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BILL MOYERS: Welcome to the JOURNAL.

Dr. James Hansen was back in Washington this week, sounding once again like Paul Revere, trying to wake the town up. Twenty years ago while other scientists were keeping their silence despite the evidence, Dr. Hansen, the director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and a physicist by training, warned of the threat to the planet from climate change.

JAMES HANSEN: Number one, the earth is warmer in 1988 than at any time in the history of instrumental measurements. Number two, the global warming is now large enough that we can ascribe, with a high degree of confidence, a cause-and-effect relationship to the greenhouse effect.

BILL MOYERS: The day after his Congressional testimony in 1988, THE NEW YORK TIMES ran a front-page headline: "Global Warming Has Begun." By the end of the year, thirty-two climate-related bills had been introduced in Congress. But powerful corporate and ideological interests launched a relentless campaign to make sure Congress did nothing.

Two decades later, even as the leading scientists in the world have reached a consensus that global warming truly does threaten the planet, Congress still has not passed any law mandating major cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions. So this week, twenty years to the day after his first appearance, Dr. Hansen was back to tell press and politicians of some striking similarities between then and now and one crucial difference. "The difference is that now we have used up all slack in the schedule for actions needed to defuse the global warming time bomb."

BILL MOYERS: It isn't that some members of Congress aren't trying. Dr. Hansen's testimony came just three weeks after the first major bill to control greenhouse emissions had actually made it to the Senate floor. It was called the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act after its two co-sponsors: Republican Senator John Warner from Virginia and Connecticut's Independent Senator Joe Lieberman. But leading the charge was a Senator who has made action on global warming her holy grail, Democrat Barbara Boxer of California.

BARBARA BOXER: Now, today, you will hear from those who wish to kill this bill, kill it, kill it as dead as they can. They say it is too complicated, that we should do nothing and we should continue the status quo. Well, the status quo is devastating, my friends. The scientists have told us that.

BILL MOYERS: Barbara Boxer became Chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in January a year ago, since then she has battled to put global warming at the top of congressional priorities. And therein lies our story.

Republican Senator James Inhofe had been the chair. He's an evangelical Christian, from the oil-producing state of Oklahoma a true believer in opposing government regulation of the environment. As for man-made global warming? Forget it.

SEN. JAMES INHOFE: Could it be that man-made global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people? I believe it is.

BILL MOYERS: Inhofe saw to it that the issue was never taken seriously while he was running the Committee. But when the Republicans lost control of the Senate, he lost control over the agenda to the new Chair, Barbara Boxer. She promptly invited former Vice President Al Gore to testify.

FMR. VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE: A time will come when a future generation will look back on 2007, at this hopeful time, and they will ask one of two questions. Either they will ask, "What in God's name were they doing? Didn't they see the evidence? Didn't they hear the warnings?"

BILL MOYERS: But Senator Inhofe seemed to think he that he still held the Chairman's gavel.

SEN. JAMES INHOFE: All right, Senator Gore, I'm very sorry. I don't want to be rude, but from now on I'm going to ask you to respond for the record in writing since you're not going to respond.

FMR. VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE: Well, if I choose to respond to you verbally here, I hope that'll be okay too.

SEN. JAMES INHOFE: If it's a very brief response. All right, I'm sure you read THE NEW YORK TIMES article that quoted the scientists I mentioned this in my opening statement, about their criticizing you for some of your being too alarmist and hurting your own cause. Now, I'll ask you to respond in writing for that one because that would be a very long response, I'm afraid. Now, it seems that --

FMR. VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE:

Well, I would like to respond -- **SEN. JAMES INHOFE:** -- everybody --

FMR. VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE: May I respond?

SEN. JAMES INHOFE: -- on global warming in the media joined the chorus last summer -
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BARBARA BOXER: Excuse me. Senator Inhofe, we'll freeze the time for a minute. I'm just trying to make --

SEN. JAMES INHOFE: Take your time. We're freezing the time.

BARBARA BOXER: No, no. We're freezing the time just for a minute. I want to talk to you for a minute, please.

BARBARA BOXER: I was a little stunned because here I had taken the gavel after a tough, you know, election season. We came in. We got power finally, albeit very small margin. But I was the chairman of the committee now. And Jim Inhofe, we work pretty well together, given our ideological differences. But he kept trying to run the hearings. And I kept saying to myself at some point I'm going to have to show him that I am the chairman of the committee.

BARBARA BOXER: Would you agree to let the Vice President answer your questions? And then, if you want an extra few minutes at the end, I'm happy to give it to you. But we're not going to get anywhere --

SEN. JAMES INHOFE: Why don't we do this? Why don't we do this? At the end, you can have as much time as you want to answer all the questions.

BARBARA BOXER: No, that isn't the rule of -- you're not making the rules. You used to when you did this. You don't do this anymore. Elections have consequences.

BARBARA BOXER: What I meant is that times have changed now. And the Democrats are in charge. And this committee, what it means is that the environment is back, front and center.

BILL MOYERS: Boxer launched dozens of hearings on global warming, and she formed an

important alliance with a Senator on the other side of the aisle.

