

Scene on Radio

BONUS Episode: Manchin on the Hill, and Introducing *Drilled*

Transcript

Sound: People vs. Fossil Fuels protest, October 11th, 2021: [protesters chanting to the beat of a drum] ... Ain't no power like the power of the people / cuz the power of the people don't stop / Say what? Ain't no power like the power of the people / cuz the power of the people don't stop / Say what? Ain't no

Amy Westervelt: Not to be all dramatic, but the fall of 2021 is a fateful moment for the future of planet Earth. With climate watchers turning our lonely eyes to Washington, D.C.

John Biewen: As you know, Amy, I drove up to D.C. and recorded this during a week of "People vs. Fossil Fuels" protests aimed at the White House.

Sound: People vs. Fossil Fuels protesters, singing: We are the protectors....

Man: Sing it loud!

Amy Westervelt: You were making recordings for use later in our series, when we really dive into talking about actions and solutions. But we decided to check in here, as part of this bonus episode, on what's happening in the capital right now.

John Biewen: Yeah. And for people listening to this in the future, we're recording this the week of October 18th, 2021. And we've said this before on Scene on Radio: we're a documentary show, usually not reacting to what's in the latest headlines. But from time to time, we just can't resist. When what's going on in the world connects too tightly with the themes of an ongoing series, we'll get together and talk about it. As Chenjerai and I did a couple of times in our Season 4 series on American democracy, for instance.

Amy Westervelt: So, as we're recording this, it's looking like we're at this real moment of truth for whether the U.S. Congress will finally, finally do something meaningful on climate, after decades of inaction and stalemate and catastrophic failure to lead — or whether our “leaders” will continue to fail us. Right now, it's not looking good.

John Biewen: As a lot of our listeners will know: Democrats in the U.S. Senate are trying to reach a deal on what the Biden Administration called its Build Back Better bill. It was put on the table as a 10-year, 3.5 trillion-dollar package that would strengthen the safety net and support people and families: expanded Medicare coverage, support for childcare — and childcare workers. Universal preschool and free community college. Making permanent the recently expanded child tax credit. And more. But crucially, the bill would also be the first really significant action by the U.S. government to transform the U.S. energy system and address the climate emergency, right?

Amy Westervelt: Yes. And it's important to say that even the measures in this Biden bill are not enough — not nearly as transformative as we would want and need them to be to slash carbon emissions and head off the catastrophic effects of a warming planet. Most

climate experts say it would need to be more like \$10 trillion over the next ten years. But, after decades of maddening inaction, it would at least be a real start. And it would give us all some hope that the U.S. — the world's number-one contributor to the climate crisis, as we've been demonstrating in this series — that the U.S. might build on these actions and maybe, just maybe, meaningfully cut carbon emissions in the coming decade.

John Biewen: But ... enter Joe Manchin, the Democratic senator from West Virginia.

Amy Westervelt: A literal coal baron.

John Biewen: As widely reported in the U.S., every single Republican in Congress is promising to vote against this bill. Every single one. Taking the climate crisis seriously has become an absolute no-no for an elected Republican in the U.S.A., at least at the national level. So the Democrats, with their 51-to-50 majority in the Senate, counting Kamala Harris's tie-breaking vote as Vice President, they need every member on board to pass the thing. But this past week, reports came out that Manchin in particular is adamantly opposed to one key climate provision — the most powerful piece, from what I understand.

Amy Westervelt: Yes. It's a program that would give U.S. energy companies a firm push. It would financially reward energy suppliers that convert from oil and coal and natural gas to clean renewables like solar and wind — and, importantly, it would *fine* those who don't. A powerful carrot *and* stick. The program is called the Clean Electricity Performance Program — CEPP. Some analysis has shown that it could actually keep us to 1.5 degrees of warming — that's a target most people have assumed is out of reach entirely by this

point. So, a real potential win for, you know, human and other life on this planet. But according to reports that cite sources involved in the negotiations, Manchin has let it be known that he will not vote for the bill if CEPP is in it.

John Biewen: If Manchin is taking this position, it's quite a blow, isn't it. And it's both frustrating and revealing, because the Clean Electricity program, CEPP, is not even expensive, as these things go. 150 billion over ten years — that would be a pretty small fraction of even the trimmed-down bill that Manchin is insisting on.

