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NEWS CORPORATION, SAVIOR OF THE PLANET BY TOBY MILLER

May 18, 2012 | Uncategorized | 0 🗨️ |



Like any socialist who has lived where I have during Rupert Murdoch’s hegemony, I’ve taken immense delight these past months in his public humiliation over phone tapping and much, much more.

Best of all, I finally understand one of my formative educational experiences. It occurred as a pupil at **George Osborne’s old school**—an institution which avows that ‘a boy achieves the most when he does the most’.

Yes, thanks to the 21st-century travails of News Corporation, I now know what my Latin teacher Mr McKenzie meant in 1973-74 when he repeatedly bellowed in my teenaged ear, from a distance of six inches, ‘Are you lying or are you stupid, boy?’

This puzzled me until I saw **James Murdoch appear** before the **Leveson Inquiry**.

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My **bellowing ex-teacher's question** felt made for that moment, rather than my own difficulties with the subjunctive and ablative absolute.

But along with the *Shadenfreud*, I have more complex feelings about Rupert's egregious empire and oleaginous offspring.

And surprisingly, they concern the environment.



We all know that Fox News Channel, the empire's Republican Party propaganda outlet in the US, specializes in

climate-change denial. Over and over again, it gives time and space to **unqualified politicians** and **skeptics** alike.

But internally, News Corporation has vigorously examined its environmental record and contribution to climate change, thanks to an unlikely source of progressive/scientific thought.

In 2007, Rupert Murdoch convened a virtual meeting of his employees across the world. The sole agenda item was Murdoch's goal of making the company carbon-neutral, to counter its annual footprint of almost

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650,000 tonnes. This was to be done via a “Global Energy Initiative” (GEI).

Murdoch told attendees that ‘If we are to connect with our audiences on this issue, we must first get our own house in order.’ He thundered on that **‘Climate change poses clear, catastrophic threats’**.

The GEI has a tripartite strategy: to reduce energy use in general, employ renewable power when economically practical, and buy carbon offsets when necessary. Every unit of News Corporation has an ‘energy team leader’ and the company allocates ‘multiple full-time dedicated managers’ to the job.

News Corp even participates in the **Carbon Disclosure Project**, which monitors what participants do to alleviate the problem.

This matters. Annual film- and television-related energy consumption and greenhouse-gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide) in my home state of California **are about the same as those of the aerospace and semiconductor industries** (warning—product placement).

But back to the old boy’s Initiative. In many ways, it’s more about money than a duty of care.

The project is couched in terms of risk—risk of regulation, risk of financial peril, and risk of reputation. In the GEI’s vocab, words like ‘aggressive’ denote value, while ‘risk’ is negative. James boasts that: **‘At News Corporation, we have saved millions by becoming more energy-efficient’**.

Murdoch’s “journalists” at Fox News Channel barely covered his policy speech or the GEI. The Initiative applies to them, but it does not suit their audience targeting, **which**

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focuses, *inter alia*, on climate-change deniers.

Who knows what these employees made of the company's *Green It, Mean It* campaign, or whether they avail themselves of the **US\$2.75 paid to workers who ride buses or US\$4000 for purchasing a Prius?**

Clearly, I'm not suggesting that the GEI makes heroes of the company or its First Nepotist. But the impact of these self-interested endeavors has been significant.

Even Fox's far-right vigilante **television show 24** got involved. It became the first carbon-neutral US primetime TV drama in 2009, with offsets calculated against car chases, air travel, and coal-generated electricity. **Wind and solar power from LA and the Pacific Northwest were used when feasible.**

The Fox lot in Hollywood buys renewable-energy certificates from facilities around the country to offset its carbon footprint. And elsewhere, **broadcast studios in Turkey use natural cooling and heating.**

Needless to say, News is not the only company involved in such practices. The Producers Guild of America has a green initiative that **stretches right across Hollywood** and other studios have longer and very distinguished records (quite apart from generally protecting public discussion of global warming from superstition).

But something *is* going on over at the Fox lot that both surprises and delights...

Of course, I *still* want Leveson to nail the bastards. Or whatever it is that Lords do.

Toby Miller's adventures can be followed at <http://tobymiller.org/>. His latest book is *Greening the Media* (Oxford, 2012), with Richard Maxwell.

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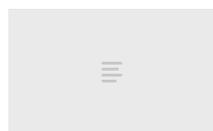
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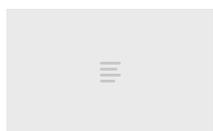
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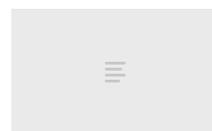
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