Anti-Science, Anti-Semitic Website 'CounterPunch' Attacks ACSH

By Alex Berezow, PhD — March 11, 2019

The Age of Social Media has been an eye-opening experience. As a friend of mine once noted, "Social media has made us realize that our neighbors are a bunch of jerks."

Of course, he's absolutely right. One of the bigger surprises (for me, anyway) is the realization that some of the people that we looked up to as children are also a bunch of jerks. And some of those people are K-12 teachers.

Recently, I had the misfortune of encountering a former Oregon high school environmental and marine science teacher on Facebook by the name of John Borowski. In his spare time, he blogs for politically extremist websites, including an anti-Semitic one called CounterPunch [1].

A friend of mine brought Borowski to my attention after the former teacher decried the dangers of glyphosate. (In reality, glyphosate has been declared safe by every major regulatory body [2], including WHO, EPA, and EFSA, and most recently by that of Brazil [3].) My friend pointed him to my work on this topic. Incapable of responding to my scientific arguments, Borowski responded by calling ACSH an industry front group. Very original.
Note that Borowski cites U.S. Right to Know (USRTK), a group of anti-biotech, pro-Kremlin activists to back up his accusation. Also note that USRTK is primarily funded by the Organic Consumers Association, which promotes 9/11 trutherism, chemtrails, and FEMA death camp conspiracies, among many others.

It's worth pausing a moment to remember that Borowski was once a science teacher, a person who was responsible for teaching the next generation how to identify reputable sources of information. Yet, here he is citing a propaganda outlet.

I don't respond well to being called a liar, especially by people who quote pro-Russian conspiracy websites, so I hammered away at Borowski on Facebook. I was not polite, and I clearly struck a nerve because he blogged about how mean I am on the anti-Semitic website CounterPunch a week later. (I refuse to link to it. More on CounterPunch in a moment.)

**Science Teacher Says Biotech Is a Crime Against Humanity**

I also decided to do some digging. It's my journalistic instinct. What I found was a tad disturbing. Borowski believes that PhD microbiologists like me who work for the biotech industry commit "crimes against nature and against humanity."
Once again, it is worth pausing a moment. In Borowski’s mind, the good and honest scientists who work for organizations like Monsanto or Syngenta are morally equivalent to Slobodan Milošević and Bashar al-Assad. Remember, he was a science teacher. For decades, he was given an opportunity to brainwash young minds with nonsense like this.

Somehow, it gets worse.

**CounterPunch: An Anti-Semitic, Pro-Kremlin, Anti-Science Website**

In Borowski’s spare time, he blogs for CounterPunch, a well-known anti-Semitic website. An article for *Algemeiner* details its many transgressions, among which include publishing content by anti-Semites and Neo-Nazis, defending Holocaust deniers, sympathizing with Islamist terrorists, and promoting conspiracy theories about Jewish control of the media. It doesn’t get much more blatantly anti-Semitic than this:

"It’s supposedly the third rail in journalism even to have a discussion of how much the Jews do control the media."
As if all that wasn't bad enough, the *Washington Post* reported [6] that CounterPunch repeatedly published articles written by a Russian government agent in 2016. To this day, the site continues promoting the Kremlin's interests, such as defending the propaganda outlet RT (formerly, Russia Today).

You may have noticed a pattern. People who are vehemently anti-biotech also tend to be pro-Kremlin and, in some cases, anti-Semitic. I suppose once you believe one conspiracy theory, it's a slippery slope toward believing them all. (We have no reason to believe that Borowski himself is anti-Semitic. However, it is unsettling that a teacher would willingly associate with people who are.)

**Why Are We Even Talking About This?**

Typically, we ignore petty cranks. But we felt this particular crank was worth calling out for two reasons.

First, we think it’s important for people to understand what those of us who do mass communication for a living deal with on a routine basis. For most Americans, a normal routine might involve dropping the kids off at school, commuting to work, putting in several hours at the office, then coming home.

For us, a normal routine is to wake up, read hate mail, read smears on social media, and then
decide if and how to respond. We went into science writing to talk about science, but we spend an inordinate amount of time talking to people who call us liars and shills and send us death threats or other physical threats. Apparently, John Borowski thinks I’m a whore and wants to fight.

John Borowski  Alex Berezow Wow, I hurt your feelings? Nice to hide behind your computer? So, what will you do? A hit job piece? You have powerful friends with blood money. Dirty money. Like I said, take your best shot. Otherwise: come talk to me face to face and call me names? How about it? ACSH is bunch of whores.

Second, some teachers don’t belong in a classroom. It isn’t hard to see why.

John Borowski  Alex Berezow Fuck off pal. The truth hurts?

Our K-12 science and math (STEM) education is decidedly mediocre. It’s not so bad as to induce panic, but our science and math performance on international tests is embarrassing compared to other countries. Our students simply aren’t being taught properly, and our education system bears much of the blame. And it seems that some people, like John Borowski, are more suited to being Greenpeace activists rather than science teachers.

As it turns out, this story has a somewhat happy ending. I put in a public records request surrounding Borowski’s employment at Salem-Keizer Public Schools. A spokesperson said he "resigned in 2013," but she did not elaborate on the circumstances preceding it. A Change.org petition [7] written on his behalf, which begged the school district, "To keep Mr. Borowski at West Salem High School," would make it seem as if the resignation was not entirely voluntary.

At least he’s not teaching impressionable minds, anymore.

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