



Suppressing Free Speech

I receive loads of mail in response to my weekly nationally syndicated column. Some recent mail has been quite disturbing. Here's a sample: "Given your support of freedom on a great many issues, I wish to bring to your attention the following George Mason University staff who have formally called on the President to use RICO statutes to punish organizations and individuals who dispute the 'consensus' of the" Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The writer goes on to say, "I am appalled that anyone associated with George Mason would so misuse the power of the Federal government." The writer names [20 signatories](#), six of whom are GMU faculty members.



This letter writer's problem, like that of many others, is a misperception of George Mason University, where I am an economics professor. We have a distinguished economics department that can boast of having had two homegrown Nobel Prize winners on our faculty. Plus, we have a worldwide reputation as a free market economics department. The university can also boast of a distinguished law school with professors who, in contrast with many other law schools, have respect for the United States Constitution and the rule of law. We can boast of the excellent Law & Economics Center, too.

With this kind of intellectual firepower at George Mason University, most people assume that it is like its namesake, a libertarian or free market university. Little could be further from the truth. My university, at which I've toiled for 35 years, has a political makeup like that of most other universities — middle of the road to liberal/progressive. What distinguishes my liberal/progressive colleagues is that they are courteous and civilized, unlike many of those at universities such as the University of Massachusetts and the University of California, Berkeley.

So I investigated this call for the use of RICO, or the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act. It turns out that Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., has called for the criminal investigation of people and organizations who are seen as global warming deniers. This would include lawsuits against the coal and oil industries, certain think tanks, and other organizations that question the global warming religion. By the way, so that Whitehouse and his gang don't appear silly, they've changed their concern from global warming to climate change. That's stupid in and of itself, for when has the climate not been changing, even before mankind arrived?

It turns out that George Mason University meteorologist Jagadish Shukla is the lead signatory of the letter sent to the president and attorney general asking them to use RICO laws to prosecute "corporations and other organizations that have knowingly deceived the American people about the risks of climate change." This GMU professor calling for the prosecution of climate skeptics has been recently revealed as "climate profiteer." From 2012 to 2014, this leader of the RICO 20 climate



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on October 7, 2015

scientists [paid himself and his wife \\$1.5 million from government climate grants for part-time work](#).

The effort to suppress global warming dissidents is not new. Grist Magazine writer David Roberts said, “When we’ve finally gotten serious about global warming, when the impacts are really hitting us and we’re in a full worldwide scramble to minimize the damage, we should have war crimes trials for these bastards — some sort of climate Nuremberg.” Professor Richard Parncutt has called for the execution of prominent “GW deniers.” Climate Progress Editor Joe Romm called for deniers to be strangled in their beds. James Hansen, who has headed NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, has likewise called for trials of global warming deniers.

The global warming agenda is a desperate effort to gain greater control over our lives. Political commentator Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956) explained that “the whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.” That’s the political goal of the global warmers.

Walter E. Williams is a professor of economics at George Mason University. To find out more about Walter E. Williams and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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