What they are saying about SpinWatch

“MPs frustrate lobbyists with SpinWatch choice”

*PR Week* on SpinWatch being called to give evidence to the Public Administration Select Committee

“SpinWatch is an excellent site that covers spin in all aspects of the media, not just politics. It is definitely worth a visit”.

www.politicalog.co.uk

“Fantastic site that monitors spin in journalism. Centred in the UK it is truly international in scope and feel which is very refreshing”

www.stumbleupon.com

“I find Andy Rowell’s blog compelling; his recent article on the The Covert Pro-Nuclear Push in Schools is very disturbing”

Mark Borkowoski

“the man who has handled PR for some of the biggest names in the business”

“It's always worth listening to someone challenging things that people try to make fact simply by persistent repetition.”

www.stumbleupon.com

“you are just feeding... cynicism”

Conservative MP Charles Walker

(an ex-PR man himself)
What is Public Interest Investigations/SpinWatch?

Public Interest Investigations (PII) was formally incorporated in January 2005. PII was set up because we felt there was a need for a designated organisation to investigate social, political, environmental and health issues that are in the public interest in the UK and Europe.

PII’s aim is to undertake cutting-edge investigations and exposes into a whole array of issues such as the oil, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, car and nuclear industries.

We are also particularly interested in the public relations industry, as well as corporate and government propaganda that is undermining our democracy. To this end, a major component of PII so far has been SpinWatch, dedicated to reporting on corporate and government public relations and propaganda, as well as the activities of the lobbying industry.

We continue to be pleased with SpinWatch’s growth and success. We would like to thank our recent funders: the Humanitarian Group for Social Development, the Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation, the Network for Social Change and Greenpeace.

Our Recent Activities

The past year has been a busy one for us. We have been involved in a range of research, campaigning and outreach activities. The following is a selection of what we have been doing to promote greater critical awareness and scrutiny of spin.
Websites

**SpinWatch.org**

SpinWatch’s main website continues to grow, with just under 3 million pages served in 2007. We are in the process of adding new networking tools to the site, as well as increasing blogging and videos. We have also increased the number of bloggers on the site, including ex-BBC journalist, Nicholas Jones, and have commissioned and received contributions from a range of authors examining PR.

We have also recently launched a new SpinWatch newsletter, to update our registered users with topical and timely spin related news, campaigns and information. We are increasing our subscribers every week and intend to use this, and similar forms of online communications, to develop and strengthen the SpinWatch community.

**NuclearSpin**

The NuclearSpin website has been updated and expanded. There are new sections on countries and regions, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, the EU, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom and United States.

There are also hugely expanded profiles on pro-nuclear organisations and lobby groups, and a new analysis section, including with key articles such as “Why Nuclear is not the Answer to Climate Change” and “Pro-Nuclear Push in Schools”.


In a pioneering move, we are now merging the NuclearSpin wiki database with that of Sourcewatch’s wiki in the US. The reason for this is to provide the largest online critical database on nuclear issues on the web. We will still keep our NuclearSpin front page, but will benefit hugely from the far larger traffic that the longer-standing Sourcewatch database generates.
**FoodSpin**

We have started compiling a sister website to NuclearSpin called FoodSpin.org. Just as we are profiling the people behind the push for nuclear we are also building profiles of organisations linked to the globalised food chain.

These organisations have been broken down into various categories, so on the FoodSpin there are now: Over 100 global food companies; 50 food industry lobby groups; 40 food lobbyists and PR companies; a dozen food-related government agencies and a dozen food industry front groups. Foodspin will be launched sometime in 2008.

**Spinprofiles**

Foodspin is part of the Spinprofiles database. This database is being compiled by a range of contributors and writers interested in propaganda, lobbying, and PR networks. The database is currently operating as a private, restricted access resource for those involved with Spinwatch’s work. We plan to publish content from the database through various online outlets during 2008.

