

Time to get out the rat poison

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ment could *never* be made in Australia, the very best place to live in the world, with the very best media and the very best politicians.

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In April 2000, the South African President, Thabo Mbeki, infamously issued a public statement casting doubt on the idea that AIDS was caused by the HIV virus. He asserted that AIDS was not even an infectious disease, and he sought out so-called experts at the fringes of science to back him up. It was all a 'scaremongering campaign' by the West designed to sell expensive medications, wouldn't you know. So listen folks, just throw away those condoms and forget about safe sex, go ahead and share those needles, don't worry about screening for blood transfusions, and let's disregard any risk of materno-foetal transmission. A prominent federal politician — an elected leader of the country — had spoken in measured, grave tones in the South African media, therefore surely he *must* be right. We should all ignore those pesky scientists and their annoying facts. Evidence, shmevidence — who gives a damn.

One need not be a medical professional to shake one's head in dismay at such an outrageously false and dangerous declaration — which represented a major setback to the serious fight against HIV / AIDs in South Africa. Who knows how many untold thousands or millions could become infected, suffer and die should such reckless stupidity by an ignorant politician be translated into public policy?

I believe that all medical practitioners, indeed all people possessing even the tiniest scrap of decency, have a responsibility to speak out against such harmful deceit wherever and whenever it occurs. Indifference is unacceptable.

Ladies and gentlemen, bad government policy kills people.

Those of us in the so-called more enlightened 'First World' might well look down our noses at Mbeki in a superior and condescending manner. Mbeki is clearly a buffoon, an oaf in a business suit — indeed, not much more evolved than a dressed-up chimpanzee who has barely gained the power of speech.

Surely such an irresponsible, anti-scientific state-

denial of crucially important truths by psychopathically devious federal politicians is not only alive and well in this country, it is thriving and proliferating in a manner akin to the HIV virus in South Africa, aided and abetted by the industry-controlled commercial media.

The Australian media has failed miserably in its democratic duty to challenge all the nonsense perpetrated by the Howard government.¹ Only the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has the courage to stand up and speak the truth. In the course of fulfilling its public responsibility, the ABC has been falsely accused by the government of 'bias'. What a crazy world we live in!

We must all wake up and smell the turd blossoms!²

In Australia, we have many times previously heard the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, Ian Macfarlane, cast doubt on the facts that global warming *is* real, *is* important and *is* caused by human activity. It is all a 'scaremongering campaign' by the greenies designed to sell renewable energy technology, wouldn't you know. So listen folks, just keep burning those fossil fuels and forget about carbon emissions; don't worry about hurricanes, floods, droughts, species' extinction or melting glaciers; and let's disregard drowning coastlines causing future refugee problems, or crop failures causing future famines. A prominent federal politician — an elected leader of the country — has spoken in measured, grave tones in the Australian media, therefore surely he *must* be right. We should all ignore those pesky scientists and their annoying facts. Evidence, shmevidence — who gives a damn.

The Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK government, Professor Sir David King, visited Australia in late 2005 and addressed our parliament about the dire global consequences of climate change, which he said was clearly a greater threat to the world than terrorism.

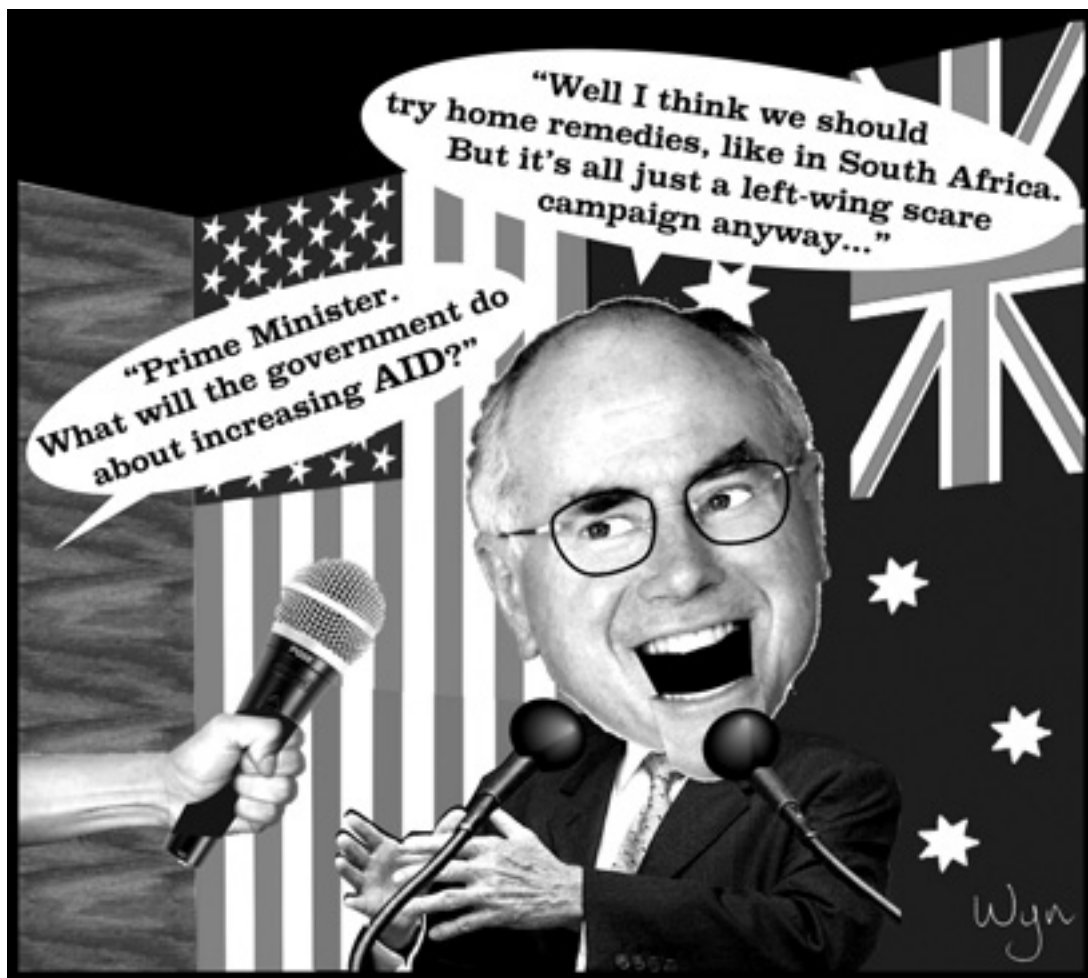
Ian Macfarlane walked out. When later asked by an ABC journalist why he did so, Macfarlane refused to comment.

