

We've all seen the names of these groups. Something called "Americans for Gun Safety" turns out to campaign for allowing assault weapons in schools, or "Citizens for Energy Balance" wants only fossil fuels and elimination of renewables. I made up the first one, but the second one is loosely based on the name of a real group. Here's another real one: Californians for Recycling and the Environment, which turned out to be a front for plastic manufacturers opposed to recycling mandates for plastics.

Oddly, it seems to be conservative or special interest groups who go in for this kind of naming. But why not turn the tactic back on them? Isn't what's sauce for the goose also sauce for the gander? Here are some groups we might see then:

***Americans to Preserve Oil and Coal.*** This group could specialize in campaigns on behalf of electric vehicles and renewable energy. The name sounds like a pro-fossil fuel group, right? But actually, this group would aim to "preserve" oil and coal by keeping them in the ground, so they don't get destroyed by being burned up. I imagine their pitch as going something like this:

"Coal and oil are precious resources. So why do so many people want to burn them up, making them literally go up in smoke. Once they're in the atmosphere, they'll warm the planet. We don't need that right now. The planet is already warmer than it has been for thousands of years. But scientists agree that another ice age awaits for us somewhere down the road. When that happens, we're going to be really upset that we used up the fossil fuels rather than preserving them for later use. When the glaciers start moving south, we're really going to need that coal and oil to heat things up. So let's keep it in the ground, preserving it where it's safe."

You're thinking that just sounds too weird, but really, is it any weirder than the kind of thing that climate denialists come up with? I don't think so.

Or how about this name for a group:

***Climate Hoax Busters.*** That sounds like a climate denial group. But it could be busting the climate-denial hoax. That really *is* a hoax, cooked up by ideologues and fossil fuel companies — and the companies at least knew better, as their own records show. So it would actually be a truthful name.

Similarly, the ***Balanced Science Association***, which sounds like something Trump's EPA

head, Andrew Wheeler, would like. But it might take the opposite view:

“Keeping things in balance is so important in life. If you lose your balance, you’re likely to fall over. And we all know about the need for a balanced diet. Balance is also important in science. You can’t go off the deep end just because there are a few scientists here and there who say something, when all the other scientists say the opposite. If you balance the evidence on both sides, the climate scientists come way out ahead. That’s why we’re in favor of the Green New Deal.”

Really, there’s no end to the possibilities. I imagine the ***Homes versus Trees Action Committee***, made up of people who favor the trees and want to restrict development. Or the ***Committee Against Plastics Recycling***, which wants to completely outlaw plastics rather than simply recycling them. (“Why recycle chemicals that are poisoning the planet? We don’t recycle poisons, we get rid of them.”)

The interesting question is why we don’t see more of this kind of tactic on the environmental side. Maybe environmentalists aren’t sneaky enough or have a perhaps-naïve belief in the benefits of political honesty. But another problem with many of these names is that they may not attract people to the cause. By and large people don’t view favoring special interests as a heartwarming goal. So falsely branding yourself as being in favor of the oil or coal industries, or as opponents of recycling, or as a group dedicated to ignoring science, just doesn’t give you much political mileage.

Hypocrisy is said to be the tribute that vice pays to virtue. In that case, it’s clear that only one side of our current debates feels it necessary to fly under false flags, and that’s the anti-environmental side.