BARBARA BOXER: Actually, I think we did better than I thought and there's a reason, a man named John Warner. And for anyone who says, you know, individuals don't matter, the government goes on, individuals matter.

BARBARA BOXER: Now, John Warner is a Republican. And by any measure, a conservative Republican, a man who's retiring now and who has made his mark on national security.

SEN. JOHN WARNER: Let's show the American public this institution can work and address a complicated subject and try and reach a common ground and common understanding. To do nothing is not an option.

BARBARA BOXER: When he came to realize that global warming was a national security issue and when his kids and grandkids said to him, "You need to have a legacy on this issue," and he then came to me, I knew we had brought bipartisanship to the committee.

BILL MOYERS: Their bill would mandate a 70% reduction in US greenhouse emissions by the middle of this century. At the heart of it is a system called cap-and-trade. The "cap" would limit how much polluters are allowed to emit without penalty from burning fossil fuel. Now here's where the trade comes in: big polluters would have to buy permits from the Federal government. If they go over the cap they would have to buy more permits to off-set their additional pollution. The companies that are quicker to clean up their act can sell their extra permits through an open market.

BARBARA BOXER: So we went in this bill to the biggest polluters of carbon -- we call it upstream, it's where it all happens. The big oil companies, natural gas, the big utilities, the very, very large manufacturers, who have their own power plants and so on. And we said to those 2,100 people, "You're going to have to reduce your carbon every year by two percent. And you're going to have to pay to pollute, to put the carbon in. So, for every ton you put in the air, you've got to have a permit." That puts a price on carbon, and that price will be set by the private market. We don't set it, okay?

BILL MOYERS: Boxer says a steady stream of income from the sale of pollution permits would flow into the treasury - as much as 6.7 trillion dollars over 40 years.

BARBARA BOXER: And what do we do with it? That's the key. What we do with it is most of it goes back to consumers. Because we know as carbon-reducing power becomes more expensive, it's going to be passed on to people. Plus, until there are new technologies, it's going to be higher costs.

So, we soften the blow. We take those trillions of dollars that come in, and we say to people who need it, "You're going to get a tax rebate. You're gonna get help on your power bill." And we have a deficit reduction trust fund. And that's half. The other half of the money goes to help find the new technologies of the future.

BILL MOYERS: It seems to me you would be subsidizing consumers to keep using the very products that contribute to global warming.

BARBARA BOXER: No, because as the cost becomes higher and higher for these companies, they're going to want to turn to other technologies.

So you bring down the carbon in the air through this cap and trade system either directly by these people turning to different ways. For example, they turn away from coal and toward solar or they get cleaner coal through sequestration. Or they go buy off sets.

BILL MOYERS: Theoretically it sounds good. Is there any evidence that cap-and-trade works?

BARBARA BOXER: Well yes, there is. Because we did it in this country around acid rain. Acid rain was a terrible problem in the northeast. Guess what? Cap-and-trade system was invented right here in America and it works very, very well. And you should see how that pollution is going straight down and we're solving the problem.

If you look at Great Britain, they have cut carbon by 15 percent over time. In that same time, they've increased their gross domestic product by 45 percent, and they've created

500,000 green jobs. That has happened. We know it is going to happen here. Venture capitalists are telling me they are just waiting for legislation. And when it comes, so they know we're really serious about putting a price on carbon through the private market, they are ready to invest trillions, more than they invested in high tech and bio-tech, in alternatives. And that's exciting.

BILL MOYERS: Conservative groups attacked the Climate Security Act this spring.

CLUB FOR GROWTH AD: Congress is at it again. This time, they're pushing massive new taxes and regulations in the name of global warming.

BILL MOYERS: Some environmental groups fought the bill too, convinced it wasn't tough enough.

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH AD: Either fix or ditch Lieberman-Warner.

BILL MOYERS: Is compromise possible between people on one side, who say, "Oh, it's going to kill the economy," and people on the other side who's gonna say it's not strong enough?

BARBARA BOXER: You know, as Carl Pope of the Sierra Club told me, he said, "Barbara," he said, "You gotta do just what's necessary. You don't have to go overboard on this." And that means that we have to have a bill that gets the job done. That reduces greenhouse gas emissions enough so that the temperatures don't go up, you know much above a couple of degrees over time. Cause if they do we're in a lot of trouble here.

In the Senate, Republican opponents called the bill a ruse for raising taxes:

SEN. JAMES INHOFE: The largest tax increase in the history of America.

SEN. BOB CORKER: This is in fact the mother of all earmarks.

SEN. JEFF SESSIONS: A secret, sneaky tax Boxer's trying to get through here.

SEN. JOHN CORNYN: It would cost the average Texas household \$8,000 in additional taxes.

SEN. MITCH MCCONNELL: It's a climate tax. Mr. President. A climate tax.

BARBARA BOXER: The fact is that's the big lie. Not only isn't there any tax in this bill, but there's tax cuts in this bill. There are fees that go to the polluters, which is in my view, part of America, America's economy. Polluter pays, that's what we do. They need to pay to pollute. And those funds go to help people through a big tax cut. And those funds go to invest in technology. And those funds go to give consumers relief right on their utility bills until we get to the point where we have alternatives.

