The other night, my wife and I saw *Merchants of Doubt,* Robert Kenner's new film about the climate denial industry. I thought it was excellent. I was surprised by the high production values and the way in which it did not *feel* like a documentary, at least until the last 15-20 minutes or so. (Then it began to remind me of a *Frontline* segment.) Former Republican Congressmember Bob Inglis of South Carolina, a die-hard conservative who lost his seat when he began to advocate for grappling with climate change (as well as the DREAM Act), comes off as particularly thoughtful.

For me, the most interesting part was the discussion of Fred Singer, a physicist who is a leading climate denial rock star, and the late Fred Seitz, another distinguished scientist who was also a climate denier. Why, the movie asks, do the handful of scientists who deny climate science do so? (and it really is no more than handful despite the denial industry's attempt to show the contrary).

Naomi Oreskes, upon whose book of the same name the movie is based, argues in the film that although they get a certain amount of money from fossil fuel interests, that does not really explain their position, and I agree with her. For Oreskes, it stems from Cold War ideology – an anti-communism that makes them hate, fear, and then deny the existence of any problem that would require government intervention. That is persuasive to me: Seitz began to fall out with the scientific community over his strong advocacy of the Vietnam War. But I think something else might be in order.

You didn't hear from Singer and Seitz anything about the dangers of government intervention when the Clean Air Act was debated (it passed the Senate nearly unanimously in 1970, and Singer was the deputy assistant administrator for EPA at that time) or even with Montreal Protocol (which as former Secretary of State George Shultz pointed out in a good op-ed on Friday, was negotiated during his tenure in the Reagan Administration).

Ironically, this sort of Cold War ideology really erupted *after the Cold War ended.* If you are a Cold Warrior and your enemy collapses, what do you do? You look for another enemy. If the Soviet Union still exists, then you know where your enemy is. But if it collapses, and if you are of a Cold War bent, you look for other places where the Evil Empire has gone into hiding. There is a thrashing-about quality of old Cold Warriors. Who is the existential Enemy? Is it Russia? China? Iran? Iraq? David Frum (who has since become much more thoughtful) just threw in the kitchen sink with the "axis of evil". It doesn't matter how poor or how weak the country is: it is a threat on par with Hitler and Stalin. With climate, it is some sort of vague Vast Left-

wing Conspiracy designed to rob us of our precious bodily fluids.

I have written before suggesting that the climate issue provides ideological glue to hold together Movement Conservatism's "three-legged stool." Anti-communism was the best: 1) billionaires hated it because it threatened their wealth; 2) conservative Christians hated it because it was godless; and 3) neoconservatives hated it because they needed an enemy. With climate, 1) billionaires hate it because it is government regulation (even if it is very light); 2) conservative Christians hate because of their suspicions of modern science; and 3) neoconservatives hate it because grappling with it requires international cooperation anathema to them.

But because climate change isn't quite as good, that requires crazier and crazier positions to make up for it. I think that this often happens, too: when someone takes a position, and it turns out to be false, they often double down on it to show that they were really right to begin with. This is what happened with torture advocacy: desperate people trying to preserve national security agreed to torture a few select prisoners, and when that didn't work, they had to show that they were right, and so wound up approving a massive torture program.

Fred Singer and Fred Seitz sort of straddle the billionaire and neoconservative legs of the Movement Conservative stool. That makes sense: ideological schema rarely play out neatly in the real world. And when you spend your time with people on "your side," you begin to adopt their positions. Thus, conservative Christians are now adopting the plutocratic ideology of billionaire Republicans – even if that is about as far from the New Testament as one can get.

As Michael Shermer of Skeptic Magazine, who is interviewed in *Merchants of Doubt,* puts it: you buy the package of your team. And I suppose that's the challenge for everyone involved in academia and public policy, no matter what their ideological priors: how to be a productive member of the team without becoming subsumed by it.