In a previous essay, I described Macfarlane as either impenetrably stupid, a coal company stooge or an impenetrably stupid coal company stooge.³ Let me also add that minister Ian Macfarlane is clearly a buffoon, an oaf in a business suit — indeed, not much more evolved than a dressed-up chimpanzee who has barely gained the power of speech.

When John Howard, in 2006, was asked what he thought of Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, Howard replied that his government did not

visitors to this country. Too bad that the campaign offended the British enough for them to ban it. Talk about taxpayers' money going down the toilet. When Andrew Denton asked comedian Billy Connolly on the interview program *Enough Rope* what he thought of John Howard's exhortations to curb public vulgarity, Billy replied that John Howard *himself* was a public vulgarity. The applause was deafening. Accordingly, my question is this: if John Howard is a public vulgarity, and John Howard advocates getting rid of public vulgarities, then surely it stands to reason that John Howard should get rid of *himself*?

Unfortunately we know that this intransigent 1950s



formulate policy based on popular movies. He may as well have added that his government did not formulate policy based on proper facts or evidence. Clearly his support for the invasion of Iraq was testimony to *that*.

In early 2006, John Howard, that doyen of etiquette, made an appeal to all Australians to temper their language, to curb their public vulgarity. No matter that shortly after this the government spent millions launching their 'Where the bloody hell are you?' tourism campaign, based on the brilliant concept that coarse language was somehow a good way to attract

throwback is not going to release his claw-like grasp on power willingly. It is therefore up to us to vote him out. We have the golden opportunity to do so in 2007, and we must not fail.

We all know what John Howard stands for. He stands for undermining student unions by cutting their funding. He stands for undermining workers' rights with his workplace contracts, contrironically⁴ entitled 'WorkChoices'. He stands for stifling dissent with his anti-sedition laws. He stands for whipping up a frenzy over the so-called 'War on Terror', which he bravely fights using fridge magnets. He stands for

slandering desperate refugees about throwing their children overboard, in order to manipulate public prejudice.⁵ He stands for imprisoning innocent asylum seekers, including women and children, behind barbed wire. He stands for detaining Australian citizens without trial and without evidence in Guantanamo Bay at the whim of a foreign power. He takes credit for a plump economy which he had nothing whatsoever to do with.⁶ He slavishly sup-

ports the interests of the coal and uranium industries, while undermining renewable energy development⁷, and he pays mere lip service to global warming. He stands for negligence and ineptitude in the face of the Australian Wheat Board kickbacks, the worst bribery scandal in Australian history. He

stands for the cowardly invasion of a defenceless country on the basis of lies, resulting in the deaths of more than 650,000 Iraqis (as published by *The Lancet* medical journal in October 2006⁸).

I believe that all medical practitioners, indeed all people possessing even the tiniest scrap of decency, have a responsibility to speak out against such harmful deceit wherever and whenever it occurs. Indifference is unacceptable.

Ladies and gentlemen, bad government policy kills people.

In a sane world, such a person would have long ago been prosecuted as a war criminal alongside Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Bush and Blair. We are indeed shocked and awed by the necons and their toadies. We are shocked at their spectacular incompetence and awed by their astounding stupidity. Most of all, though, we are appalled by their despicable corruption, hypocrisy and malevolence.