Amy Westervelt: Yeah, exactly! Up to now Manchin has been saying he objects to the Build Back Better bill because it's just too expensive, or it adds to the deficit — even though Biden and the progressives in Congress structured the bill so tax increases would pay for it and it *wouldn't* add much, if anything, to the deficit. And, to put that word “expensive” in perspective, I think it's worth noting that the defense budget *every year* is more than \$700 billion. So, that means \$7 trillion a decade, at least, which is twice what's being proposed here. Not to mention the fact that unchecked climate change comes with a price tag of \$1.9 trillion a year. That's not even counting unquantifiable things like human lives and the loss of entire species. But Manchin's been talking about cost for months. At the last minute — surprise, surprise! — it seems what he actually objects to is the one provision that would push the energy system away from fossil fuels. Which is infuriating. The fact that one dude basically gets to decide whether or not we act in time on climate, and that he was *always* going to double down on fossil fuels no matter what ... ugh! I don't know about you, John, but I'm fueled by rage right now.

John Biewen: It's maddening, first because, duh, the whole point is to pivot away from fossil fuels, to save the planet and the natural world and civilization as we know it. But Manchin's position is doubly disturbing because he's got a blatant conflict of interest.

Amy Westervelt: That's right. Joe Manchin owns somewhere between a million and five million dollars of stock in a coal brokerage company — a company he founded a few decades ago — and he earned almost half a million dollars in dividends from that company in 2020 alone. So, a rapid move away from coal would hurt Joe's own wallet. It's appalling that this is even legal. I mean, that one guy with personal interest in a polluting industry, an actual medium-sized coal baron, gets to decide for 330 million Americans — never mind the whole rest of the world, by the way — that no, we're not gonna take aggressive action to shut down that industry in order to save ourselves and our world.

John Biewen: Aside from his personal bank account, Manchin has received more campaign donations from the coal, oil and gas, and mining industries than any other senator in either party in the current election cycle. A spokesman for Manchin told the *New York Times* that he won't accept the Clean Electricity Program because he can't support "using taxpayer dollars to pay private companies to do things they're already doing."

Amy Westervelt: Whew, that's rich, considering the billions in taxpayer subsidies that Congress has given to oil and coal industries over the years to do what they were already doing. Presumably to Joe Manchin's literal, personal benefit, since he's a major investor in the coal industry. So, yeah, the "I'm for the free market" routine is complete bullsh** here, it doesn't fly. If we needed more evidence that Manchin is carrying water for the fossil fuel

industry, don't forget that sting that Unearthed, the journalism project funded by Greenpeace UK, pulled off in the summer of 2021. They tricked two former ExxonMobil lobbyists, Keith McCoy and Dan Easley, into thinking they were interviewing for a new job opportunity, and got them bragging about various feats they'd pulled off for Exxon. McCoy was really over the top. He bragged about how he planned to prevent any aggressive climate action thanks to his close ties to key members of Congress.

John Biewen: Here's a clip of that interview, from a report by Britain's Channel 4 News.

Channel 4 News, Keith McCoy video: Joe Manchin, I talk to his office every week, and he is the kingmaker on this because he's a Democrat from West Virginia, which is a very conservative state, and he's not shy about sort of staking his claim early and completely changing the debate. So, on the Democrat side we look for the moderates on these issues, so it's the Manchins, it's the Sinemas, it's the Testers.

John Biewen: There he's referring to Senators Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Jon Tester of Montana.

Amy Westervelt: As an aside, it was charming to see Exxon disavow what Keith McCoy said in that interview, including the fact that, yes, the company "aggressively [fought] against" climate science for years. After the footage came out, the CEO of Exxon Mobil said he was "shocked" by McCoy's comments and that the company "stands by our commitments to working on finding solutions to climate change." It would be strange if Keith McCoy didn't represent the company's views, since his job was to represent the

company's views. His title at Exxon at the time? "Senior director of federal relations." So this was not an intern that like, went rogue. [Laughs]

John Biewen: Yeah, he's the chief lobbyist for the company. But he doesn't represent our views. How — wha — where did this come from? Right?

