

The real Al Gore

Before he became the patron saint of climate change, Al Gore was a truly despicable politician, owned lock stock and barrel by Wall Street.

Here are a handful of lowlights from his political CV that expose the real Al Gore:

Protector of Wall Street fraud. As William Black reveals in his book *The Best Way to Rob a Bank is to Own One*, the disastrous Savings & Loans crisis in the late 1980s and early 1990s was due to widespread control fraud in the newly-deregulated sector. The incoming Clinton administration in 1993 had the job of reforming the financial sector to ensure against a repeat of the crisis; Vice President Al Gore took the lead on the issue, as part of his neoliberal anti-regulation downsizing agenda called “Reinventing Government”.

William Black was part of a team of regulators who had contained the S&L crisis to US\$150 billion in losses, rather than trillions, including by aggressively enforcing loan underwriting rules that dramatically reduced mortgage control fraud. Gore put a stop to all that. Gore’s choice to oversee his Reinventing Government deregulation agenda, Bob Stone, bragged he got the job by pitching to Gore his view that the government shouldn’t “waste one second going after ... fraud.” One of the first acts of deregulation to come from Gore’s agenda was replacing the effective loan underwriting rules with an unenforceable guideline. “This was the single most destructive act of deregulation by the Clinton and Bush (II) administrations”, Black wrote.

US drug companies’ profits over African AIDS victims’ lives. In 1997 South Africa passed a law to give its six million AIDS patients access to cheaper AIDS drugs. This enraged the big US and European drug companies, which claimed it violated their “intellectual property” rights—a favourite US corporate line to this day—even though most poverty-stricken South African AIDS patients couldn’t afford their drugs anyway. Al Gore went to war on behalf of the drug companies, from whom he received millions in campaign donations, and put intense pressure on South African president Thabo Mbeki to drop the legislation and bow down to the drug companies. This issue returned to bite Gore in 1999 in the lead-up to his US presidential bid, when AIDS patients protested at his campaign events. Only then did Gore compromise and settle the dispute, uncaring about the deaths of many thousands of African AIDS patients in the meantime.

Warmonger. With Bill Clinton mired in the Monica Lewinsky scandal, in 1999 Al Gore took the point in the administration to commit the USA to British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s push to intervene in Kosovo. The significance of the Kosovo intervention cannot be overstated. Under Blair’s direction, it would become a practice run for the illegal invasion of Iraq, and subsequent regime-change interventions in Libya and Syria, because it introduced a new doctrine into international law called Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which justified military action against a country if it were done to protect civilians in that country from human rights atrocities. Blair boasted his doctrine would end the principle of national sovereignty and non-interference that had underpinned international law since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. However, as Kosovo and subsequent military interventions, especially in Libya, have demonstrated, the supposed human right atrocities can be faked, and used as a pretext. The Kosovo intervention was also the first time NATO was used in an offensive military action, rather than a defensive one.

President Clinton was reluctant to commit to Kosovo, but caved in under pressure from Hillary Clinton and Gore, who enthusiastically endorsed Blair’s far-reaching agenda and vocally prosecuted the case for war. Gore also went on to support the 2003 invasion of Iraq on a lie.

Surveillance state enforcer. Silicon Valley tech giant Google is now a global surveillance machine, able to monitor the activities and tastes of billions of people. This is no accident—Google’s founders got started with backing from the Pentagon, which controls the National Security Agency (NSA), and the company has been a Pentagon contractor since 2003.

Google’s ability to monitor our lives might have been stopped before it started, however, if a California State Senator, Democrat Liz Figueroa, had succeeded in passing a bill in 2003 requiring Google to get the informed consent of everyone copied into a Gmail, Google’s email product, before it was allowed to scan the email for information it could use in targeted advertising. Targeted ads are how Google makes its billions, but when Gmail first launched, its users were initially shocked to see ads related to the private content of their emails. The legislator’s bill had a good chance of passing, which would have destroyed Google’s business model and completely changed the nature of the internet as we know it today. Desperate, Google turned to none other than Al Gore, who flew into California to stand over Figueroa in a closeddoor meeting, demanding she drop her bill. Figueroa buckled, and thanks to Gore, our children are now growing up in a world where privacy is a foreign concept and 24-hour surveillance by private tech giants working for the Anglo-American surveillance state is almost inescapable.

But he has our best interests at heart on climate change.

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