Last week, after saying that he did not believe that carbon dioxide is the primary cause of climate change, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt reminded me for the second time since he took office of someone I met at age fifteen: Dolores Umbridge. Yes, that Dolores Umbridge, the one that functions as the main villain of the fifth Harry Potter book, at times eclipsing even Voldemort in her evilness. Now before you dismiss this as hyperbolic, let me make my case. [Spoilers ahead.]

For those of you who have not read the books (in which case, drop everything and go read them) and for those who read them a long time ago, let me introduce you to Dolores Umbridge. Like Pruitt, Umbridge arrives at Hogwarts to serve in a position whose very purpose she questions: teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts, despite vehemently opposing teaching students actual defensive spells. She came from the Ministry of Magic, which was clashing against Hogwarts because the Ministry officially denied that Voldemort had returned to power after over a decade in hiding, and the Hogwarts Headmaster was publicly warning people of Voldemort's return. Umbridge values following the Ministry policies above all else, even if her actions serve no purpose.

On her first day at Hogwarts, Umbridge makes an impromptu, unsolicited speech that bores most students so spectacularly they stop paying attention. Afterward, Hermione, one of the few that did listen closely, informs Harry and Ron that in fact there was "some important stuff hidden in the waffle." For this seemingly meandering monologue had some thinly veiled promises to control the administration of Hogwarts buried within it. Umbridge says that "progress for progress's sake must be discouraged, for our tried and tested traditions often require no tinkering," and that Hogwarts should focus on "preserving what ought to be preserved, perfecting what needs to be perfected, and pruning wherever we find practices that ought to be prohibited."

Pruitt conjured (pun intended) up the persona of Umbridge on his very first day at the EPA. He made a speech to employees describing his hopes and vision for the agency. Pruitt started by boring his audience. The first half of the speech told an historical anecdote about the founding fathers that really had nothing to do with EPA's mission – it was about a dinner shared by Madison and Jefferson to talk about the national debt. He said the story showed the importance of civility and leadership, and went on to sprinkle not-so-subtle hints throughout this generic speech about what he plans to do at EPA.

First, he never used the words science, public health, pollution, or climate change.

Instead, he characterized the agency's work as tackling issues "with respect to our future environment and our natural resources." This reference to "natural resources" and his avoidance of the words pollution or public health harkens back to traditional conservationist notions of environmentalism. Second, he suggested a larger focus on business interests, referencing "business" and "the market" several times throughout: "[EPA is] going to do business in the future"; "how we do business as a country"; "making informed decisions on how [policy will] impact those in the marketplace."

His description of how he sees the purpose of regulation was perhaps the most perplexing part of his remarks: "Regulations ought to make things regular. Regulators exist to give certainty to those they regulate. Those that we regulate ought to know what's expected of them, so that they can plan and allocate resources to comply; that's really the job of a regulator." Wait, what? The purpose of regulation is to comfort and help the regulated party?

This strategy of obscuring an extreme position by using vague, bland terms is what inspired the comparison between Pruitt and Umbridge. He is denying the public protection role of EPA not by saying "Our job is not to prevent pollution," which would be controversial, but by framing regulation as a tool to ensure market predictability. This reorients the agency's mission from public health and the environment to the economy, and recasts its primary constituent as industry, rather than the American public, but does so in general, roundabout terms. Some of his language is so similar in style to that of Umbridge, it's striking. Consider these two excerpts:

> Pruitt: "The only authority that any agency has, in the Executive Branch, is the authority given to it by Congress. Sometimes those authorities are broadly stated, getting much discretion to an agency to engage in the authority given to it, granted. But other times, other times, Congress has been very prescriptive. It's been very specific on what we can and cannot do as an agency. We need to respect that."
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> Umbridge: "Every headmaster and headmistress of Hogwarts has brought something new to the weighty task of governing this historic school, and that is as it should be, for without progress there will be stagnation and decay. There again, progress for progress's sake must be discouraged, for our tried and tested traditions often require not tinkering."

Neither of these quotes refers directly to a specific law or educational policy, yet the message is still clear. Pruitt believes that the Clean Air Act (and perhaps other laws as well) does not give the EPA the discretion it has claimed up to this point. Umbridge believes that Ministry policy does not give Hogwarts administrators the discretion to stray from approved lesson plans as it has in recent years.

The second major similarity lies in Pruitt's refusal to acknowledge the existence of climate change and Umbridge's refusal to acknowledge the return of Voldemort. In her very first class session, Umbridge forbids even mentioning the name "Voldemort" in her classroom, and tells students that if anyone says Voldemort is alive, they are lying. She claims that students "have been frightened into believing" that Voldemort has returned.

With Pruitt as EPA Administrator, climate change is the new He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. This latest statement is just another example of what already seems to be a strategic erasing of climate change from the government vocabulary. Climate change-related material has already started to disappear from EPA's website, and has been scrubbed entirely from the White House website. Trump is expected to direct Pruitt to withdraw the Clean Power Plan, and many also anticipate severe cuts to climate science research funding. These actions are in line with the general stance of conservatives that scientists are causing unnecessary fear and panic by overstating the potential impacts of climate change and the role of human activity. Kind of like they have been "frightened into believing" that climate change matters.

But if Pruitt is the analog to Umbridge, who takes on the role of Dumbledore's Army, the Hogwarts student resistance group? Perhaps EPA employees. On February 15th, before Pruitt's confirmation, the agency created a "mirror" site, a replica of the EPA site as it existed on January 19, 2017. That date should tell you everything – this is an attempt to preserve public data and information that might get pulled from the agency website under the new administration. The "snapshot" site is still a government website and presumably could be taken down by the new Administrator. However, he has now been in office for several weeks, and the site continues to be live.

A group of anonymous EPA employees also took the fight to social media. In January, several "alternative" twitter accounts popped up, purportedly run by federal employees at scientific agencies such as NASA, the National Park Service, and EPA. The accounts began tweeting data and messages, both the content of which and act itself suggested they had moved to alternative handles because the

official twitter accounts were under a gag order from the Trump Administration. Several accounts such as @altEPA and @ActualEPAFacts began tweeting climate change data, and have continued to do so even after the new Administrator directly refuted that carbon dioxide is a cause.

It seems the EPA has its own Dumbledore's Army working in a Room of Requirement somewhere…. We can only hope they continue fighting back. Some, however, have already had enough. Just the other day, the head of EPA's environmental justice office resigned, after leaked documents showed the administration planned to slash EPA staff by one-fifth and even eliminate whole programs, like environmental justice. The recent release of the President's suggested budget went even further than many had expected, cutting EPA funding by 31%.

But hey, maybe Trump has the right idea – after all, progress for progress's sake must be discouraged.