

Smoke and Fumes The Climate Change Cover-Up

A film by Johan von Mirbach

Produced by a&o buero filmproduktion, Robert Tasso Pütz and Tristan Chytroschek

Editor: Gudrun Wolter

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With Donald Trump, an outmoded view of climate change has taken hold of the White House again. Great news for oil companies such as Exxon and Shell. They have been secretly financing scientific studies and campaigns, which are talking down climate change and have been influencing the public debate for 60 years.

New documents prove that since 1957, these companies have known that burning fossil fuels changes the climate - their own, strictly secret research had revealed this. But the US oil companies did not only carry out research and then concealed their results. Since 1963, Exxon and Shell engineers have been using their knowledge about climate change to gear up for a warming planet: They built higher and sturdier oil rigs to compensate for rising sea levels and more severe storms. Pipelines in the Arctic were anchored more firmly because of the melting permafrost.

"Climate change was a huge thing at the time," says geophysicist Edward Garvey, who worked for Exxon from 1978-1983. "Exxon researched in all directions, CO2 emissions, storm forecasts, melting permafrost. And then, overnight, all research programmes were discontinued. That's so frustrating."

Instead, the companies did exactly the opposite: they commissioned counter-studies, which were widely disseminated via lobby groups. They deliberately financed research to discredit their own results, tried to explain climate change through sunspots or deny it altogether. They stressed statistical errors and uncertainties. Climate change deniers still work like this today.

"For me, this is the biggest scandal in human history," says Carroll Muffett, Chairman of the Center for International Environmental Law in Washington, an NGO dealing with environmental law.

Meanwhile, two public prosecutors and several counties in the United States have started investigations against Exxon and other oil companies for deliberately misleading the public on the subject of climate change.

Are climate change deniers in Germany using the same arguments? Do they publish the same doubtful studies? The documentary also addresses these questions.

A story about the biggest cover-up in history, which lasted for 60 years and is only now being revealed.