

Ken McLeod and Brian Martin: disagreement over email correspondence in 2010

In October 2010, I invited Ken McLeod to comment on part II of my draft article “Debating vaccination.” We subsequently exchanged a number of emails.

The background is that Ken had made a complaint to the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission about the Australian Vaccination Network. In part II of my article I made a critical analysis of his complaint.

In 2012 and 2013, Ken made claims about our 2010 correspondence that I believe are incorrect or misleading. He made these claims on a public forum in 2012 and, despite my reply at the time disputing them, repeated them in 2013.

I wrote to him seeking permission to post our email correspondence so that others could judge for themselves. He replied saying no. Ken thus made public claims about our correspondence that I have contested, but is unwilling to allow this correspondence to be made public. Accordingly, I reproduce verbatim only my emails to Ken (omitting his email address), and have summarised his responses [in square brackets].

Ken has a concern about children’s health and seeks to promote vaccination as a means to improve their health. His concern is worthy and his support for vaccination is legitimate. In “Debating vaccination,” I did not support or oppose vaccination. Instead, I raised concerns about attempting to suppress critics of vaccination, for example by making abusive comments about them, making numerous complaints that served as a form of harassment, and making threats.

Brian Martin

1 November 2013

Below:

1. Our email exchange in 2010, with the contents of Ken’s emails paraphrased (pages 2–4)
2. Postings in 2012 about the 2010 email exchange (pages 5–7)
3. Correspondence in 2013 about the 2010 email exchange (page 8)

Martin-McLeod emails, 2010

From: Brian Martin <<mailto:bmartin@uow.edu.au>bmartin@uow.edu.au>
Date: 11 October 2010 12:44:26 PM
To: Ken McLeod <email>
Subject: Debating vaccination

Dear Ken,

I've written an article titled "Debating vaccination". Part II is an analysis of your complaint to the HCCC about the AVN. A copy of this part is attached.

I welcome your comments and corrections.

This is a copy intended just for you. I would appreciate your not quoting or distributing it.

Regards,
Brian

PS You may remember that we corresponded some years ago about thorium reactors, among other things.

Brian Martin
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phone 02-4221 3763 work, 02-4228 7860 home
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From: Ken McLeod <email>
To: Brian Martin <bmartin@uow.edu.au>
Date: Mon, 11 Oct 2010 17:52:48 +1100
Subject: Fw: Debating vaccination

[Ken said he was considering a response and asked to see the entire document.]

From: <mailto:bmartin@uow.edu.au>Brian Martin
To: <email>Ken McLeod
Sent: Tuesday, October 12, 2010 11:25 AM
Subject: Fwd: Fw: Debating vaccination

Hi Ken,

Only Part II deals with the substance of your complaint. It stands alone in that regard: you or your work are not the focus in the other parts. Therefore I hope you'll be able to comment.

As is my usual practice, I send portions of work in progress to selected individuals, as I prefer not to have more draft text circulating than necessary.

Regards,
Brian

From: Ken McLeod <email>
To: Brian Martin <bmartin@uow.edu.au>
Date: Wed, 13 Oct 2010 11:02:34 +1100
Subject: Re: Fw: Debating vaccination

[Ken said it would require "a week or so" to prepare a response, and asked where the document would be published.]

[13 October 2010]
To: Ken McLeod <email>
From: Brian Martin <bmartin@uow.edu.au>
Subject: Fwd: Re: Fw: Debating vaccination

Hello Ken,

Decades ago, not so long after I started studying scientific controversies and suppression of dissent, I learned that if there was a possibility of attempted censorship, it was wise not to reveal where an article was submitted or to be published. Sorry.

Regards,
Brian

From: Ken McLeod <email>
To: Brian Martin <bmartin@uow.edu.au>
Date: Sat, 4 Dec 2010 18:02:08 +1100
Subject: Fw: Webinar Reminder - Threats, Suppression and Health Fascism in Australia

[Ken noted that "Debating vaccination" had been published before he commented, and asked to see a copy.]

[8 December 2010]
To: Ken McLeod <email>
From: Brian Martin <bmartin@uow.edu.au>
Subject: Debating vaccination

Dear Ken,

My article is now available at <http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/10lw.pdf>

I'd be happy to consider posting a reply from you on my website.

Regards,
Brian

From: Ken McLeod <email>
To: Brian Martin <bmartin@uow.edu.au>
Date: Wed, 15 Dec 2010 14:49:54 +1100
Subject: Re: Debating vaccination

[Ken thanked me for offering to post a response. He said he could prepare a lengthy reply showing where I had misrepresented him, but said the real issue was whether Meryl Dorey had lied in promoting her agenda. He attached a document about her alleged lies, asking me to post it as prominently as "Debating vaccination", which he said attacked him.]

[16 December 2010]
To: Ken McLeod <email>
From: Brian Martin <bmartin@uow.edu.au>
Subject: Fwd: Re: Debating vaccination

Dear Ken,

Sorry, I don't consider your document to be a response to mine. You haven't addressed my commentary on scientific controversies, my analysis of your complaint to the HCCC, or my examination of the attack on the AVN. I see your document as a continuation of the attack on the AVN.

My analysis of your HCCC complaint was not an attack on you personally and I'm sorry if you took it that way.

Regards,
Brian

2012 posts about the 2010 email exchange

Ken McLeod, 20 September 2012¹

Two years ago, Martin sent to me a draft of an article critical of me that he intended to publish, and asked for my comments. I saw that the article was in need of major corrections and advised him I would get back to him with comments and corrections.

He then published without waiting for my response. In doing so, he demonstrated quite clearly that he was hypocritical and dishonest.

