

A Drunken Madman

A gin-soaked skeptical atheist malcontent pontificates on subjects diverse
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Failing at one's own job

If there's a common thread that runs through the ranks of antivaxers, chiropractors, homeopaths and general fucktwats that I've blogged about over the years, it's an inability to quantify or even recognise their own incompetence that stands out most clearly for me.

Enter Professor Brian Martin, Faculty member in Social Sciences at the University of Wollongong, a regional centre some 85km or so south of Sydney. Brian has reared his head in support of [Meryl Dorey and her Anti-Vaccination Network](#) a few times in recent years. Brian sees himself as a champion of "whistleblowers", and sees Dorey and her band of crystal-stroking sandalistas as a natural fit with his chosen topic.

Of course, Dorey doesn't have a whistle to blow. More a [party squeaker](#). And that's the first sign of Martin's incompetence raising its head. Martin has not done the due diligence required to determine whether Dorey's argument is in any way valid, and therefore whether she's entitled to be defended as a whistleblower.

Martin has said, in print, that he has [no strong views for or against vaccination](#), implying that he hasn't investigated the science, because his concern is the treatment of the AVN by their detractors. In fact, [in this article](#), he explicitly outlines that he's *only* examined the debate, and not the framework of evidence underlying it.

Trouble is, if you're so blithely unaware of the science, so disinterested to the point of ambivalence on such a scientifically solid topic, how can you possibly distinguish a genuine whistleblower from a run-of-the-mill delusional lunatic?

The answer is, of course, that you can't.

Perhaps the man claiming he designed a car that runs on a perpetual motion generator while working at Ford, only to have it ruthlessly suppressed by Big Crude and Big Auto, is a genuine whistleblower. Or perhaps, as physics suggests, he could be a nutbar and/or charlatan making implausible claims. If you have no strong views for or against thermodynamics, you might conclude that the crank has something going for his story, and back him against an imagined enemy. Even though he's making absurd, counter-scientific, *impossible* claims.

Much like Dorey does.

I'll repeat the point: Without a good knowledge of the science in question, there's no way to make the

distinction between whistleblower and crank.

But while this is the core failing in Martin's attempts to position himself as a champion of the little guy, it's not the one I want to mention here. No, the one I want to mention here has already been blogged about by ReasonableHank, over at his excellent blog. [Pop off and have a look](#), then come back, because there's an aspect which Pete glossed over. Go on, I'll be here when you get back.

Ah, you've returned. Funny, huh? Yep. And this quote *is* pretty epic.

SAVN's Facebook page, with thousands of members, is filled with contemptuous comment about the AVN and especially about its key figure Meryl Dorey. *The Mercury* ran a photo of Dorey standing in a balcony. SAVN posted this photo with Dorey's face covered by a Guy Fawkes mask, the implication being that Dorey would meet Fawkes' fate, namely torture and execution, at least metaphorically.

Stupid, but epic. Peter notes with his usual correctness, that the photoshopping of the GF mask onto Dorey was a reaction to her adoption of V for Vendetta-style imagery. What I noticed, though, was that Martin really ought to know what the Guy Fawkes Mask actually stands for these days.

Originating in the comic and movie [V For Vendetta](#), the stylised image of Guy Fawkes gave the man himself a reboot – as less a traitor who was justly executed for his crimes and more as a symbol of anti-establishment solidarity, as the closing scenes of the movie [thrillingly demonstrate](#).

The mask was adopted in short order by the internet at large and gained a new prominence in the [Anonymous protests against Scientology](#). Later still, the [global Occupy movement](#), something with which a Social Sciences professor sporting a penchant for anti-establishment little-guys-against-big-guys posturing, might have some slight familiarity.

The mask even appeared in pictures from the [Arab Spring protests of 2011](#), and the anti SOPA protests in the US. As an image, it's everywhere. Shouldn't a Social Sciences Professor have some passing knowledge, then, of this [icon of modern protest movements](#)?

Apparently not.

No, apparently, the Guy Fawkes image implies that Dorey will undergo – metaphorical – torture and execution.

I remind you, this man is a Social Sciences Professor, and he appears to be unaware of what a Guy Fawkes mask means in today's global protest scene.

This is like a Biology Professor standing up and proclaiming that the [recurrent laryngeal nerve](#) is an *insoluble puzzle put in place by a god who works in mysterious ways*.

It's taking an outdated, superceded view of a fast-moving topic in which one really ought to be better acquainted

It's my opinion that Brian Martin is failing at his own job, and coupled with his support of Judy Wilyman there are serious reasons for UoW to take action to rein in a staff member who has, basically, lost the plot.

Of course, why would you listen to me? I'm just one guy up against a big ol' monolithic establishment like UoW. It's almost like.... oh wait!



posted @ Wednesday, June 13, 2012 2:08 PM

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re: Failing at one's own job

Left by [A Well-Known Native American](#) at 6/14/2012 10:45



I think it's also possible that the picture could've meant something else;

One reason that the collective Anonymous donned the Guy Fawkes masks at the outset of Project Chanology (the global protesting against the Church of Scientology International,) aside from the badass end scene of V for Vendetta, was it's depiction in an Internet-based memetic comic known as Epic Fail Guy.

Epic Fail Guy is a crudely-drawn stick-figure wearing a Guy Fawkes mask who fails comically in anything he tries to do.

Is it not possible, that because it is Dorey with the Fawkes image superimposed over her face, that the person responsible for the image was comparing her to the comic's tragic protagonist and expressing that they think she fails at

everything?
Hell, I know it's what I think, after all!

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