

The governmental website star.is

Worked against politicians and political parties not in government.

Worked against local opponents from the east.

Worked against the demand of national vote.

Painted a simple black picture of the so called "environmentalists".

Attacked writers, journalists, scientists.

The website has served its cause. It has not been updated since april 2004. Impregilo and Alcoa have taken over the public relations.

Star.is is a website paid for by the government. It is supposed to be a news and information website and is run by the Ministry of Industry, The Icelandic National Power Company and others as the front end for STAR, an official preparation committee for a dam and aluminium smelter in the east of Iceland. Let's look at some examples of the news from this website:

"The opponents of the Kárahnjúkar dam use lies and untruths". Below this heading is an open letter which is supposed to "bring to attention the lying crap which is being spun against the dam at Kárahnjúkar". The natural scientist Guðmundur Páll Ólafsson is accused of "lying" when he points out the connection between the Kárahnjúkar dam and the possible damming of Jökulsá á Fjöllum. His "lies" are said "to be similar to the lies of Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir [member of parliament] used on television when she said that the location of the dam is a volcanically active area". Star.is had earlier written about Guðmundur's course on the vegetation north of Vatnajökull, held at Endurmenntunarstofnun Háskóla

Íslands (Continuing Education of the University of Iceland) using the words: "Endurmenntunarstofnun HÍ in a propaganda war against the Kárahnjúkar dam!" With Guðmundur's course the University is said to "have done its share in agitating against the Kárahnjúkar dam". This is a brutal attack from an official source against the freedom of speech, professional credibility and financial income of a scholar. Star.is totally disregards the laws on state media which explicitly state that they shall uphold democratic groundrules as well as human rights and freedom of speech and opinions.

The Icelandic Music Awards ceremony was used by many to voice their opposition to the planned dam. This makes star.is stretch things a bit far in those derogatory words about Ögmundur Jónasson (member of Parliament and floor leader for the Left-Green party) which was very absent from the ceremony. "Think of Ögmundur Jónasson gasping for breath and starting a riot in the Parliament podium outside of the regular program!" No signature is appended to these comments nor for the headline: "Left-Green desperation in the Parliament halls. - Left-Greens in the Parliament fared badly in the radio and television debates about their proposal to let the nation vote on the future of the area north of Vatnajökull". Can a medium of the Ministry of Industry and the Icelandic National Power Company use anonymous propaganda against members of Parliament and their work?

The headline "Young people in the east of Iceland favor the dam at Kárahnjúkar" points to a poll. A little over half is positive towards the dam, 34% are against it and those are all people living in the east of Iceland. Are these 34% enemies of the east of Iceland?

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It's the same scenario all over. Ómar Ragnarsson (a respected media personality) is said to be in "a holy war against dams and large scale industry" (he recently published a very neutral book showcasing the pros and cons of the Kárahnjúkar dam). Steinunn Sigurðardóttir (novelist) is said to have "presented a skewed view" on television. María Ellingsen (international actress) is said to have lied on a local radio station.

The president of INCA (Iceland Nature Conservation Association) is trod upon, his words are said to be "crap and nonsense", headlines declaring "Árni Finnsson still lying and thoroughly at that." "Árni Finnsson, the president of INCA doesn't hesitate to veer far off the truth in his fight against the dam." Friðrik Sophusson (director of the Icelandic National Power Company) is quoted as saying that INCA is a puppet of foreigners and is working against Icelandic interests. Should directors of state enterprises use such nationalistic verbalisms and tailor "Icelandic interests" to their own?

No one is allowed to defend themselves but everything connected to the dam and large scale industries is shown in a positive and almost religious light. "I only meet smiling people" says Smári Geirsson (east-icelander and very pro-dam). While "most Icelanders rejoiced the signing of the contract" the rangers at Drekaþgil flagged the Icelandic flag half-mast. "While the general public of Iceland rejoiced the Alcoa board decision..." Doesn't it give you goosebumps? Are we in North Korea?

Star.is attacks known persons and their professional integrity, politicians and open associations and anonymous writers defame named persons as liars. It uses words and methods that the last century should have taught us not to use and what's worse: A special interest group parodies freedom of speech by hijacking the word "Austfirðingur" (East-Icelander) and use it as a denominator for "one nation with one will", even though many of the staunchest preservationists are those East-Icelanders that know their area best and should therefore under normal circumstances be a leading voice in their community.

Star.is is only the tip of the iceberg, just a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of euros being spent to deliver "information" to the nation through public relations companies where ex-reporters seem free from the constraining ethics of the press. This propaganda is paid by the state to control the will of the majority and therefore a "democratic verdict".

The obvious questions are:

Who is writing this anonymous propaganda?

How much has it cost the nation?

What politicians are responsible for this pathetic development?

The president of Alcoa said that there will "always be people who oppose progress". If star.is is the method to drive progress through, then the price is not only the Icelandic nature but democracy itself.

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