SEN. JAMES INHOFE: As gasoline prices continue to rise and set new record highs every day, this bill would only keep prices rising.

SEN. JOHN CORNYN: This bill would be like a wet blanket on the economy, raising electricity prices, raising gas prices on everything from agriculture to small businesses.

SEN. MITCH MCCONNELL: Gas prices are, without a doubt, the single most pressing issue for Americans at this moment.

BILL MOYERS: Was it bad timing to bring this bill to the floor when everyone in the country, except for the very rich, is suffering from this huge surge in gas and fuel prices?

BARBARA BOXER: I think that is a great question and also completely irrelevant to the debate. Since you're asking me questions, I'm gonna ask you a question.

BILL MOYERS: All right, fair enough.

BARBARA BOXER: When do you think gas prices are going to go down?

BILL MOYERS: Well, I think that they're never going to go down.

BARBARA BOXER: I agree with you. They're never going to go down much, if at all. Does that mean we never take up global warming legislation when we know we have a shrinking window to save the planet so that your grandkids and my grandkids and everyone who's watching, their grandkids, can live on Earth. We have to act, number one. That's specious. There's never going to be a good time. This is hard. We have to deal with it. And so we have to act. You cannot hide under the covers and say, "Wake me up when gas prices go down a dollar a gallon and then I'll bring up global warming legislation." Here's the interesting thing, number two. I will posit to you because of global warming legislation, if we do it right, we will be free of foreign oil. We will be on the path of energy independence.

BILL MOYERS: First Boxer had to get 51 votes to pass the bill, concerned that she had those votes Republican leaders set out to derail it with a procedural logjam.

SEN. ROBERT MENEDEZ: The clerk will report the bill.

CLERK: Short title. Table of Contents. Section II. Findings. Section III. Purposes. Section IV. Definitions.

BILL MOYERS: The minority leader, Mitch McConnell, had the clerks in the Senate read the entire bill into the record. And that took more than ten hours. What was that about?

BARBARA BOXER: What Mitch McConnell did in forcing the reading of the bill, was a panic attack. And this is how I know it. We had gotten, because somebody sent it to us, the game plan to Republicans. Their initial game plan was to begin the amendment process right away, not to do a filibuster. 'Cause they thought they had us on gas prices. And they had us on the issue.

Well, it wasn't turning out well for them. We debated them toe to toe. We brought out the chart that showed under George Bush with no global warming legislation, gas prices had gone up 270 percent, 93 cents since January. They were losing it. And they decided to do a sneak attack. And it was a sneak attack, force this reading. Get their act together. What are we gonna do? And then they decided to filibuster. So, they started it off with a ten-hour reading. Talk about a waste of money.

BARBARA BOXER: I ask that the reading be dispensed with.

OFF CAMERA: Mr. President, regular order.

SEN. ROBERT MENEDEZ: The clerk will continue to read.

CLERK: Section 1751. Integration. Subtitle G. State, Federal interaction.

BARBARA BOXER: Those poor clerks had to stay there over time reading the bill. It was a stall--

BILL MOYERS: Four hundred and ninety-two pages' worth?

BARBARA BOXER: --a stall tactic.

SEN. HARRY REID: We find ourselves confronting an orchestrated effort by the Republican leader to delay and obstruct. We've seen this play a record number of times before this body. In ten months we all know they broke the two year-filibuster record. We're now, I believe, at 72 filibusters.

BILL MOYERS: Why was it to anybody's advantage not to have a vote on this bill?

SENATOR BARBARA BOXER: I think the Republicans got nervous. And they didn't think they could get as good a vote as they wanted. They wanted to crush us. And they couldn't at the end of the day. More good news.

VOICE: Mr. Akaka, Mr. Alexander.

BILL MOYERS: But they could mount a filibuster to prevent the legislation from coming to

a vote. It takes the votes of 60 senators to shut off a filibuster, and Boxer knew she didn't have those votes.

BILL MOYERS: As I understand the math, you got actually 48 votes--

BARBARA BOXER: Physically there.

BILL MOYERS: --physically. In the Senate chamber, you got 48 votes. Six other Senators said if they had been here, they would've voted with you. That would've given you 54.

BARBARA BOXER: Correct.

BILL MOYERS: But you needed 60 votes --

BARBARA BOXER: Yes.

BILL MOYERS: -- to stop the filibuster. Why couldn't you get the 60?

BARBARA BOXER: We never could get the 60.

BILL MOYERS: Why?

BARBARA BOXER: Because of the people who are in the Senate today. Because they're hostile to it. I mean, we reached a high water mark.

BILL MOYERS: But she also lost the support of four Democrats, including the progressive Senator from Ohio, Sherrod Brown .