Amy Westervelt: Right.

John Biewen: So, back to Joe Manchin: he likes to talk about protecting the jobs of coal miners in his state. But coal has been slowly or not so slowly dying for years. Fewer than 15 thousand West Virginians are still employed in coal. Many times that number work in healthcare, education, childcare, industries that would all get a big boost of support from the Biden bill, never mind the hundreds of thousands of poor and working-class families who can really use that new child tax credit that is lifting families out of poverty across the country and which this bill would make permanent.

Amy Westervelt: So, yeah. It's hard to see how Senator Manchin is really looking out for the people of West Virginia in any way! Even in the most short-term economic terms, let alone the fact that maybe it's better for West Virginians not to be drowned by climate-induced floods.

John Biewen: Meanwhile, Amy, what does Kyrsten Sinema want?

Amy Westervelt: Oh God, who the hell knows! She's a manic pixie dream girl who loves triathalons and politics. I don't know. I don't know what she wants!

John Biewen: Again, she is the Democrat from Arizona, the other senator who's refusing to support the 3.5 trillion-dollar version of the Biden bill.

Amy Westervelt: During these crucial negotiations she's been attending fundraisers in the U.S. and in Europe. I mean, are you kidding me right now? Drug and medical companies have given three quarters of a million dollars to Sinema's political campaigns over the years and, coincidentally, she's come out against a part of the Biden bill that would lower prescription drug costs for people on Medicare. Again, that looks like in-your-face corruption, or at least the appearance of it.

John Biewen: But we're not accustomed to calling it that in this country. Our press talks breezily about deep corruption in other countries, especially in the so-called developing world. When it comes to the U.S. political system, our media reserves the word corruption for the really hardcore illegal stuff, right? Under-the-table personal bribes. Reporters dutifully point out apparent conflicts of interest when they're glaring enough, like in this Joe Manchin case or Sinema's campaign contributions. But it's all pretty polite. You know, this is kinda unseemly, but it's how things work. And we don't have enough debate in this country about a political system that just doesn't serve the interests of most of the people – for multiple reasons, some of them baked in since the 1780s, but also in part because the system is rife with, call it what you will, corruption.

Amy Westervelt: Yeah. You know, John, somebody really ought to do a podcast series on so-called democracy in America, and how we've never really had it. By design.

John Biewen: Mm. Hmm, great idea. [Amy laughs.] The lack of real democracy is a key reason we're in this climate fix — the congressional stalemate we've just been talking about, and the decades of inaction that have brought us to the edge of this cliff.

Amy Westervelt: And our so-called leaders *still* cannot get it together and take action, even now, when public opinion is finally coming around despite decades of misinformation and climate denial. Look at a few poll numbers. In a fall 2021 survey from Monmouth University, 60 percent of U.S. adults said climate change is “very” or “extremely” important for the federal government to address. In a Pew survey from 2020, 79 percent of Americans said the country should prioritize shifting to alternative energy sources. 79 percent. And that's across the board. Large majorities of Democrats *and* Republicans support tougher restrictions on emissions from power plants and giving tax credits to those companies to move to renewables. And yet, our major news organizations are still in the habit of calling people like Manchin “moderates” or “centrists.” When the fact is they're taking a fringe position — along with the entire Republican caucus — in blocking climate action.

John Biewen: It doesn't even feel accurate to call their position “conservative,” does it? I mean, what's being conserved there? It's really just a protect-certain-toxic-industries position. Which is either just stubbornly irrational, or it's corrupt. Folks can decide for themselves which of those is most likely. But “moderate” it ain't.

[Music]

Amy Westervelt: Whew. The story's not over. We'll see where things go in the final months of 2021. We're also headed into a pretty big climate disinformation investigation in the Congress at the moment. The President will be headed to Glasgow for the next international climate summit at the end of October and early November. So, there are more things coming down the pipeline. Maybe something will jar Manchin's brain loose, I don't know.

[Break]

John Biewen: There's something else we came here to do in this bonus episode, at roughly the midpoint of Season 5. As a complement to our series, *The Repair*, I wanted to bring you all an episode from a show that many of you know about, and some of you have discovered this season through Scene on Radio: Amy Westervelt's podcast, *Drilled*. Amy, how do you describe *Drilled*?