And so, Mr Rumsfeld, here is a 'known known' I offer to you: we now know for sure that the invasion of Iraq will go down in history as an act of damnable thuggery committed by a bunch of damnable thugs.

If bad government policy kills people, surely the people who vote for those bad governments are ultimately responsible. Voters who install governments that have already proven to be evil must also be considered culpable for the murder of innocents, whether the dead be Iraqi civilians or unsuspecting US soldiers who thought they were serving their country but were in fact serving the interests of Halliburton & Co.

Paul Keating perhaps put it most aptly when he described John Howard as 'having all the vision of Mr Magoo with none of the good intentions'.

We have the golden opportunity to get rid of this lying rodent and his execrable cronies in 2007 and replace them with leaders who possess greater decency, vision and integrity. We must not fail.

All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.



Notes and references

- 1 One may argue that the Australian commercial media, dominated by Rupert Murdoch, is the prime originator of most of the nonsense anyway (such as weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, or global warming denial), and that Howard is merely toying Murdoch's line. And just what is Murdoch's agenda? Ted Turner, the founder of CNN, himself said that 'Rupert's idea of a better world is a world that is better for Rupert'.
- 2 'Turd blossom' is of course the nickname George Bush Junior gave to Karl Rove, the architect of Bush's 2004 election campaign. Rove has also been called 'Bush's brain'.
- 3 See Chia, Geoffrey 'Achieving wisdom' in *Australian Rationalist*, No. 74, Winter 2006 (<www.rationalist.com.au/archive/74/p39-48_chia_ar74_web.pdf>).
- 4 For definition of a 'contrironic' term or title, see Chia, Geoffrey 'Confronting the wizards of ID' in *Dissent*, No. 22, Summer 2006 / 2007.
- 5 Evidence ultimately revealed the mastermind of the 'children overboard' lie to be the abominable Peter Reith. When Reith was exposed in due course, instead of being punished and condemned, he was spirited away overseas and removed from our scrutiny, and rewarded with the lucrative position of Executive Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London.
- 6 The federal government delights in taking credit for our good economic times, but the fact of the matter is they have *nothing* to do with Australia's prosperity. The Hawke and Keating governments did the hard work of economic restructuring previously, which the current government merely inherited. Our present wealth is the result of a prolonged commodities boom driven by an insatiable demand for coal, metals and natural gas from rapidly developing China, a matter of dumb luck for resource-rich Australia. Crediting Howard for Australia's wealth is like crediting the Saudi royal family for Saudi Arabia's oil wealth, a totally undeserved attribution. Cheap manufactured goods from China have also directly, or by competitive pressure on rivals, driven the cost of consumer goods down, enabling us to keep more money in our pockets — giving us more disposable income. The GST windfall and sell-off of valuable public assets has enabled the present government to accumulate a huge surplus fund, which it uses to bribe the voting public with 'tax breaks' or 'family benefits' each time an election comes around. The same good economic situation (apart from the loss of our public assets) would have existed if Labor had been in federal government for the past eleven years. It is an utter myth to claim that members of the coalition government are somehow economic geniuses; however, they have hoodwinked the public into believing this lie by relentless propaganda from the colluding commercial media. This fallacy must be exposed to the voting public. What about their intended sell-off of Telstra, and abandoned sell-off of the Snowy River hydro scheme? Same agenda.
- 7 Erstwhile federal minister for the environment and heritage Ian Campbell vetoed the Bald Hills wind farm project in Victoria with the spurious excuse that it would endanger the orange-bellied parrot. Information later released to the public in 2006 revealed that in the *worst-case scenario*, one parrot would be killed every 667 years — hardly a significant risk by anybody's measure. Indeed, the Federal Court of Australia heard evidence that Campbell had ignored advice from his own department that the wind farm could be built without any risk to the parrot. The reduction of carbon emissions by the wind farm would also have mitigated the threat to many more endangered species overall. Campbell was appropriately condemned as 'grossly incompetent' and 'a joke' by Rob Hulls, Victorian Minister for Planning. Campbell's tactics are typical of the federal government, which uses morally or environmentally righteous-sounding language to push through legislation which is in fact harmful to the public good and to the environment, but which benefits big-business interests such as the coal-fired power lobby. Campbell is either a fool or a corrupt pawn of industry, or both. Despite the coalition's reshuffling of the deckchairs in January 2007, Campbell remained a front-bench minister, and nothing had really changed — until he was sacked over the Brian Burke affair in March. This sacking was a particularly cynical politically expedient manoeuvre, just as was Howard's sudden 'concern' about David Hicks' detention, which was obviously driven by the shifting winds of public opinion rather than by any genuine interest in the rule of law.
- 8 See Burnham, Lafta, Doocy and Roberts 'Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross-sectional cluster sample survey', *The Lancet*, Vol. 368, Issue 9545, 21 Oct 2006, pp1421-1428.

