

From: Karen Himle <himle@umn.edu>  
 Subject: Fwd: Troubled Waters film premiere postponement  
 Date: September 13, 2010 11:47:14 AM CDT  
 To: Robert Bruininks <bruin001@umn.edu>, hagst005@umn.edu  
 Cc: allen levine <aslevine@umn.edu>

Greetings. I believe that Susan Weller is managing this extremely well. I am looking forward to the opportunity to meet with her when she returns from her trip. This letter is very thoughtfully written.

Karen

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Allen S. Levine <aslevine@umn.edu>  
 Date: Sun, Sep 12, 2010 at 6:43 PM  
 Subject: Fwd: Troubled Waters film premiere postponement  
 To: Karen Himle <himle@umn.edu>

My short note--If she does not follow through the Dean's office will take over.

Al

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Allen S. Levine <aslevine@umn.edu>  
 Date: Sun, Sep 12, 2010 at 6:40 PM  
 Subject: Re: Troubled Waters film premiere postponement  
 To: Susan Weller <welle008@umn.edu>  
 Cc: Barb Coffin <bcoffin@umn.edu>, Lori Engstrom <lmengstr@umn.edu>, Martin Moen <mmoen@umn.edu>

Hello Barb,

As Susan said below the premiere of the documentary is to be postponed until the Spring semester. We need to contact folks and let them know about this.

Thanks,  
 Al

On Thu, Sep 9, 2010 at 11:57 AM, Susan Weller <welle008@umn.edu> wrote:  
 Dear Barb,

Based on the information and feedback I have received to date, I have decided that the Bell Museum's premiere of your documentary film "Troubled Waters" will be postponed until the Spring semester. Several factors have contributed to this decision and in an honest effort to protect your reputation, and the reputation of the University, unfortunately, this decision is necessary.

### REACTION

The delay of U relations in reviewing the film and then pronouncing it unfit for Regents endorsement has made the postponement unavoidable. My own lack of familiarity with U policy and procedures regarding the production and distribution of creative and scientific materials developed by faculty and staff is also to blame. I simply don't know the policy and cannot review it in a timely fashion while overseas. I cannot argue convincingly that we followed U policy and you are the victim of U Relations violating their own procedures.

One of the factors that has contributed to my decision is that I have been told that one of your biggest supporters, President Brunninks is now alarmed by the film's content. This development is a major concern to me and should be to you. Your reputation as a trusted source of environmental information is being sullied by incomplete information that is circulating. Reputations cannot be rebuilt easily; I would rather postpone and obtain an independent assessment by trusted scientists and policy makers than risk your reputation with a film release that is not endorsed by the scientific community and whose integrity is not supported the University.

Another factor that has contributed to my decision is the lack of support among the Dean's council for the film. They need to be on the frontline with politicians and other stakeholders. The fact that two take serious issue with the facts of the film is troubling. Associate Dean Jay Bell (tenure home: Soil, water and climate) has now finally viewed the film and expressed concerns as well. My research expertise is not in this area of water management and agricultural issues; I have to listen to those whose expertise is in this area.

As Director of the Bell, it is critical to me that the U and our College stand behind our public programming. We serve as their portal showcasing the best of University research. To not have the U's endorsement would be a serious blow to our reputation as well. I cannot easily disentangle your film project from the Bell because your time and our staff contributed substantively to it.

To ensure that this film meets the standard of the "best of University research," I will be asking Deb Swackhammer to chair a panel to review the film's scientific (not artistic) content. I will invite Dave Tilman and Jeff Strock to serve on it. I have asked the Dean to name up to four other scientists and/or policy makers in this area. The panel would review the film and, if they felt fundamental elements of this controversy had been missed or misstated, these would need to be addressed prior to the film's release. Prior to release, we will follow the U's procedure for review of creative and documentary materials.

With the strong backing of the U's scientific and policy community, this film will have a more substantive impact than "going it alone" at this point. After all your hard work, it would be a huge disappointment to have the film dismissed outright.

Recognizing that any modification of the film will cost money, I will need to address the budget issues of modifying the film (assuming the panel recommends this, they may not) when I return.

I regret that I have to disappoint you, Shanai, and others who have worked so hard on producing this documentary. Again, I feel responsible for not being versed in the University procedures and providing the oversight that could have prevented this awkward and highly unfortunate situation. Please accept my apologies. We will work to ensure that the film meets the U's standards without compromising your creative vision for the film. I want to ensure that President Bruininks is fully behind your film prior to its release.

I appreciate all the hard work and honest effort you have put into this film to make it the best possible. This is an extra review step that most documentaries are not subjected to. I am sure that when we do release the film this coming Spring, it will have the full backing of the University. I will instruct Marty to draft a letter to key donors and stakeholders explaining that we have decided to put the film through scientific panel review given the controversial nature of the material. It will be signed by me and I invite you to co-sign it with me. This letter will go out when I am back in town and have a chance to review it.

### REACTION

, I ask that you channel that your energy into assisting me and the Dean by providing a bibliography of all the fact-checking that was done for the film and the spread-sheet of people interviewed for the film. I also request that you respond in a timely fashion to any requests for donor information and contracts.