Amy Westervelt: I call it a true crime podcast about climate change.

John Biewen: In this, our bonus episode, we're sharing a *Drilled* piece that picks up on themes you explored, Amy, in parts 3 and 4 of *The Repair* — fleshing out some stories about one of the major figures in the public relations industry that protected oil producers

and other polluters for decades. This is episode 2 of *Drilled*, Season 3, *The Mad Men of Climate Denial*.

[Sound: Nazis marching]

Amy Westervelt: This is a newsreel from the Associated Press in Germany, April 6th, 1933. The headline is “Boycott of Jews is enforced by Nazis.” That same month in the U.S. and the U.K., an anti-Nazi boycott began, discouraging people from buying German products. Hitler was chancellor and had been building his case against Jews and communists for months, calling them the “enemies from within” who had caused Germany devastating losses in World War I. Later that year, IG Farben, the largest chemical company in Germany, gave its American publicist a massive new contract. That man was Standard Oil PR guy Ivy Lee. He had been working for Farben in the US for about \$4,000 a year since 1929. In 1933, the German parent company offered him \$25,000 a year, and his son \$33,000 a year for advice. Standard Oil was also working with Farben. By this point, they had formed a joint venture to work on petrochemicals and synthetic fuels. They'd seen what Lee had done for Standard Oil and the Rockefellers, and with the boycotts and growing anti-German sentiment in the U.S., Farben wanted Lee's help. And the reason for the big raise soon became clear. He wasn't just advising a German chemical company. He was advising the Third Reich.

[Sound: Hitler giving a speech]

Amy Westervelt: Now, as far as we can tell from various available documents, the point was not to sell the Nazi regime and its ideas to America as is, but really to convince the Nazi leadership to tone down the rhetoric.

[Sound: Hitler giving a speech]

Amy Westervelt: ... to shift some of their thinking make themselves more palatable to Americans. One of the big things that Lee was focused on initially was getting them to drop the idea of kicking the foreign press out of Germany because that idea had been floated at the time, and it was something Lee thought of as a clear indication of fascism. In January 1934, Lee takes meetings with Hitler and also with his minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, and offers them some advice. To get along better with Americans, Lee suggests they stop pushing propaganda in the US, and rather than kick out the foreign press in Germany, they should befriend them. This advice was actually documented a few months later in written testimony to the House un-American Activities Committee by U.S. Ambassador to Berlin William Dodd. Dodd goes on to write about a conciliatory speech that Goebbels delivered to diplomats and the foreign press, saying, "it was plain he was trying to apply the advice, which Ivy Lee urged upon him a month ago."

Lee testified about his work in May of 1934, and it wasn't the first time he'd been investigated by the government. Lee's work for the Soviet Union had also raised suspicions. He often bragged about being responsible for the U.S. resuming trade with Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution, a feat he firmly believed was just good for business for both countries. He took a similar stance on his work with the Third Reich, but the press didn't necessarily see it that way. When his testimony was released to the public, reporters grilled Lee, and he did the exact opposite thing that he'd always advised his clients to do. Instead of talking to the press, he dodged them.

By August, Hitler was not just Chancellor, but also President of Germany. Officially, the Führer. Ivy Lee had developed a brain tumor by this point. In his last months, he met again with Dodd, who wrote about this meeting in his diary. He wrote, "Today, the old man

looked broken and in spite of talk about his cure, I am sure his health is very poor. He has made his millions the last 20 years, and now the world knows how it was done."

Lee died in November 1934. He couldn't answer any more questions, so the government closed their investigation of him, and he wouldn't live to see what his last clients would do.

So why would the Third Reich go looking for a publicist in America?

Because in just 20 years, Lee had turned John D. Rockefeller from a man routinely described as the most hated man in America into a kindly philanthropist who was widely admired. He did that through a combination of tactics that have been used by everyone from dictators to CEOs ever since, and that are still very much in use by the fossil fuel industry today. And he created essentially the first front group, an oil industry organization that allowed individual companies to pool resources and vastly expand their reach without anyone really noticing. That's the story we're going to dig into in this episode.

