

Dear Amy and DN staff,

I was listening to today's show on line from KPFA at 6 AM Pacific (yes, I have donated on this round). The feature was a speech by John Pilger. After you switched to pledge, my mind wandered to an e-mail exchange I had the last few days with Jeff Brady of NPR based in Denver. Last week Jeff did his annual summer story on western wildfires. Like the rest of the media, his report completely ignored the role of logging in the increase in fire size and fire intensity. Instead it was all about "100 years of fire suppression" and how that – along with global warming – has led to the larger and more intense and dangerous wildfires like those burning this year. So I sent the message below to Jeff whom I have known for years (since he reported on forest issues and I was a major forest activist) in the hope I can get him to do a story on the role of forest management in the growth of forest fire size and intensity.

Applying the lessons of John Pilger, I realize that Jeff and the entire media plays the role of megaphone for the official view of western wildfire. That view emphasizes the role of past fire suppression policies and ignores the role of industrial forest management which continues to transform large landscapes through clearcutting, short (30-80 year logging rotation) and herbicides to create monocultures.

The interesting thing in this is that I myself and other forest activists have spent decades writing about and talking to reporters about the role of logging in the increasing incidence of high-intensity ("catastrophic") wild fire. There have also been two major, federal government scientific ecosystem assessments – covering the entire Sierra Nevada and the entire Interior Columbia Basin - which clearly identified "past forest management practices" as the major factor which has led to larger and more intense forest fires.

I am fairly certain that Jeff Brady has covered these assessments – they were big news for a time. But his message back to me was: "where is the research to back up these (your) assertions." I think I caught annoyance in this question but I responded by citing the research. Of course he could have easily found the information with an informed internet search and, in fact, I am certain he has seen this information before. But Jeff Brady had forgotten this information.

The essential mechanism by which "mainstream" journalists fool themselves into believing that they are "objective" and "fair" is this creative (and selective) forgetting. I have seen the same thing happen with scientists and managers: the information that creates dissonance with the official view, with official reality, is forgotten, misplaced, lost. The information which supports the official or dominant view is remembered and emphasized. It is thus that group mind – and its variant "the dominant interpretation" - is created and sustained. I can recite many sterling examples of this.

Well that is it. I don't know where to go with this. I could suggest that you expose the real story behind the western wildfires – I have a friend who is an old, retired firefighter and author (Murry Taylor, author of "Jumping Fire") who you could interview. Murry is agast at what firefighting has become.... But that is a little off the usual path for you. Maybe we need an Indy Media Environmental Show which would focus on debunking the "environmental myths" perpetrated by the mass/establishment media; I would love to help create such an effort.

Thanks for all you do.
Felice Pace