SEN. SHERROD BROWN: I have the utmost respect for my colleagues who have worked so long and so hard to craft this historic legislation and for environmental advocates in Ohio and across the country. I am 100 percent committed to passing a robust, mandatory cap and trade policy. However, Mr. President, while we have been debating climate policy, Ohioans have been getting bad news. This has been a particularly tough week for my state. In the last 7 days, Ohioans learned that our state may soon lose another 10,000 jobs.

If we don't take this right step to ensure domestic manufacturers a level playing field with companies from countries without global warming requirements, we might as well throw a going-away party for the steel industry, the cement industry, the glass industry, aluminum industry, the chemical industry, for foundry after foundry after foundry in Ravenna, Chillicothe, Mansfield and Marion.

BARBARA BOXER: I think he's wrong on this. I think he's acting out of fear and not hope. You see, I think there's enough revenues produced from this bill to completely offset the pain. And we have put more than half the bill's resources into that. And frankly, if we had to put more into it, I would. So my view is we can offset it. We can offset it. That's the beauty of this. I believe this can be structured in such a way that it actually brings around an economic renaissance.

BILL MOYERS: Seven Republicans voted with Boxer, including Senator Elizabeth Dole from North Carolina.

SEN. ELIZABETH DOLE: Cap and trade, first adopted for acid rain under the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments is an American environmental and economic success story. There is no doubt that this is a much greater challenge and one that affects every sector of the economy. But we have the ability to repeat that success. Our constituents do not send us to Washington to sit back and do the easy things. Rather, they send us here to have the courage to tackle the challenges.

BILL MOYERS: Most other Republicans were dead set against the bill.

SEN. LAMAR ALEXANDER: It is well intentioned, but the bill as it has grown has become in effect, with all respect, a well-intentioned contraption and it creates boards and czars and commissioners and money, and it is too complicated and too expensive.

BILL MOYERS: Their filibuster stopped the bill in its tracks.

SEN. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE: The motion is not agreed to.

BILL MOYERS: Nonetheless, Boxer claimed an important symbolic victory.

BARBARA BOXER: This is a landmark day. It's another milestone in the fight against global warming.

BILL MOYERS: Remarkably not a single Senator in the debate challenged the reality of climate change or denied the human role in causing it.

SEN. JOE LIEBERMAN: It's a giant step for the United States Senate. It puts us on the path to getting this done hopefully next year.

BARBARA BOXER: The Clean Air Act took 10 years. This will not take 10 years. This will not take 10 years.

BILL MOYERS: What happens if we don't act?

SENATOR BARBARA BOXER: If we don't act on global warming, and those alternatives that we need to foreign oil don't materialize, we are forever dependent on, you know, the prince of Saudi Arabia.

We need to get off foreign oil. The best way to do it is to become energy independent. The best way to do that is to embrace global warming legislation. Because, when there is a price on carbon, Bill, people are going to look for alternatives.

BILL MOYERS: How are you gonna ever overcome the fragmentation and the power of all these special interests with lots of money?

BARBARA BOXER: First of all, miracles happen. But aside from that, we're gonna do it. I believe we will overcome the special interests. I have to say, there are a few special interests who are on our side, cause they know, they want to do business in other places. And they don't want to have different rules. And they know this is coming. So it's not as clear cut as you know all the special interests versus global warming. It's a little bit more of a, you know, different kind of lineup here. So it makes it very interesting. But look. Change is coming. We're going to fix this problem because we have to.

BILL MOYERS: Senator Boxer, thank you very much for your time and for this conversation.

BARBARA BOXER: Thank you, Bill.

BILL MOYERS: As Senator Boxer dukes it out over the health and safety of the planet, other hearings in Congress are looking at health and safety in the workplace.

GEORGE MILLER: That you will tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth...

BILL MOYERS: Just last week, the House Committee on Education and Labor heard some disturbing testimony about the reliability of the government agency charged with protecting workers on the job.

BOB WHITMORE: The mission of OSHA is to take care of American Workers. If OSHA can't or won't do its job, it's up to you all to make it do the job.

BILL MOYERS: That's Bob Whitmore, a longtime civil servant at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration - or OSHA. And that's his lawyer sitting behind him. Whitmore's been placed on administrative leave, and he's testifying as a private citizen despite his two decades of expertise overseeing the agency's injury and illness records.

BOB WHITMORE: Information is inaccurate to impart to wide-scale underreporting

BILL MOYERS: As you'll see, Whitmore has a record of challenging the credibility of reports companies are required to provide OSHA about injuries and illnesses workers suffer

on the job. The Chairman of the Committee, Representative George Miller of California, had some strong remarks about OSHA's performance.

GEORGE MILLER: OSHA refuses to recognize that the problem exists. We simply must not allow the lack of information to allow hazardous conditions to exist, putting workers lives and limbs at risk.

BILL MOYERS: Businesses, on the other hand, say the requirements are cumbersome, and have long pressured the agency for weaker standards of regulation.

The pressure's paid off. THE NEW YORK TIMES' Stephen Labaton reported last year that since George W. Bush became president, the agency has left worker safety largely in the hands of industry, and has issued the fewest significant standards in its history.