**Lobbying Transparency.org**

In the UK, SpinWatch is a founding member of the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency that was launched in January 2008. It already has fifteen NGOs and Unions involved. A further nineteen organisations have been approached. The campaign has its own website: http://www.lobbyingtransparency.org.
Books / Brochures / Investigations


David Miller and William Dinan have recently published “A Century of Spin: How Public Relations Became the Cutting Edge of Corporate Power”, which offers a new account of the emergence and spread of PR during the 20th century.

SpinWatch’s Andy Rowell had a chapter in the book “A Game as Old As Empire – The Secret World of Economic Hitmen and Web of Global Corruption”, which was published as a sequel to the international-bestseller, “Confessions of an Economic Hitman” in 2007.

An investigation by SpinWatch uncovered that the head of the new European Chemicals Agency, ECHA, was being “imposed” by the European Commission. The investigation found the name of one of the strongest candidates – Ethel Forsberg, the head of Kemi, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, was removed by the Commission before the short-list of two was sent to ECHA’s Management Board to decide who to pick.

Our investigation into the food industry front group -TOAST- was published in the Independent on Sunday in January 2008. We exposed TOAST’s hidden connections to the diet industry, its use of parliamentary influence to promote the diet industry's agenda; its lack of transparency with regard to funding; and its use of parliamentary influence with respect to funding.

In 2007, SpinWatch undertook a long investigation into conflicts of interests of MEPs. The report, that examines conflicts over issues such as nuclear power, hedge funds, genetic engineering, motor vehicles, financial services, the media industry, public relations companies and the American military, will be published in 2008.

SpinWatch also contributed written evidence to the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) inquiry into lobbying in the UK. SpinWatch was subsequently called to give oral evidence to the committee.
Public Events

SpinWatch was also one of the organizers of the 2007 EU Worst Lobby Awards. At a festive awards ceremony in Brussels in December 2007, German car manufacturers BMW, Daimler and Porsche were disgraced when they were named winners of the ‘Worst EU Lobbying’ Award 2007. The German Atomic Forum was also named and shamed with a special prize for ‘Worst EU Greenwash’.

SpinWatch has been heavily involved in the ALTER EU campaign for lobbying disclosure. We have participated in various meetings and conferences discussing transparency and lobbying regulation, including giving evidence to the European Parliament hearing on the ETI in September 2006 and participating in the Council of Europe Corruption & Democracy conference in Strasbourg in November 2006.

SpinWatch also participated in the ALTER EU assembly in Brussels in October 2007, presenting papers and leading discussions on the development of lobbying regulations, and the possibilities of different forms of lobbying regulation emerging from the ongoing European Transparency Initiative (ETI).

Several members of SpinWatch participated in the international conference on “Communication and Conflict”, held by the Department of Geography and Sociology at the University of Strathclyde in September 2007. This conference brought together some of the world’s leading researchers and writers on PR and propaganda. The conference also involved a Lobbying Roundtable, with invited contributors from academia, politics, journalism, civil society and the lobbying industry across the UK, Europe and the US.

Press Complaints

We revealed the political connections behind the people attacking Al Gore’s film, An Inconvenient Truth. Working with the organization MediaLens, we challenged the BBC over their reporting of the issue, gaining significant concessions from them over reporting of issues to do with front groups.

We were part of a team of people who submitted the largest ever complaint to OFCOM concerning a programme broadcast in Britain – Channel Four’s Great Global Warming Swindle. OFCOM’s decision is still awaited.
What Next?

SpinWatch will be at the forefront of the campaign for regulation of lobbyists in the UK as well as the EU. We will be continuing our work investigating the activities of the nuclear, fossil fuel, food, and lobbying industry, amongst others.

SpinWatch is also developing a number of new projects, including work on military and defence propaganda, and the role of neo-conservative think tanks and policy planning groups in the UK and Europe.
## Public Interest Investigations

Trading, profit and loss account for the year ended 31st May 2007

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**Balance** 10361