His persistence in claiming that we untruthfully assert that Meryl Dorey engages in conspiracy theories involving aliens, after we have given him the proof, shows that he is a liar.

Brian Martin, 28 September 2012²

Dear Ken,

Perhaps you have forgotten the sequence of events concerning my article “Debating vaccination”. I sent part II of it to you, inviting comment, on 11 October 2010. You replied two days later saying “it will take me a week or so to write a proper response”. Having not heard further from you for six weeks, I posted the paper in early December. You then protested to me; I wrote on 8 December that “I’d be happy to consider posting a reply from you on my website.”

The only reply you proposed was the document “Meryl Dorey’s trouble with the truth”. Concerning this, on 16 December I replied,

“Sorry, I don’t consider your document to be a response to mine. You haven’t addressed my commentary on scientific controversies, my analysis of your complaint to the HCCC, or my examination of the attack on the AVN.”

In the nearly two years since this exchange, you have not provided any comments on or corrections to “Debating vaccination”. My offer to consider posting a reply from you stands.

Regards,
Brian

¹ Losing in the Lucky Country, “Dealing with the Brian Martin dilemma,” 19 September 2012, <http://luckylosing.com/2012/09/19/dealing-with-the-brian-martin-dilemma/>

² reasonablehank, “Of publication, and sleights of hand,” 18 September 2012, http://reasonablehank.com/2012/09/18/of-publication-and-sleights-of-hand/?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter. Subsequent quotes are from comments on this blog.

Brian Martin, 30 September 2012

[Text not referring to Ken McLeod omitted here]

Contrary to Hank's assumption, I was not worried when Ken McLeod did not send me any comments on "Debating vaccination". I interpreted that as indicating that he could not find anything substantially wrong with my analysis of his complaint.

Ken McLeod, 30 September 2012

Martin says "...Ken McLeod did not send me any comments on "Debating vaccination". I interpreted that as indicating that he could not find anything substantially wrong with my analysis of his complaint."

What a giant leap, what an arrogant assumption of my position. Martin made this assumption without consulting me, he published his diatribe without waiting for my comment. Martin made no attempt to remind me that he was approaching a deadline; a simple reminder would have been a courtesy, something that Martin deliberately avoided.

For the record, I was not "indicating that he could not find anything substantially wrong with my (Martin's) analysis of his (my) complaint."

The extra time I was taking was due to the inordinate amount of work I had to put in to developing a response, due to the inordinate amount of downright misinterpretation and misrepresentation. I was later horrified that I had put so much time and work into developing a response only to find that Martin had published without waiting for it.

That is why I regard Martin as a dishonest washed-up academic who needs to raise his profile by riding on the coat-tails of someone else's campaign, so much so that I will have nothing to do with him.

Brian Martin, 3 October 2012

Dear Ken,

It seems there was a communication breakdown. You were working on your reply to "Debating vaccination" and expecting me to wait for it. I assumed, because you said it would take you a week or so, that nothing was forthcoming. With the benefit of hindsight, you might have told me it was taking you longer than a month and I might have checked with you before publishing.

It's a shame for your work to go to waste. You're welcome to send it to me or to post it online, as you choose.

Regards,
Brian

Ken McLeod, 5 October 2012

There was no communication breakdown. You took the opportunity to misrepresent me in a most duplicitous manner. You claim to have made an assumption of my position, and I say again that this was the most outrageous arrogance. I won't waste any more time on you because I don't deal with liars.

Brian Martin, 9 October 2012

Dear Ken,

I don't know whether you ever wrote a reply to "Debating vaccination". There are two main possibilities. The first is that you never wrote one. The second is that you wrote one but, in the past two years, have not posted it.

You have continued to claim that "Debating vaccination" has inadequacies but have failed to produce any evidence. Why not? I presume because you don't have a strong case.

There's an easy way to prove me wrong: publish your critique.

Regards,
Brian

2013 correspondence about the 2010 email exchange

From: [Brian Martin](#)

Sent: Sunday, September 29, 2013 11:03 AM

To: [Ken McLeod](#)

Subject: Debating vaccination

Hi Ken,

I understand you have been commenting again about the time back in 2010 when I invited you to comment on "Debating vaccination". To be specific, you recently posted, inter alia, "When Martin drafted his first article defending the AVN and criticising me in 2010, he sent the draft to me for comment. I saw that it had many grievous 'errors' in it, and that it would take a while to provide a response. I asked Martin for an extension of his deadline, but he went ahead and published anyway. So I have no hesitation in saying that in publishing without waiting for comments and corrections, he demonstrated his complete lack of ethics" (SAVN Facebook page, 27 September 2013).

To help refresh your memory, I attach our emails in chronological order.

A few points are relevant.

1. An author is under no obligation to solicit or obtain feedback from people named in an article. In "Debating vaccination", I wrote about your complaint to the HCCC. I was not obliged to seek comment from you before publication, but I did so as a matter of courtesy.

2. I didn't impose a deadline for your comments, and you didn't ask for an extension. You said it would take you a week or so; I waited six weeks.

3. Despite claiming that "Debating vaccination" has shortcomings, you have not provided evidence of a single one. My offer to post a response to the substance of the article remains open.

Because you haven't provided a response to the article, my assumption is that either you haven't actually found any flaws in it or that you are unable or unwilling to publish an account of them because your response would then be open to scrutiny. You can easily prove me wrong.

Regards,

Brian

PS You've also made claims about our 2011 email correspondence that I'll address separately later

Ken McLeod, 29 September 2013

Ken responded within half an hour, saying that he did not intend to debate with me because I was a "dishonest publicity-seeking sod", closing his email with "Fuck off."