Then, last February, came another strong indictment. THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER published an investigative series on how and why OSHA has let companies in the poultry industry get away with reporting inaccurate information about injured workers. As often happens in journalism, The OBSERVER reporters were in pursuit of one story when an unexpected lead sent them on to something bigger. What happened is the subject of this report from our colleagues at Exposé. Sylvia Chase narrates.

NARRATOR: In the fall of 2005, reporters at THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER were hard at work researching and reporting a story that gripped the nation: the avian flu.

For much of the media, the story was an end in itself. For the OBSERVER, it was only the beginning.

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: The workers would tell me, if if there is avian flu here in this plant, we're going to get it. But we really have much more serious problems right here, right now.

The problems the workers described were not about disease...they were about on-the-job injuries.

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: They're cutting thousands of thousands of times without breaks, you know, developing tendonitis problem, hand problems, wrist problems, uh, shoulder and back problems; a lot of workers having carpal tunnel and not being able to get medical care, because every time they go to the nurse to say, hey, I'm in pain, they either get written up or told that they're not being -- they're not hurting from this job and it's something else.

NARRATOR: The poultry industry employs about 28,000 workers in the Carolinas and about 240,000 nationwide. Its production lines move at a relentless pace, meeting the enormous demand for America's most popular meat.

AMES ALEXANDER: Workers are making 20,000 cuts a day, highly prone to repetitive motion kinds of problems like carpal tunnel. They're working with sharp knives, around dangerous chemicals and equipment.

KERRY HALL: We started to wonder who was looking out for the workers. They really seemed to be kind of on their own. What really is happening behind these factory walls?

MITCH WEISS: I said, "let's do this;" we know from, from our initial research that there are poultry plants in 27 states. Why don't we start filing Freedom of Information Act requests with all the agencies out there that deal with the poultry industry.

KERRY HALL: I ended up sending more than 50 FOIAs to agencies in 27 states requesting more than 800 inspection files.

NARRATOR: While waiting for the FOIA requests to be filled, THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER's Kerry Hall and Ames Alexander researched publicly available Bureau of Labor Statistics about safety in poultry plants. They were surprised by what they found.

AMES ALEXANDER: What we saw is that according to the official records, the injury and illness rates in the poultry industry had declined immensely over the last decade, by more than half.

NARRATOR: Especially surprising were statistics saying that incidents of certain painful and debilitating injuries like carpal tunnel and tendonitis had gone down even more. Poultry workers suffered these conditions less than 25% as often as they had ten years ago.

These musculoskeletal disorders - or "MSD's," as they are known --are common in jobs where workers perform repetitive motions. But by 2006, the statistics suggested it had become harder to get an MSD working in a poultry plant...than in a toy store. Intrigued, the OBSERVER reporters began questioning sources knowledgeable about industry conditions. They included labor attorneys, experts in workplace safety, regulators and physicians.

AMES ALEXANDER: And a lot of the experts we began talking to said that these official numbers just couldn't possibly be right, because this was a very dangerous industry.

NARRATOR: One example: Dr. Jorge Garcia, who practiced in rural South Carolina. He told the paper he had seen about 1000 poultry workers in the past seven years. He said, "I don't know a single worker who doesn't have some sort of pain in their hand."

NARRATOR: Soon, data from the reporters' freedom of information requests began to trickle in.

KERRY HALL: Here actually is some of our FOIA requests and FOIA responses. Letters from all the agencies: Indiana, Texas, Wisconsin, Georgia, Pennsylvania.

NARRATOR: The documents included not only plant inspection reports but also injury logs from the occupational safety and health administration...OSHA.

KERRY HALL: OSHA regulates poultry plants based off of these self-reported injury and illness rates. If you have a high injury and illness rate you'll get targeted possibly for an inspection. If you post a low rate, you can fall off the radar screen completely.

NARRATOR: While the documents showed some gruesome injuries, even deaths, there was nothing to contradict the statistics that said injury rates were way down.

But in comments that OSHA inspectors included in their reports, there were clues that something might be amiss.

AMES ALEXANDER: Inspectors were finding cases where injuries weren't showing up on the official records for one reason or another. There were, there were, uh, workers who said, you know, uh, "People get hurt all the time, but they're afraid to report."

NARRATOR: "Afraid," the paper would learn, because most line workers in poultry plants are immigrants, concerned they might be fired if they complain.

And many, though not all, are undocumented, and also fear deportation.

NARRATOR: Now Spanish-speaking reporter Franco Ordoñez went to see if some Latino immigrant workers might be willing to speak up.

Some did talk.

Celia Lopez had carpal tunnel;

Karina Zorita's hand pain made it hard to bend her fingers...or hold things.

Seferino Guadalupe shattered his ankle in a forklift accident.

It was put back together with screws.

And there was much more: punctures, fractures, chemical burns, and laceration after laceration.

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: these communities are just filled with injured workers. I mean, this -
- these plants are just, you know, just shredding them out.

NARRATOR: Ordóñez also learned of workers who had not only been injured...but claimed to have been coerced into staying at work once they were.

