

The Scoundrel's Handbook

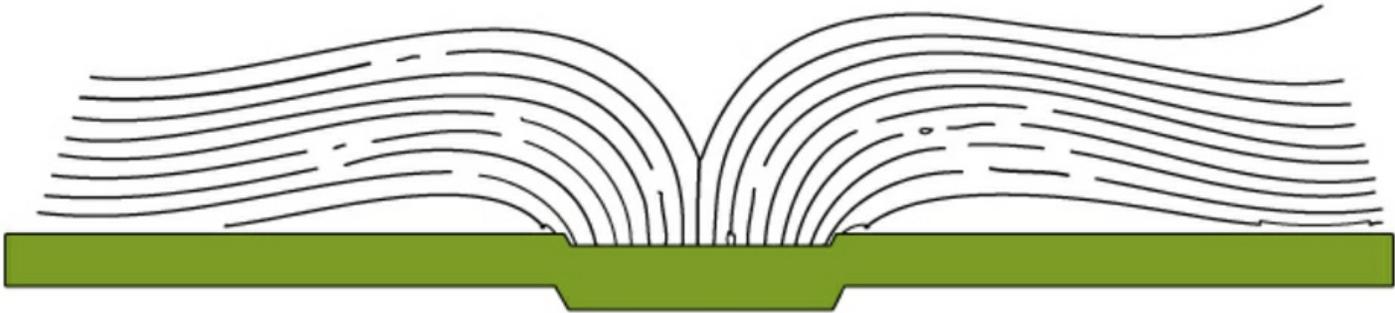
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The Scoundrel's Handbook on Huff Post Green

It was Samuel Johnson who said that patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel. He talked a lot about false patriots, those who "appeal to the rabble, circulate pointless petitions, and who allow their passions to confound the distinctions between right and wrong." He never said if he had anyone particular in mind, but I sure do. A lot of people in Washington, D.C. have become quite adept in using the Scoundrel's Handbook to advance their narrow view of the world.

The first chapter in this primer for the morally challenged, of course, is denial, and we've seen any number of people over the years willing to stand up and lie bold-faced to the American people simply because admitting to their actions would expose them for the scoundrels they are.

But it's the second chapter I'd like to talk about: the one in which the scoundrel goes on offense and attacks anyone and everyone willing to expose him for what he is.

Unfortunately these scoundrels come in a variety of shapes and stripes. The ones that concern me most are those who attempt to savage a mountain of scientific evidence in favor of obfuscation and innuendo. They cloud what's clear because the light of day would expose them for what they are -- scoundrels of the worst sort. In their effort to protect a status quo that is good for them but not so much for the rest of us, they wrap their world view in flag and country and patriotism, and loudly proclaim that to question their self-interest is somehow un-American.

Regrettably, that's the way so much gets done these days in Washington and why it's not about who's right, but who's loudest, who lies and denies most convincingly, and who is the most willing to pay, say or do whatever is necessary to win, regardless of the consequences.

I say this because as the [U.S. Green Building Council \(USGBC\)](#) has become more successful, we've developed our share of enemies: people willing to do just about anything to defend their status quo at our expense -- even if it means polluting the environment, subjecting the most vulnerable among us to cancer-causing carcinogens, and regularly prioritizing financial gain over human lives.

The hot button so many of them use today is jobs. You watch: it will happen. Some industry in this country will start crowing that some environmental non-profit like ours threatens the livelihood of those who make a living in the very industry they represent. They'll irrationally claim that our most deeply held desire is to derail their freedoms and all those rights they'll contend are inherently theirs, and that we're working tirelessly to put people out of work. Come on. Really?

I say: Bring it on. And let's talk jobs.

Tens of thousands of R&D jobs could be created if any industry out there made it a standard operating practice to investigate, explore and develop more sustainable ways of conducting business, safer and healthier ways of manufacturing and disposing of waste, and new, innovative and entirely eco-friendly uses for new and existing products.

Talk about a growth industry! Talk about a rich, fertile field for young, bold and forward-thinking entrepreneurs! Not only could any industry create an overwhelming number of internal jobs and whole new areas of growth for existing companies, it could also spawn hundreds of startup ventures whose success would be tied directly to the sustainability made possible by their industry's safer, cleaner operating procedures. If they took what they spent on lobbyists and lawyers who are defending the status quo and invested it here, think of how many jobs that would create.

The reason [LEED certification](#) has achieved such a massive level of acceptance and buy-in across the globe is because in putting the program together we were fiercely dedicated to working hand-in-glove with the very companies we'd be rating and certifying. As a result we were able to balance what was practical with what was desirable. In the process we created a certification program that not only makes a ton of business sense, but is good for both the planet and those generations who will someday inherit it. And along the way we were the catalyst for a new market that didn't exist 10 years ago, and that today accounts for thousands of jobs and a market impact in the billions.

Make no mistake: these scoundrels can't have it both ways. If USGBC is on the side of sustainability, that could only mean that those who oppose us are ultimately on the side of exploiting the earth's non-renewable resources.

If we're on the side of protecting the environment from careless and short-sighted decision-making, that could only mean those who oppose us are for subjecting you and your family to the kind of short-sighted decisions that lead to eco-disasters like Love Canal, the Gulf oil spill, and mountaintop coal removal.

And if my organization and the hundreds of corporate partners we represent are on the side of public health and protecting American citizens -- especially the youngest and most vulnerable among us -- that could only mean that those scoundrels who populate my Washington list, who run around the halls of Congress and nestle into corner booths making it all about them... well, they clearly don't think of us at all!

In this town countless individuals and organizations read from the Scoundrel's Handbook, learn from it, and ultimately swear by it. So much so, in fact, you'd almost think it was the Bible -- which, I guess if you worship at the altar of greed and power, it no doubt is.

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