You are an incredibly important member of our Bell public programs and management team. I appreciate your steady leadership and all your contributions.

We will get through this set-back. Thank you for understanding.

Sincerely,  
Susan

--  
Dr. Susan Weller  
Director and Professor  
J.F. Bell Museum of Natural History  
10 Church St, S.E., Room 300  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

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From: Karen Himle <himle@umn.edu>  
Subject: OK  
Date: September 28, 2010 4:32:34 PM CDT  
To: Ann Cieslak <ciesl002@umn.edu>

This may be ok if the propaganda airs on TPT - maybe that's what is at play.

REDACTION

K

REDACTION

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Karen Himle  
Vice President, University Relations  
University of Minnesota  
612-624-2855

From: Karen Himle <himle@umn.edu>  
 Subject: Personal and Confidential  
 Date: September 28, 2010 4:16:22 PM CDT  
 To: Ann Cieslak <ciesl002@umn.edu>

I met with President Bruininks and Kathy Brown for almost three hours this morning. It was apparent at the beginning that he did not understand the totality of the problem. He simply wanted to issue a statement and "put this behind us." I must tell you I almost walked away then. But I pressed and asked what he really knew of the situation. It was evident that the complexity of the matter hadn't been presented. As I peeled away the layers and described the various roles of the players his demeanor changed and he was quiet. In fact he spoke very very little and listened intently. He believes that he will be asked to say something about this to the Senate on Thursday. I urged him to review the words of Professor Cramer in the FCC minutes, as it is apparent to me that Professor Cramer understands what is at foot. I was very direct with him about the complicity of Dean Levine and the Provost. And I urged him to provide safe haven for Susan Weller, as I believe that she was muted under pressure by the Provost and Levine. My most important observation was that he say nothing until he understood his end game. I emphasized that the first words from him now on this matter would be the most important as they would have to be repeated over and over again.

The President said he spoke with Susan Weller last Sat evening before he left Morocco. He stated that Susan told him then that she had discovered very serious personnel problems and that she needed help. Until today, however, I don't believe that the President understood the full weight of those problems. He has not spoken with Susan since then. Susan is begging for help but has, I believe, and as I indicated last week, been threatened in some way by the Provost and/or Dean Levine within the academic ranks. This is why I believe this to be true:

-Redaction-

And now we wait on this.

I did talk with Gail Klatt today. She does not believe that her services are appropriate for this analysis. **REDACTION**  
 She would be available to assist. I did walk Gail through everything.

**REDACTION**

For what it's worth, I now have a word to describe what we have before us - Propaganda. The Troubled Waters film is styled precisely to Michael Moore's techniques of psychological persuasion. This is from an article by a Dr. Kelton Rhodes who is an expert in the subject. These are the techniques:

1. Omissions: Don't present the whole truth. What gives omissions their power is that often they are not recognized as missing by their audience. By leaving out important information, people are allowed to jump to conclusions about the evidence that is presented. The propagandist has, at no point, failed to tell the truth - they've just failed to tell the whole truth. (NOTE - this is what Assoc. Dean Greg Cuomo observed).
2. Contextualization: If you feel sad at any particular moment, that tends to color how you interpret whatever happens to you next. In propaganda this can be used by creating a bleed-through effect from one scene to another. The emotion from one scene is used to color how you interpret the content of the next scene. (NOTE - the producer of TW uses this technique liberally through the film)
3. Associations, Pacing and Distraction: Like Pavlov's dog. When Pavlov fed his dog, the dog salivated and he rang a bell. After a while the dog began salivating when he rang the bell, despite the fact that there was no food in sight. (Note - in this film there is a sad bold statement "the cow just dropped dead." What follows is a brisk quiet run-on narrative that "while the autopsy on the cow was inconclusive and that nitrates could have come from the farm's own manure pile - and then this narrative in slower, bolder voice - but the found is surrounded by nitrates flowing from other farms. The distraction combined with the association leads the viewer to believe that nitrates killed the cow, even though no statement to that effect is made.

It appears that our own Professor Cramer knows that what we have in front of us is, very intentional, propaganda.

There are others that I won't belabor. Maybe if this comes to an end this analysis in and of itself would be a good effort in scholarship.

In order to have that productive discussion, however, we have to emerge from the darkest part of this nonsense in tact.

Karen

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Karen Himle  
Vice President, University Relations  
University of Minnesota  
612-624-2855

From: Karen Himle <himle@umn.edu>  
Subject: **After a Good Rest, My Last Message on This**  
Date: September 29, 2010 7:32:38 AM CDT  
To: Robert Bruininks <bruin001@umn.edu>, Ann Cieslak <ciesl002@umn.edu>  
Cc: "rotenberg, mark" <mark.rotenberg@ogc.umn.edu>, brown059@umn.edu

What an amazing three weeks. I have learned more about people, policy and politics than you could ever get in a PhD

So we leave this saga with essentially the same question with which it began - just with sharper definition:

- REDACTION -

This isn't evil propaganda - it's actually quite interesting and certainly well presented. That's why no one was able at the beginning to figure out what was wrong - it just didn't seem quite right to anyone who viewed the film.