I'm Amy Westervelt, and this is Drilled, season three, The Mad Men of Climate Denial. If you haven't listened to episode one yet, go back and do that. This season, we're looking at the history of Big Oil's Big Propaganda Machine and the specific spin masters who helped create it.

You met Ivy Lee last time.

Ivy Lee: Mr. Rockefeller listened to me patiently, pleasantly and calmly until I'd finished my eloquent presentation of why he should do...

Amy Westervelt: The thing you need to know about Ivy Lee's first years in PR is that he invented some of the fundamental techniques that are still in use today. The press release and the press conference are the two you probably know best.

President Donald Trump: In order to fulfill my solemn duty to protect America and its citizens, the United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord.

Amy Westervelt: But arguably the most important method Lee perfected—the foundation of PR—was the use of tightly controlled language. He believed that words really matter and that industry should try to control them. We see this today all the time. In the case of climate change, for example, the term has shifted over the years.

James Hansen: The greenhouse effect.

President George Bush Senior: Global warming.

President Bill Clinton: Climate change.

Amy Westervelt: All of that—the press releases, the press conferences, the language, the wordplay—it's all so common now that it's hard to even imagine a time before those things existed. But when Ivy Ledbetter Lee was growing up in Georgia, America was a very different place.

[Music]

Amy Westervelt: Lee was born just a few years after Americans discovered that oil could be used for energy. Before that, it was just this annoying substance that came up whenever we were looking for water or salt. And then it became a cure all.

Carnival barker: ... step right up, folks. Here's the answer to your problems.

Doctor, you

Amy Westervelt: Seriously, people used to put crude oil on sore muscles or even drink it to treat everything from cholera to bronchitis. But by the 1870s, the oil rush was on. Journalist Ida Tarbell chronicled those days in her magnum opus *The History of Standard Oil*. Ivy Lee was born during those 1870 boom years. He was the son of a popular minister in Georgia. After graduating from Princeton University, Lee worked as a reporter for a few years and then, like so many journalists since, he got tired of being broke and took a job as a publicity guy. From there, he got into political campaigning, and he worked for the Democratic National Committee for a while, the DNC. There, he met a guy named George Parker, who was working on the campaign of a judge Alton Parker. The judge is a candidate no one remembers because he got absolutely trounced by President Theodore Roosevelt, who won his reelection that year. [Music] When the election was over, George and Ivy joined forces to create one of the country's first PR firms. They were also the first to distinguish public relations from just publicity. Publicity was about getting your picture in the paper. Public relations was about building a real relationship, not just between your client and the media, but also kind of using the media to make a better relationship between your client and the public.

As a former journalist, Lee really believed that companies should be more transparent with the press. In his mind, rather than hiring publicity managers, companies should be hiring staff journalists to help them explain themselves to the public. So, yeah, we might have him to thank for that trend.

Lee worked with a bunch of coal companies in his early years. And they were all pretty regularly embroiled with labor disputes, so he put out this declaration of principles that was all about how companies should be truthful and authentic. But what he actually helped them do is use the truth to sell lies, and that's a key tactic the fossil fuel industry still uses today. Here's science historian Naomi Oreskes.

Naomi Oreskes: One of the reasons that it's so easy for people to sow doubt about climate change or any other issue is that if confusion is your goal, mixed messages are a very effective strategy. So you can say a lot of different things, and some of them may well be true. And you can even quote out of context the true things you have said in order to make it seem as if you are quite reasonable, as if you're operating in good faith and that you are an entity to be trusted.

Amy Westervelt: You can totally see the roots of that in the very first press release, which Ivy Lee wrote. In 1906, Parker and Lee were working on behalf of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company when one of its trains fell off a drawbridge in Atlantic City. Fifty people were drowned and the railroad came to Lee and Parker basically looking for help covering it up. Because that's how railroads handled things at the time. They were constantly having wrecks and then covering up what happened. But Lee had learned from his time with the coal companies that this kind of thing was just a bad move. It made the public distrust you. And besides, it wasn't always the railroad's fault that these wrecks happened. Plus, he was starting to realize that whoever told the story first was the one the public really listened to. So he convinced the Pennsylvania railroad guys to go a different route and draft a statement to send to the media instead. And it does exactly this thing that Oreskes talks about. It uses various truths to ultimately mislead people. It says the wreck happened, and the company doesn't know why, but it's investigating. But it knows that it's not the rails or the bridge or the operators, and it lands on a suspicion of the cause of the wreck. The manufacturing of the train car, which of course is the only thing the railroad has no responsibility for. So it never outright lies. It just leads to a particular conclusion that benefits the railroad. Lee sent this statement to the *New York Times* and got an incredible result. The paper printed it word for word. And now suddenly Lee realizes, Wow, this is a