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: Jaime Hernandez was probably the most difficult to track down. We were looking for him for about three weeks to a month. Jaime Hernandez: My job focused on the meat, getting it off the bone, at first grab it and cut it, that is piece after piece after piece.

JAI ME HERNANDEZ: Because of the pain and such, I got these little balls in my hand. I had surgery, and after that, I asked if I could go home to rest. And they said no, that I needed to be at work, even if I didn't do anything, just sitting in the office. And I said, but I don't feel well, I'm dizzy, it hurts, things like that. They said you have to be at the plant so they can pay you, because if you aren't, you can lose your job.

NARRATOR: Hernandez told Franco Ordóñez a supervisor drove him back to work right after his surgery. The OBSERVER learned why a company might do that.

Patrick Scott: having no days away from work is the single biggest factor in determining worker's compensation costs for a factory.

NARRATOR: Consultants who advise companies on workers compensation told the OBSERVER if injured workers return quickly, a company can save money in workers comp costs.

A quick return also means the company won't have to report what OSHA calls a lost-time injury - reducing the chance that regulators will inspect the plant.

Jaime Hernandez worked for a company called House of Raeford Farms. The company would tell the OBSERVER that the paper's account of what happened to Hernandez was inaccurate...but that it couldn't discuss why because its personnel records are confidential.

House of Raeford is one of the nation's top ten poultry producers, employing about 6,000 people in seven plants in the Carolinas and one in Louisiana.

The company slaughters and processes about 29 million pounds of chicken and turkey each week.

Kerry Hall and OBSERVER photographer John Simmons were granted access to House of Raeford's West Columbia, South Carolina plant...where they got a firsthand glimpse of working conditions.

JOHN SIMMONS: The start of, uh, the whole process is in the live hang room. Where all the employee stands behind the line, uh, that -where live chickens are fed up a conveyer belt, and they're moving around; they're squawking and-and, uh, cackling. And, uh, the people are grabbing them, these large birds -- at least 5, maybe 7 lbs, and they're hanging them upside down by their -- by their feet in the, uh, stirrups as they go by.

JOHN SIMMONS: Uh, there's an animal feces smell from the, uh, from the chickens. Um, and just the animal smell itself. They're doing hundreds and hundreds of birds per shift, if not thousands.

JOHN SIMMONS: And they're constantly working to sharpen the knife - and immediately going back and cutting the bird.

KERRY HALL: I could see these people really literally standing shoulder to shoulder just having to do this work over and over again, and kind of the relentlessness of it.

NARRATOR: Kerry Hall had learned a remarkable fact about the West Columbia plant. It had gone four straight years without reporting a single case of a musculoskeletal disorder.

Experts told her zero MSD's were inconceivable in a place where jobs require so much repetitive motion.

Something went wrong here

At another House of Raeford plant -- this one is in Greenville, South Carolina, and known as "Columbia Farms" -- Franco Ordonez and Ames Alexander interviewed the safety director, Bill Lewis.

He told the reporters that Columbia Farms had a streak of seven million safe hours. He said -- quote -- "we come to work with five fingers and toes, and we go home with the same thing we came in with."

AMES ALEXANDER: You know, after we got back from that interview, we started looking through the logs.

KERRY HALL: And noticed that there had been some pretty serious injuries that occurred during this time that there were seven million safe hours with no lost-time accidents.

NARRATOR: The logs the reporters were examining are known as 300 logs. They're required by OSHA and are intended to serve as an accounting of serious jobsite injuries and illnesses. Osha uses 300 logs to help determine how safe plants are, and whether or not they need inspection.

The reporters would use them to help determine whether or not the companies were under-reporting injuries.

But it was something the logs didn't contain that would help them answer a broader question: why did official statistics make the poultry industry seem so much safer than experts believed it could possibly be?

AMES ALEXANDER: There used to be a column on injury logs where companies were supposed to record all repetitive motion injuries. Uh, and this essentially gave OSHA inspectors a very quick idea of how common repetitive motion problems like carpal tunnel, like tendonitis, were. Uh, and then, uh, under pressure, uh, from the industry, OSHA removed that column.

NARRATOR: It was OSHA under the Bush administration that removed the column in 2002. The result, according to Ames Alexander?

AMES ALEXANDER: OSHA essentially made it easier for companies to hide these sort of repetitive motion injuries. One plant we looked at, uh, in 2001, it had 150 repetitive motion injuries. After they removed the column, they had fewer than 10.

NARRATOR: The Bush administration also repealed a collection of rules put in place at the end of the Clinton administration. The rules, which formed a national ergonomics standard, would have required employers to correct workplace conditions likely to cause repetitive-motion and other injuries.

Charles Jeffress, who headed OSHA from 1997 to 2001, told the OBSERVER that the effect of repealing the ergonomic standard and removing the column was to "turn a blind eye to a lot of what happens in poultry plants."

And one OSHA insider was even more blunt. Bob Whitmore - When you look at a log, it's supposed to tell us -- it is supposed to tell us what's going on in this workplace. You have to understand, it was always intended to be a surveillance tool.

NARRATOR: Bob Whitmore, for twenty years the OSHA official in charge of the agency's injury and illness records, agreed to act as an inside source for the OBSERVER.

