

And I Thought the EPA Was There to Protect Me...

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I owe a debt of gratitude to my friend, investigative reporter Marcus Stern. Thanks to his [recently published article on Weather.com](#), I believe I finally have the necessary insight into President Trump's thought process when he selected such a person as Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Mr. Pruitt, a stalwart opponent of the EPA who has sued it more than a dozen times, vowed to roll back clean air regulations and indicated his desire to "dismantle" this regulatory organization – to "right size it" and neutralize its stranglehold in an effort to end its overregulation of American businesses. He is infamously quoted as saying in a radio interview in response to his contrarian position on climate change: "...science should not be something that's just thrown about to dictate policy in Washington..."

This Orwellian logic of "doublethink" seems to be endemic within the Trump administration. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, after touting his environmental credentials and similarity to President Theodore Roosevelt, proceeded to recommend reducing the Bears Ears National Monument by 85 percent and the Grand Staircase Escalante Monument by almost 50 percent. He also lifted restrictions on oil and gas exploration and production on Bureau of Land Management lands and proposed a 2018 National Parks budget \$296 million less than 2017's budget.

I have found myself baffled by the rationale behind appointing individuals to head agencies they have expressed a desire to either eliminate or handcuff via the restriction of regulatory authority. Many of these government agencies are run by people that once lobbied against the same regulations they are now tasked with enforcing. I now see that I was viewing these appointments from my traditional perspective. But after viewing the State of Arizona's management video "Knowing Your Customer," I have been enlightened.

I Have Seen the Light

I found my revelation in a management training video developed by the State of Arizona, which was created under the tenure of Henry Darwin during his time in Arizona as an administrator, where he championed the concept of "lean management." Mr. Darwin was recently appointed to be Chief of Operations for the EPA.

Recently, Mr. Pruitt announced that the EPA would be partnering with Toyota to improve the efficiency of the EPA, implementing management practices made famous by Toyota and generally referred to as "lean" management principals. To that end, Mr. Pruitt brought Mr. Darwin on board.

Mr. Darwin appears to have reasonable credentials for this position, having served 20 years with the State of Arizona where he served as the Director of Environmental Quality and subsequently Chief of Operation for the State. He is a strong proponent of “lean management” and characterizes it as: “...the process we use to basically eliminate waste and maximize customer value...”

To quote from the video:

“...So who is the customer? The customer is the ultimate end user of the product or service you deliver. Sounds simple, right. Well not quite. At least not for most of us in government. The term customer often gives us fits, because we tend to think of ourselves as public servants, and since we serve the public, we assume the public is our customer. This sort of fuzzy thinking leads us off track every time. But it is easily corrected when you stop and think concretely about what you actually produce. Let’s say your job is to write environmental permits. So your widget is a written permit. Who’s your customer? If you think it’s the general public because they benefit from clean air and water, you’d be wrong. Who actually needs and uses the permit? It’s the industrial facility that can’t legally operate until the permit has been approved. In most cases, the public doesn’t directly use our products or services, but they certainly benefit from them. In this sense, they are investors. They pay taxes and demand a reasonable return on their investment. In other words, they expect us to deliver mission outcomes, which is why our agencies exist. But don’t confuse them for the customer, because they are not the end user of our services...”

The video seems to conspicuously leave out the one stakeholder which seems to be benefiting the most from the Trump administration’s desire to reduce regulation and Mr. Pruitt’s desire to implement lean management practices...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLaKqMBs1ZA&index=5&list=PLYZu9POvJ3L0nuNzsoyL-voZ78K4ZH-_n



SO WHO IS THE CUSTOMER?



If you view President Trump's appointees and the agendas which they purport to champion in the light of this "Knowing Your Customer" video, many actions begin to make sense — at least in the perspective of the Trump agenda. For example, reducing regulation for the benefit of the customer, who in their perspective happens to be industry.

In the case of the EPA, it's almost diametrically opposed to why the EPA was created under the Nixon administration and its historic mandate. As stated on the EPA website (still):

"Born in the wake of elevated concern about environmental pollution, EPA was established on December 2, 1970, to consolidate in one agency a variety of federal research, monitoring, standard-setting and enforcement activities to ensure environmental protection. Since its inception, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people."

Mr. Pruitt and Mr. Darwin need to be reminded as to who the EPA's "customer" is. According to the EPA's own website, it's still the American people — not industry.

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