lot of power. I can just tell journalists what the story is and they'll print it. This is a big deal and a really big tool for industry. It wasn't just generally a better idea to tell people what you're actually up to. Communicating with the press in this way also gave you the opportunity to shape the story.

So this is a big, big shift in how the public gets information. A couple of years later, Lee has another big breakthrough. He realizes another key part of shaping the story is shaping the language journalists use to describe his clients and what they're doing. So by this point, his firm has shut down. He and George have parted ways, and he's working full time for the Pennsylvania railroad. He writes the first PR advice book, and in it, he says the key thing that companies need to worry about is getting the public on their side. And he talks about how you can use language to do that. He gives the example of railroads and the full crew law.

So, like I said, at the time there were a lot of wrecks. And actually a lot of them were happening because of negligence and because trains were understaffed. So the government steps in and they try to impose what they call full crew regulations. Basically, you have to have full staff on your train to make sure it's safe. But Lee flips the script on this. He has the Pennsylvania railroad guys start talking about these regulations as *extra* crew requirements. So just think about that for a second. The difference between full and extra and what a stroke of genius this was. "Full" implies that the railroads are cutting corners, that their crews are lacking in some way. "Extra" implies that this is not a necessity, that the government is asking railroads to do more than they need to and imposing a burden on them. It's totally standard industry spin today, but we have Ivy Lee to thank for that. And that's a good thing to remember—that this kind of thinking was going on in the background of corporate communications very strategically more than 100 years ago. Especially when you listen to the way the industry describes itself today.

American Petroleum Institute advertisement: [Music] We're leading the world in oil and natural gas production. That means lower energy costs, more growth, more security for Americans. More energy means more opportunity. We just need the right policies to make it happen.

Amy Westervelt: By the time Ivy Lee began working with Rockefeller in 1914, he was a master at this stuff. And shortly after that, the U.S. joined World War I, and Lee was tapped to run publicity for the American Red Cross. That job put him in regular contact with the government's propaganda department, which was also run by a former journalist turned political campaigner, a guy named George Creel. Creel had helped campaign for President Woodrow Wilson with the slogan "He kept us out of the war." So now that Wilson was joining the war, he wanted Creel's help convincing the American public that it was a good idea. And Creel was up to the task. He pulled together both journalists and publicity experts, graphic designers, musicians, filmmakers—basically anyone who had worked in or around media and entertainment in any way. And he launches a full-blown propaganda campaign across film, print and radio.

Johnny Get Your Gun: [Music] Johnny get your gun, get your gun, get your gun /
Take it on the run, on the run

Amy Westervelt: Even Ida Tarbell was part of the Creel Commission. It was all hands on deck. The Creole Commission and Ivy Lee at the Red Cross were also tasked with creating a positive image of America outside the country. The guy in charge of that for Creel was Edward Bernays, who just so happened to be the nephew of Sigmund Freud. Bernays put all of his uncle's psychological know-how to work on behalf of the country. He went on to become one of Lee's top competitors and, like Lee, to have a large influence on

Hitler's approach to propaganda. But in those days, they were focused on selling America to the world and learning a lot from each other. One of Bernays' big innovations was to enlist Hollywood in the effort, banning the export of anything that showed America in an even slightly negative light and funding movies that highlighted the bravery of American soldiers.

WWI fight song: [Music] We'll be over, we're coming over, / And we won't come back till

Amy Westervelt: It was the broadest and best funded PR effort Lee had ever seen, and the experience taught him a very key lesson. If you can pull together enough resources, you can wage an all-out psychological war that's impossible to beat. Which of course, gave him an idea for his best client, Standard Oil. One company, even a company run by Rockefellers, could only do so much. But what if they came together as an industry? They'd already kind of done it. A petroleum board of all the companies was pulled together during the war to make sure there was a steady supply of fuel to the front. If they could come together during a war, why couldn't they do it to benefit the industry in peacetime? Here's environmental sociologist Bob Brulle.

