

# FP COMMENT

## Wikipedia's Zealots: Solomon

As I'm writing this column for the Post, I am simultaneously editing a page on Wikipedia. I am confident that just about everything I write for my column will be available for you to read. I am equally confident that you will be able to read just about nothing that I write for the page on Wikipedia.

The Wikipedia page is entitled Naomi Oreskes, after a Professor of History and Science Studies at the University of California San Diego, but the page offers only sketchy details about Oreskes. The page is mostly devoted to a notorious 2004 paper that she wrote, and that Science magazine published, called "Beyond the Ivory Tower: The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change." This paper analyzed articles in peer-reviewed journals to see if any disagreed with the alarming positions on global warming taken by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Remarkably, none of the papers disagreed with the consensus position," concluded Oreskes.

Oreskes's paper -- which claimed to comprehensively examine all articles in a scientific database with the keywords "climate change" -- is nonsense. As Post readers know, for the last 18 months I have been profiling scientists who disagree with the UN panel's position. My Deniers series, which now runs some 40 columns, describes many of the world's most prominent scientists. They include authors or reviewers for the UN panel (before they quit in disgust). They even include the scientist known as the Father of Scientific Climatology, who is recognized as being the most cited climatologist in the world. Yet somehow Oreskes missed every last one of these exceptions to the presumed consensus, and somehow so did the peer reviewers that Science chose to evaluate Oreskes's work.

When Oreskes's paper came out, it was immediately challenged by science writers and scientists alike, one of them being Benny Peiser, a prominent UK scientist and publisher of CCNet, an electronic newsletter to which I and thousands of others subscribe. CCNet daily circulates articles disputing the conventional wisdom on climate change. No publication better informs readers about climate change controversies, and no person is better placed to judge informed dissent on climate change than Benny Peiser.

For this reason, when visiting Oreskes's page on Wikipedia several weeks ago, I was surprised to read not only that Oreskes had been vindicated but that Peiser had been discredited. More than that, the page portrayed Peiser himself as having grudgingly conceded Oreskes's correctness.

Upon checking with Peiser, I found he had done no such thing. The Wikipedia page had misunderstood or distorted his comments. I then exercised the right to edit Wikipedia that we all have, corrected the Wikipedia entry, and advised Peiser that I had done so.

Peiser wrote back saying he couldn't see my corrections on the Wikipedia page. Had I neglected to save them after editing them?, I wondered. I made the changes again, and this time confirmed that the changes had been saved. But then, in a twinkle, they were gone again! I made other changes. And others. They all disappeared shortly after they were made.

Nonplused, I investigated. Wikipedia logs all changes. I found mine. And then I found Tabletop's. Someone called Tabletop was undoing my edits, and, following what I suppose is Wiki-etiquette, also explained why. "Note that Peiser has retracted this critique and admits that he was wrong!" Tabletop said.

I undid Tabletop's undoing of my edits, thinking I had an unassailable response: "Tabletop's changes claim to represent Peiser's views. I have checked with Peiser and he disputes Tabletop's version."

Tabletop undid my undid, claiming I could not speak for Peiser.

Why can Tabletop speak for Peiser but not I, who have his permission?, I thought. I redid Tabletop's undid and protested: "Tabletop is distorting Peiser. She does not speak for him. Peiser has approved my description of events concerning him."

Tabletop parried: "we have a reliable source to this. What Peiser has said to \*you\* is irrelevant."

Tabletop, it turns out, has another name: Kim Dabelstein Petersen. She (or he?) is an editor at Wikipedia. What does she edit? Reams and reams of global warming pages. I started checking them. In every instance I checked, she defended those warning of catastrophe and deprecated those who believe the science is not settled. I investigated further. Others had tried to correct her interpretations and had the same experience as I -- no sooner did they make their corrections than she pounced, preventing Wikipedia readers from reading anyone's views but her own. When they protested plaintively, she wore them down and snuffed them out. By patrolling Wikipedia pages and ensuring that her spin reigns supreme over all climate change pages, she has made of Wikipedia a propaganda vehicle for global warming alarmists. But unlike government propaganda, its source is not self-evident. We don't suspend belief when we read Wikipedia, as we do when we read literature from an organization with an agenda, because Wikipedia benefits from the Internet's cachet of making information free and democratic. This Big Brother enforces its views with a mouse.

While I've been writing this column, the Naomi Oreskes page has changed 10 times. Since I first tried to correct the distortions on the page, it has changed 28 times. If you have read a climate

change article on Wikipedia -- or on any controversial subject that may have its own Kim Dabelstein Petersen -- beware. Wikipedia is in the hands of the zealots.

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