



# The Working Press

## Who needs the 'he said, she said' of scientific debate?

*An L.A. Times Pulitzer Prize reporter's curious notions about 'reporting' on the environment.*

GEORGE NEUMAYR

MAJOR MEDIA reporters and editors usually say they approach opinions impartially, giving "both sides of the story" and merely reporting opinions, not favoring or even distinguishing among them. This stance is transparent nonsense. In reality, these reporters and editors magisterially decide which "experts" deserve to opine in their stories and invariably the opinions they select fall on the liberal side of the spectrum. The sources they choose to represent the "conservative side" are usually not particularly conservative, and that serves the purposes of the major media nicely by ensuring that debates slide ever leftward.

Kenneth Weiss is a *Los Angeles Times* reporter who covers the environment. He did that scintillating series on the deterioration of the world's oceans that wowed the Pulitzer Prize Committee. In an October interview with *PRWeek*, Weiss suspended the above-mentioned charade and bluntly said that "one thing that I've learned is that all opinions are not created equal."

So, even Pulitzer Prize-grade reporters sift and grade what they hear, choosing what they consider to be the "better" opinions. But how do they do that non-ideologically? That subject is rarely broached. But surely the reporter must apply *some* criteria, *some* philosophical standards, when separating the more worthy opinions from the less. How else could "all opinions are not created equal" become a quotable principle for Mr. Weiss? In his own case, for instance, Weiss has decided that the opinions of "scientists" who agree with the theses of the environmentalist movement are so stupendously wise that he needn't expose his readers to the opinions of scientists who *don't* adhere to that "consensus."

Asked by *PRWeek* — "How do you avoid falling into

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the pro vs. con rut with environmental issues?" — he responded: "For the [oceans] series I just stripped away all that 'he said, she said,' because there wasn't room, and also because I think the reader turns off very quickly when they get that. They just throw up their hands and say this is all so confusing, why should I pay attention to this?" So Weiss will decide the truth for his readers — remember, this fellow is supposed to be in some sense a "science" correspondent, one for whom scientific debate is just that same ol', same ol', "he said, she said" stuff, tediously reminiscent of the endless squabbling charges and counter-charges thrown back and forth in divorce court.

WELL, AT least he is being honest about his reporting, if not about the environment. Would that more liberal reporters just came out and said they are in the business of deciding which opinions readers should hear. Not that Weiss is *entirely* alone in owning up to the belief that reporters should recognize some opinions as more equal than others. I once heard Jacob Weisberg of *Slate.com*, while appearing at a media forum aired on C-SPAN, say that major newspapers should never quote proponents of Intelligent Design in their coverage of debates over evolution. To do so, he said, is the equivalent of treating the opinions of segregationists with deference in stories about civil rights. Why, he said, give bad opinions "equal time"?

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*Los Angeles Times* Editor Jim O'Shea continues to disseminate memos on the paper's sagging fortunes. The staff memos, which *Laobserved.com* methodically culls, appeared to represent the paper's deep thinking on its

## THE FRONT LINE

**I**slamo-fascism Awareness Week (Oct. 22 to 26), sponsored by the **David Horowitz Freedom Center** [[horowitzfreedomcenter.org](http://horowitzfreedomcenter.org)] and supported by student activists across America, and **Capitol Resource Family Impact's** launching of a referendum campaign [<http://saveourkids.net>] against Senate Bill 777, **Sheila Kuehl's** assault (fully supported by new-left Gov. **Arnold Schwarzenegger**) on the free speech rights, not to mention the sanity, of California's long-suffering public school students. Both events show California grass roots conservative activism at its best: as a vibrant force for freedom.

**H**orowitz, working with hundreds of student activists at more than 100 campuses nationally, spurred interest, discussion, thought, and (from the fascist left) tyrannical reaction. California was well-represented in the program with events scheduled at USC, UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, San Francisco State, San Diego State, and Pepperdine.

**B**est-selling author **Ann Coulter** (*If Democrats had any brains, they'd be Republicans*) is Ann's current book, typically titled to infuriate lefties) addressed some 225 students who filled USC's Annenberg Auditorium (in the University's communications school), along with hundreds more in an overflow crowd watching her on closed-circuit TV outside. At Cal Berkeley, **Nonie Darwish**, an Arab woman, told students

that Islamofascism is an "ideology of violence and hatred" — and then had her point illustrated, punctuated, and proven by obligingly loud, foul-mouthed leftists who paraded through and around the event providing excellent Stalinist/Hitlerite/Baathist models of thuggery.

**W**e set out," Mr. Horowitz wrote in his blog, "to start a discussion about Islamofascism and the oppression of women in Islam (and the deafening silence of Women's



Studies Departments over that oppression) and we have done just that. On 114 campuses and in the national press, on national TV, and across the Internet and the talk-radio network, people are talking about Islamofascism and the oppression of women in Islam and the silence of Women's Studies departments about that oppression (e.g., 383,000 web references and counting.)"

**C**alifornia's increasingly strident anti-family governor signed SB 777: a thought-control bill similar to last year's S.B. 1437, also by Kuehl, that the gov-

ernor vetoed. 777 says "no teacher shall give instruction nor shall a school district sponsor any activity that promotes a discriminatory bias because" of homosexuality, transsexuality, bisexuality or transgender status. For the left, and the courts, and the major media, to disagree about a principle or idea is construed as an attack on any people who profess the principle or live by the idea. Thus if you say homosexuality is immoral you are supposed to be attacking Sheila Kuehl personally, along with anyone else she claims to speak for, and she wants to be able to gag you for it. (Of course, if she says Christianity is immoral, well, that's merely an exercise in free speech.)

**F**or once, pro-family conservatives are doing something concrete to oppose this fever-swamp extremism. Go to [Saveourkids.net](http://Saveourkids.net) for more information about helping overturn the new Kuehl-Schwarzenegger Axis of Intolerance. And please ignore the defeatism about this noble effort emanating from the George B. McClellan contingent of the social issues conservative movement. Like the good general who drove Lincoln crazy by never being quite ready to fight, a subsection of the pro-family movement seems always ready to pull the plug on any political action as being too soon or too late, too little or too much. The schools have been pulled apart little by little; they will be restored the same way — just what Islamofascism Awareness Week and CRFI's SB 777 Referendum project are doing. Good for them. CFR