BOB WHITMORE: We have so many workplaces to cover and so few people to cover them with. When we walk in, we want to see what's going on. It's like a Candid Camera. That's what it's supposed to be. It's not like that anymore; it's a report card. Problem is, the students are grading themselves.

NARRATOR: Other OSHA officials told the OBSERVER that poultry plants are safer than ever. They cited enforcement programs, a decade of declining reported-injury rates, and a growing recognition that reducing injuries is good for business.

NARRATOR: For Franco Ordonez, one woman's story crystalized the plight of immigrant poultry workers. Her name was Cornelia Vicente, and she worked at House of Raeford's

Columbia Farms plant.

The OBSERVER found her name in the records of a workers compensation lawsuit. Now Ordonez went looking for her.

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: I was able to find Cornelia through talking to enough workers, where eventually they'd point you to the right house.

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: She slowly started to open up, uh, about what occurred to her. Um, and as she opened up and she, uh, started to explain what happened, she just started -- basically just everything started pouring out of her, uh, you know, all the-the anger, the sadness, the fear, um, everything that kind of was wrapped up in this experience of her working at that poultry plant.

KERRY HALL: She had been working on a conveyor belt. She was grabbing boxes. And she didn't want to get behind in her work so she tried to grab two boxes at the same time and her right arm ended up getting caught in the conveyor belt. It grabbed her arm, broke her arm and amputated the tip of her, uh, one of her fingers.

FRANCO ORDOÑEZ: you know, she gets rushed to the -- to the hospital, uh, you know, she doesn't know what's going on...

KERRY HALL: While she was at the hospital she says the plant nurse came and visited with her and fed her but also told her that she was expected back for the next shift. Patrick Scott: So she wound up going to work and saying that she was -- wanted to go home. She had asked to go home, that she was crying at work because she couldn't deal with the pain of the physical loss of her finger and her broken arm and the pain of having your body altered.

NARRATOR: Jaime Hernandez worked at Columbia Farms. He saw Cornelia Vicente the day after her she returned to work. The next day when she got there she went around, trembling, sad, crying like she wasn't even there. She wasn't there. Physically yes, but in her thoughts no. She was out of it, gone. I felt like crying with her.

NARRATOR: The Columbia Farms log revealed that Vicente would spend over nine weeks on what it known as "job transfer," given tasks away from the conveyor belt.

KERRY HALL: She said at one point they asked her to sweep and she said it was -- she described it as an impossible task given her broken arm and the pain she was feeling.

NARRATOR: When the reporters compared Vicente's account of her injuries and her medical records with what House of Raeford Farms had reported to regulators they found the company had mentioned the broken arm...but not the amputation.

KERRY HALL: That wasn't noted on this.

NARRATOR: And, the OBSERVER would report, because Vicente didn't miss a complete shift, the accident wouldn't have to be counted as a lost-time injury.

KERRY HALL: She was on job transfer for 64 days. No days away from work.

NARRATOR: The paper would also report that House of Raeford refused to answer its questions about Cornelia Vicente.

In 2006 and 7, Ordonez, Hall and Alexander interviewed more than 200 current and former poultry workers from different companies, mostly in the Carolinas... Including about 120 from House of Raeford Farms.

Now, in March 2007, armed with numerous stories of underreporting of injuries -- and employees being pressured to work while injured -- Kerry Hall went to Washington to seek comment from the OSHA records expert, Bob Whitmore . Among other evidence, the reporters had compiled a list of injury rates reported by poultry companies in 2005.

KERRY HALL: When I was showing this to Bob...

AMES ALEXANDER: Uh-huh.

KERRY HALL: He was looking through this and he would see these zeroes, these zero injury and illness rates, and he just started getting fired up. He would just start saying, "I can't believe that, I can't believe that's there."

NARRATOR: Kerry Hall also shared evidence of 41 House of Raeford injuries that the team learned of in a sampling of workers who lived near the company's plants.

BOB WHITMORE: As Kerry and I went through some of the descriptions of injuries that she was finding out about, I decided at that point in time was that a recordable case or not? Should it have been on that log?

NARRATOR: Whitmore concluded the company violated workplace safety law by failing to record more than half of the injuries. The OBSERVER would report that House of Raeford Farms told the paper the company follows the law, looks out for the safety of its workers and treats them with respect.

Presented with findings from the OBSERVER, the company wrote in a letter that there were - quote - "many inaccuracies" in the information workers provided, and said that "the allegations made by these former employees do not fairly or accurately represent the policies or management practices of House of Raeford Farms." The letter continued, "We value our employees and strive to treat them in a fair and respectful manner at all times."

NARRATOR: In February 2008, after 22 months of work examining thousands of pages of documents and conducting over 800 interviews THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER published a 6-day series. It was called "The Cruellest Cuts."

The paper concluded that "weak enforcement, minimal fines and dwindling inspections have allowed [poultry] companies to operate largely unchecked"...and that "official injury statistics aren't accurate and that the industry is more dangerous than its reports to regulators suggest."