Bob Brulle: Ivy Lee draws on his experience in the war propaganda board effort to start developing larger institutional public relations efforts, and he works with the head of Standard Oil of New Jersey, which we now know as ExxonMobil, to form the American Petroleum Institute in 1919. And so the American Petroleum Institute is now one hundred years old, and it's considered to be the, really the first modern, sophisticated, public relations oriented trade association in the world.

Amy Westervelt: So in 1919, Ivy Lee begins representing not just the various Standard Oil companies, but also a new oil industry group, the American Petroleum Institute. With the resources of the entire industry behind it, the API didn't have to choose between media relations and lobbying or influencing the film industry and the news press. It could do all of it and more. This is really Ivy Lee's great and lasting contribution to how the world sees the oil industry today. For more than a century now, the API has been running a multi-pronged propaganda campaign, indoctrinating Americans with the idea that the oil industry is a fundamental part of American life. It started just after World War I, went right through World War II, and has carried on ever since. Here's a bit from a short film the API released in 1950 called "24 Hours of Progress."

24 Hours of Progress: [Music] The production of oil is a measure of American progress. As our nation grows, so grows our need for petroleum.

Amy Westervelt: Now, compare that with this 2018 campaign they ran called "Power Past Impossible."

American Petroleum Institute Superbowl advertisement: The things that we're doing with technology, we're pushing the boundaries of what the oil and gas industry has seen.

Amy Westervelt: So before this guy talks, there's a lot of hard pumping music and some patriotic word salad on screen, connecting the oil industry to everything you know and love about America. It is really heavy handed and very "America! F**k yeah!" And it's clearly trying to target young people. Part of this ad ran during the Super Bowl. Other parts showed up all over YouTube and various podcasts. But again, remember the big lesson

Ivy Lee brought home from World War I to the oil industry was not just pool all these resources into a big group that can't be tracked, but also pool all these resources so you can wage a multi-front all out propaganda war. So it's not just commercials we're talking about here, it's way broader and deeper than that. Here's Dr. Brulle again.

Bob Brulle: The American Petroleum Institute was actively engaging in public relations activity, and I did find some material about their educational outreach to elementary and secondary schools in the 1960s about, you know, getting their viewpoint about energy and petroleum into schools, which starts certainly in the 60s and continues to this very day.

Amy Westervelt: It's every aspect of society and culture, from Super Bowl ads to educational materials in schools, for a hundred years, repeating the same message. Oil is good. Oil is American. Oil is necessary for progress.

Next time on Drilled, we'll meet our next spin master, Daniel Edelman. He learned all about psychological warfare while combating Nazi propaganda in World War II and came home and used those tricks on behalf of various industries, including the fossil fuel industry and his largest client, the American Petroleum Institute.

[Music]

Amy Westervelt: Drilled is part of the Critical Frequency podcast network. The show was reported, written and produced by me, Amy Westervelt. Julia Ritchie is our editor. Our managing producer is Katie Ross. She also created this season's incredible artwork. Sound design, scoring, and mixing by Bea Eamon. Rekha Murthy is our editorial advisor. Leamula Chance is our fact checker. Special thanks to Richard Miles and to our First

Amendment attorney James Wheaten and the First Amendment project. Drilled is made possible in part by a generous grant from the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development. We appreciate their support. You can find Drilled on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, or wherever you get your podcasts. Don't forget to leave us a rating or a review. It really helps the show. And you can follow us on Twitter now @WeAreDrilled and visit our new website drillednews.com for climate accountability reporting, newsletters, and behind-the-scenes stories from this season. Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.

[Music]

John Biewen: Stay with us, there's much more of *The Repair* to come. Our story editor this season is Cheryl Devall. Music in this episode by Lili Haydn and Lesley Barber. Music consulting by Joe Augustine of Narrative Music. Scene on Radio comes to you from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University.

Transcription by Jess Jiang.