploits.com/musings/2012/tell-me-whats-horrible-about-this/#comment-89946>

(Also saved here: http://sealevel.info/The_Blackboard-Tell_me_whats_horrible_about_this.html)

<http://planet3.org/2012/02/20/hmm/#comment-3850>

That is obviously compelling evidence that Gleick, himself, wrote it.

5. The only evidence of any sort to suggest that the forged strategy memo existed before Gleick stole the other documents is Gleick's own word – and he's a proven liar and felon with a very strong motive to lie about it.

Lies are like fleas on a dog: if you find one, you can be pretty sure there are others. Luke 16:10

ARTICLES ABOUT "FAKEGATE":

The Atlantic

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/02/leaked-docs-from-heartland-institute-cause-a-stir-but-is-one-a-fake/253165/>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/02/peter-gleick-confesses-to-obtaining-heartland-documents-under-false-pretenses/253395/>

American Spectator

<http://web.archive.org/web/20121015154927/https://spectator.org/blog/2012/02/17/theft-and-apparent-forgery-of>

WUWT

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/02/24/heartland-institute-releases-peter-gleick-emails-detailing-fraud-identity-theft/>

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/03/14/professional-forensic-stylometric-analysis-of-the-fake-heartland-climate-strategy-memo-concludes-peter-gleick-is-the-likely-forger/>

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/02/14/heartland-releases-the-peter-gleick-legal-brief/>

<https://wattsupwiththat.com/2016/12/04/unscientific-americans/>

<http://tinyurl.com/gleick-forgery>

Steve McIntyre

<http://climateaudit.org/2012/02/20/peter-gleick-confesses/>

<https://climateaudit.org/2012/02/25/gleick-and-americas-dumbest-criminal/>

Revkin / NY Times

<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/20/peter-gleick-admits-to-deception-in-obtaining-heartland-climate-files/>

<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/22/more-on-peter-gleick-and-the-heartland-files/>

RedState

http://www.redstate.com/moe_lane/2012/02/22/more-on-the-peter-gleick-fakegate-memo/

Samizdata blog

<https://www.samizdata.net/2012/02/the-gleick-earw-1/>

<https://www.samizdata.net/2012/03/why-agw-advocat/>

<https://www.samizdata.net/2012/06/post-74/>

<http://www.samizdata.net/?s=gleick>

Heartland

<http://heartland.org/press-releases/2012/02/20/statement-heartland-institute-peter-gleick-confession>

<https://www.heartland.org/news-opinion/news/gleick-other-global-warming-alarmists-poison-discussion>

<http://fakegate.org/>

<http://fakegate.org/bast-on-forged-memo/>

<http://heartland.org/press-releases/2013/02/14/why-isnt-pacific-institutes-peter-gleick-jail>

This is a 57-page slide presentation (with some redactions) produced by Heartland's legal counsel, Jones Day. It is entitled, "Criminal Referral of Dr. Peter H. Gleick Talking Points." It was presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois, and Heartland asked that Gleick be prosecuted for his crimes. The U.S. Attorney, a Democrat, declined to prosecute Gleick:

https://www.heartland.org/_template-

assets/documents/publications/criminal_referral_of_peter_gleick.pdf

Google finds even more:

<http://tinyurl.com/gleick-forgery2>

AFTERMATH OF “FAKEGATE”:

If you want a great example of “fake news,” there’s the story about how Gleick was supposedly “cleared” of suspicion of being the forger. This story is by *The Guardian’s* “US environment correspondent,” Suzanne Goldenberg:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/may/21/peter-gleick-cleared-heartland>

Opening paragraph:

“A review has cleared the scientist Peter Gleick of forging any documents in his expose of the rightwing Heartland Institute’s strategy and finances, the Guardian has learned.”

You might wonder “what review?” Or “by whom?” Or “how is a ‘review’ different from an ‘investigation?’”

In fact, Goldenberg didn’t give a source because she didn’t have one. Although Goldenberg didn’t admit it in the article, she got the information from Gleick’s own organization, the inexcusable Pacific Institute, and that organization didn’t say who created the “review” which supposedly cleared Gleick, and they never even released a copy of the report from that “review.”

It turns out there was no investigation at all. They just hired a lawyer named Gary Scholick, a specialist in labor law, with no apparent relevant expertise w/r/t forgery, to supposedly write a “review” of the documentation which they gave him.

I say “supposedly,” because that review was never released, and, to this day, Scholick is not mentioned anywhere on the Pacific Institute web site:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Scholick+site%3Apacinst.org>

My guess is that the “review,” if it actually existed at all, was just a few sentences in a letter, saying that Scholick found no evidence in the material he was given, blah, blah blah.

Here’re a couple of WUWT articles on it:

<https://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/06/06/pacific-institute-reinstates-peter-gleick/>

<https://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/06/07/heartland-institute-responds-to-pacific-institutes-reinstatement-of-gleick-cites-federal-criminal-prosecution/>

It sure makes it hard to take *The Grauniad* seriously.

Note that Gleick's crimes didn't seem to hurt his career much.

Pacific Institute quickly reinstated him as their President (now "President Emeritus").

The AGU let him "resign" for "personal, private reasons" as chair of AGU's Task Force on Scientific Ethics, and did not revoke his AGU membership.

The NAS did not revoke his membership, either.

Scientific American [whitewashed the affair](#), with an interview with Gavin Schmidt, in which he minimized the significance of the scandal, attacked Heartland, and didn't even mention the forgery.

Gleick was subsequently rewarded by *National Geographic's* (now defunct) ScienceBlog subsidiary, with a blog there. He was their resident "scientist, innovator, and communicator" on "global water, environment, climate" (and presumably identity theft, fraud, character assassination, and forgery):

<http://scienceblogs.com/significantfigures/index.php/author/pgleick/>

Michael Mann still loves him:

<https://mobile.twitter.com/MichaelEMann/status/937042789006761985>

HuffPo loves him, too:

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-h-gleick/>

LESSONS FROM "FAKEGATE":

I think the dishonesty of Climate Movement activists like DeSmogBlog and Peter Gleick is a lot like the dishonesty of the Piltdown Man hoaxer.

I don't doubt that the Piltdown hoaxer truly believed that men and primates are descended from a common evolutionary ancestor. He just ginned up a little fake evidence to bolster the case for what he was already sure was true... just like Climate Movement activists like Gleick forge documents, manipulate & withhold data, blackball skeptics, etc., to bolster the case for what they are already sure is true. They don't even think of themselves as dishonest, they're just using a little deception in support of a greater truth.

The response of those duped by such deceptions is instructive, too. When a belief has been held for long time (or even for a short time, for less-than-careful thinkers), it settles into the mind, and becomes comfortable there, and is reluctant to leave. People who have been convinced of something by false evidence, if they have held that belief for a long time, rarely become unconvinced of it if the evidence is later shown to be false.

That's why The Big Lie works so well.

How many people changed their opinions about evolution, in even the tiniest detail, when Piltdown Man was revealed to be a hoax? How many CAGW true believers are now doubters in the wake of the [Climategate](#) and Fakegate revelations?

Few. Precious few.

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CO2 Coalition site: www.co2coalition.org

My personal site: www.sealevel.info