Among other findings:

In North Carolina, the number of OSHA poultry plant inspections fell from 25 in 1997 to nine in 2006. South Carolina poultry plant inspections dropped from 36 in 1999 to 1 in 2006.

Nationwide, OSHA workplace safety inspections at U.S. poultry plants have dropped to their lowest point in 15 years. In fact the government rewards companies that report low injury rates by inspecting them less often. And Washington's regulators rarely check whether companies are reporting accurately.

BOB WHITMORE: There's a disconnect. The spin in D.C. disconnects you from reality. The agency isn't doing what it should be doing. Because we're not there representing the workers. We're there representing the businesses.

MITCH WEISS: You know, when I go to work every day there is the expectation that I'm going to come home in one piece. That I'm going to an office and leave and come home safe. These workers have no such expectations.

BILL MOYERS: Oh no, they told us, Iraq isn't a war about oil. That's cynical and simplistic, they said. It's about terror and al Qaeda and toppling a dictator and spreading democracy and protecting ourselves from weapons of mass destruction. But one by one, these concocted rationales went up in smoke, fire, and ashes. And now the bottom turns out to be the bottom line. It is about oil.

Alan Greenspan said so last fall. The former Chairman of the Federal Reserve, safely out of office, confessed in his memoir: "...everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil." he then told reporter Bob Woodward, "if Saddam Hussein had been head of Iraq and there was no oil under those sands, our response to him would not have been as strong as it was in the first Gulf War."

Remember, also, that soon after the invasion Donald Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, told the press that war was our only strategic choice. "We had virtually no economic options with Iraq," Wolfowitz said, "because the country floats on a sea of oil."

Shades of Daniel Plainview! You remember Plainview - the monstrous petroleum tycoon in the movie "There Will Be Blood." Half-mad, he shouts: "there's a whole ocean of oil under our feet!" then adds, "no one can get at it except for me!"

No wonder American troops only guarded the Ministries of Oil and the Interior in Baghdad, even as looters pillaged museums of their priceless antiquities. Our soldiers were making sure no one could get at the oil except...guess who?

Take a look at this headline the other day in THE NEW YORK TIMES: "deals with Iraq are set to bring oil giants back." Read on: "Four western oil companies are in the final stages of negotiations this month on contracts that will return them to Iraq, 36 years after losing their oil concession to nationalization as Saddam Hussein rose to power."

There you have it. After a long exile Exxon Mobil, Shell, Total and BP are back in Iraq. And on the wings of no-bid contracts - that's right, sweetheart deals like those granted Halliburton, KBR, Blackwater. The kind of deals you get only if you have friends in high places. And these war profiteers have friends in very high places.

Let's go back a few years, to the 1990s, when private citizen Dick Cheney was running Halliburton, the big energy supplier. That's when he told the oil industry that, "By 2010 we will need on the order of an additional fifty million barrels a day. So where is the oil going to come from?" Cheney asked. While many regions of the world offer great oil opportunities, the Middle East...is still where the prize ultimately lies."

Fast forward to Cheney's first heady days in the White House. The oil industry and other energy conglomerates have been handed back-door keys to the white house, and their CEOs and lobbyists were trooping in and out for meetings with their old pal, now Vice President Cheney. The meetings are secret, conducted under tight security. But as we reported in July 2003, among the documents that turned up from some of those meetings were maps of oil fields in Iraq and a list of companies that wanted access to them. The conservative group Judicial Watch and the Sierra Club filed suit to find out who attended the meetings and what was discussed. But the White House fought all the way to the Supreme Court to keep the press and public from learning the whole truth.

Think about it. These secret meetings took place six months before 9/11, two years before Bush and Cheney invaded Iraq. We still don't know what they were about. What we know is that this is the very oil industry enjoying swollen profits these days. It would be laughable if it weren't so painful to remember that their erstwhile cheerleader for invading Iraq - the press mogul Rupert Murdoch - once said that a successful war there would bring us \$20 a barrel oil. The last time I looked, it was more than \$140 a barrel. Where are you, Rupert, when we need the facts?

At those hearings earlier this week, scientist James Hansen, who 20 years ago alerted us to the dangers of global warming, compared the chief executives of big oil to the tobacco moguls who denied that nicotine is addictive or that there's a link between smoking and cancer. Hansen said these barons of black gold should be tried for committing crimes against humanity and nature in opposing efforts to deal with global warming.

Perhaps those sweetheart deals in Iraq should be added to his proposed indictments. They have been purchased at a very high price. Four-thousand American soldiers dead, tens of thousands permanently wounded for life, hundreds of thousands of dead and crippled Iraqis plus five million displaced, and a cost that will mount into trillions of dollars. The political analyst Kevin Phillips says America has become little more than an "energy protection force" doing anything to gain access too expensive fuel without regard to the lives of others, or the earth itself. One thinks again of Daniel Plainview, in "There Will Be Blood". His lust for oil came at the price of his son and his soul.

That's it for the JOURNAL. We'll be off next week for the July 4th concert.

You'll see us here again in two weeks.

I'm Bill Moyers.

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