And that is the mark of truly well presented propaganda!

This is why Michael Moore has been so very successful. Not a fact is out of place, but the story is told in a manner to bring the casual viewer into the web - omission, making people feel sad, identifying that we are all part of a group oppressed by bad guys. Bring a couple of truly legitimate scientists into the picture and - voila! Propaganda!

Of course, because it is propaganda, the authors don't react very well if they are found out before their message is given full view. So they borrow from their propaganda tool box and advance on their opponent to weaken it into submission. They do so publicly - personally - relentlessly - creating such a distraction that no one even thinks to ask this question: "Why don't we look at the film and see what it's all about before we judge?"

But by then it's too late - rational thought has been sacrificed and the authors of the propaganda have prevailed.

Propaganda is a hard thing to identify and define, but, just as Justice Potter Stuart has opined on obscenity, I'll know it the next time I see it.

My goodness - education comes in all forms at the University of Minnesota - and I didn't even have to sign up for a class!

Karen

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Karen Himle  
Vice President, University Relations  
University of Minnesota  
612-624-2855



Susan Weller <welle008@umn.edu>

## Troubled Waters film

### premiere postponement

3 messages

Susan Weller <welle008@umn.edu>

Thu, Sep 9, 2010 at 12:13 PM

To: Martin Moen <mmoen@umn.edu>

Marty,

REDACTION

I've also contacted Himle. Feel free to relay to Karen just how pissed off I am (diplomatically) that they couldn't get their shit together when asked.

REDACTION

Will deal with setting up that science panel review tomorrow.

Susan

On Thu, Sep 9, 2010 at 12:06 PM, Martin Moen <mmoen@umn.edu> wrote:

THANK YOU....a difficult email, but very well written.

I'll get started on the letter with consultation from Barb and Mary.

m

On Thu, Sep 9, 2010 at 11:57 AM, Susan Weller <welle008@umn.edu> wrote:

Dear Barb,

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REDACTION

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development is a major concern to me and should be to you. Your reputation as a trusted source of environmental information is being sullied by incomplete information that is circulating. Reputations cannot be rebuilt easily; I would rather postpone and obtain an independent assessment by trusted scientists and policy makers than risk your reputation with a film release that is not endorsed by the scientific community and whose integrity is not supported the University.

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of the material. It will be signed by me and I invite you to co-sign it with me. This letter will go out when I am back in town and have a chance to review it.

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We will get through this set-back. Thank you for understanding.

Sincerely,  
Susan

--  
Dr. Susan Weller  
Director and Professor  
J.F. Bell Museum of Natural History  
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College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences

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Susan Weller <[welle008@umn.edu](mailto:welle008@umn.edu)>

Sat, Sep 18, 2010 at 11:29 AM

To: Daniel Wolter <[wolter@umn.edu](mailto:wolter@umn.edu)>

Cc: Allen Levine <[aslevine@umn.edu](mailto:aslevine@umn.edu)>, Lori Engstrom <[lmengstr@umn.edu](mailto:lmengstr@umn.edu)>, Marty Moen <[mmoen@umn.edu](mailto:mmoen@umn.edu)>

Hi Dan,

REDACTION

responses in writing

I'd prefer to keep my

REDACTION  
~~I should be ok to talk to Tom on Monday if he wishes to follow up on these responses.~~

Thanks, Susan

1. Who specifically previewed the documentary? ("a number of University officials and faculty")

I don't have all the names - I requested copies of the reviews from the film production team when I returned from Europe on Thursday and I am still waiting on them. I have given the production team a deadline of Monday afternoon to produce their documentation. I wish to fully document positive responses as well as criticisms of the film to be fair to the film's production team.

Personally, I was involved in one screening whose purpose was to discuss communication with stakeholders on all sides of the issue (agriculture, natural resources, watershed managers, extension, etc). My participation in this meeting was not to review the **scientific** content; this is not my research area of expertise. I am an evolutionary biologist by training.

2. What specific issues did they raise?

I don't have all the issues until I have the reviews. Barb Coffin and I were invited to the CFANS Deans council to discuss their concerns with the film. Their concerns centered on the lack of objectivity and factual errors concerning production agriculture.

3. Who are the faculty members who will review the film?

4. What is their timetable for meeting?

I do not have a list of names to share. I requested a list of suggested reviewers from the film's production team last Thursday; they have not yet provided any. I have also requested input from the Deans council (Saturday). My goal is to have the review team assembled next week.

My intent is to have a balanced review team (environmental, natural resources and production agriculture experts). The process will be expedited as much as possible.

As a scientist, I adhere closely to the system of peer-review because it is the gold standard. I was deeply disappointed to learn that my own staff did not follow standard procedures. I cannot defend the film to its critics until I have peer-reviews.

5. How did the procedure break down? Was there a researcher who oversaw the project's scientific integrity at the beginning? If so, who was he/she? What happened? Or was no one doing that?

Addressed on the website.

On Fri, Sep 17, 2010 at 4:31 PM, Daniel Wolter <[wolter@umn.edu](mailto:wolter@umn.edu)> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

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