

MARTIN WALKER

The Survival of the Most Corrupt*

The Verdict, Thursday 28th January 2010

*The expression often used by Mr. Herbert Spencer of the Survival of the Most Corrupt is more accurate, and is sometimes equally convenient.

With apologies to Darwin and Mr Herbert Spencer

And so it came to be that Dr Kumar, the Chairman of the GMC Fitness to Practice Panel trying Dr Andrew Wakefield, Professor Simon Murch and Professor Walker-Smith sat without the flicker of a smile on his face, leaning on the long plastic topped table and read out the verdicts to the many charges. The Panel found that; most of the children in the *Lancet* paper had been experimented upon outside the inclusion dates of research ethical committee approval 172/96. That a number of the children had been subjected to aggressive procedures not sanctioned by any research ethics committee. That in most cases parental approval had not been lodged in the case files and that Dr Wakefield had "treated children with a 'callous disregard' for the distress and pain that he knew or ought to have known the children involved might suffer. This latter aside, although repeated by the media incessantly throughout Thursday night, actually referred to the taking of a small quantity of blood by a trained professional from 5 healthy children, whose parents were friends of the Wakefield's; a control sample for a study. This had nothing to do with the experimental procedures that were supposedly carried out by Dr Wakefield on the 12 children reviewed in the *Lancet* paper.

As the recitation of the crimes of Dr Wakefield came to an end, it appeared as if Dr Wakefield, had in the mid nineties, been some kind of inhuman Nazi experimenter practicing on children in the heart of England; an overlooked human vivisector who stalked a large North London hospital committing serious crimes with the two other criminals in his firm, invisible to his colleagues and unseen by the hospital administration.

Kumar didn't have an easy read of the verdict. Feelings ran high. The GMC were unable to keep order. Muttering began as Kumar's message became clear while he dodged through the verdict; the microphones working with loud clarity for the first time in two and a half years. Suddenly one parent exploded in a clutter of bags and clothing, a scarf and a jacket, she stood up, twisted round a blur of mustard, shouting as she made her way out of the hearing room. She evaded the the GMC security as they tried to manhandling her. After a short quiet with Kumar continuing, another parent, dressed attractively in purples, fury on her face, raged against him, repeating

'the children' over and again. GMC security did catch up with this diminutive parent and held her bruisingly in the lift on the way to expelling her from the premises.

The public gallery began to empty. Then after another five minutes of Kumar's sucrose voice, a freewheeling free-for-all pushed its way to the door. It was headed by a straighter than straight parent, one who usually appeared unable to be aggressive, he remonstrated with the Hearing, like a radical haranguing a rabble, every word in place, beautifully composed. He informed the panel that they were the only ones who had behaved unethically, not the doctors who had tried to care for their children.

Outside again, the parents drew together and began chanting their message or catching up with reporters, trying to squeeze the last juice from the media. Jim Moody, Dr Wakefield's friend and a lawyer a frequent visitor from the US during the hearing had that day delivered to the GMC an indictment of the prosecution's central witnesses in the hearing. I thought as I listened to him, he was far too articulate for a media able only to understand cacophony. Nevertheless they pretended to listen intently, pointing 57 varieties of recording technology in his direction. That night I could find not even rubble of his speech in the broadcast media.

At the end of the afternoon, in the gathering dusk of the Euston Road, a real treat, the presence of Andy and Carmel, this time completely in control, without the press snapping at their heels, walking fast like an escaping Bonny and Clyde but standing calmly saying exactly what needed to be said but answering no questions. Of course the media had their own way of portraying even this. Dr Wakefield became 'an unrepentant doctor', a man who wouldn't take his medicine! I personally was so pleased that neither Dr Wakefield or Professor Walker-Smith graced the hearing room with their presence showed proper contempt for the hearing.

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It is 10.30 am on the morning of Thursday 28th January, I'm sitting in the student canteen inside the University of London on Gower Street. This University is now and has been for the last hundred years, the hub of science research. The body of Jeremy Bentham, resides sitting in a glass and wood exhibition box. The library of the Wellcome Institute is just round the corner and because of its closeness to the Wellcome Trust, the University has been the recipient of funds from that body and its original pharmaceutical counterpart, The Wellcome Foundation, for a century. The university was used for the filming of Silent Witnesses one of the most popular forensic science detective programmes on British TV. The University College London, has centuries of science ground into it's very bricks; it was here that Francis Crick studied on the way to discovering the double helix of DNA.

Ten minutes' walk up the Euston Road stands the big glass building of the GMC where later in the day, the panel in the Wakefield, Murch and Walker-Smith case will announce its verdicts or 'findings on fact' as they fancifully call them. Here in the glass panelled hearing room, a different kind of science has been practiced for the last two and a half years; the science of deception.

We already know, and some of us have known for a long time, that all the defendants will be found guilty on almost all the charges. Although the hearing does not begin until 2.00pm, the cameras are already there in the early morning, like vultures on rocks. The camera men and reporters, hands stuffed in windcheaters talking in low voices, with constant nods of the head and shuffling of the feet, looking determinedly at the pavement. It's very cold in London and especially so on this part of the Euston Road that is like a canyon down which the wind whistles.

I was the first of Dr Wakefield's contingent to arrive. I got to the GMC building early because I always have a need to sink into the situation to feel that I can get the measure of atmosphere, to mull it over, long before the proceedings begin. I am here after following Dr Wakefield's case over five years and attending the hearing at every sitting over the last two and a half years.

Today I know will be one of those times that signify a dark night of the soul, for defendants, parents and campaigners alike. This afternoon the defendants will be knocked from their horses by rib smashing lance blows, on the ground they will lie dazed and have to figure whether it is right or even possible to remount and continue the battle. Parents will contemplate the bleak landscape of their children's illness without any treatment and with open skepticism from medical practitioners from whom they seek help. Activists and campaigners like myself will have to face the melancholic prospect of either continuing the campaign or slipping away to support apparently more equitable battles.

This particular battle is a post-modern struggle, one in which the most powerful forces, multinational companies, reshape the world hand in hand with governments. This is a struggle from which parents and citizens have been expunged. A blind struggle, in an age where all the ties between governments and citizens have been severed, where it is no longer possible for citizens to have any real effect on either the processes of industrial science or of national politics. At the same time that Dr Kumar is pulling his verdict out of the hat this afternoon, a quarter of a mile away near Parliament Square ex-prime minister Tony Blair will be excusing his role in the killing of 100,000 civilians in Iraq. Huge and the little crimes are spoken away with 'the people' unable even to dent the facade of apparent fairness.

Today at the GMC we all will have to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous and organised fortune, the defendant will have to bend with the wind like trees on the beach cliffs and smart from the ignorance of the news media. Parents will have to pretend that they can cope, make themselves strong and hope that help will come from somewhere for their children; the prospect of no further clinical help is impossible to contemplate. Activists, scientists, politicians and campaigners - supporters of truth and science will have to steel themselves to the phlegm spat from the PCs of snakes like Brian Deer, stand still and take the belittling mountain of toxic words that he and his blancmange brained associates will heap belittlingly upon us.

Before I become too maudlin, however, I have to say that about one thing we can rest assured, history will prove us right, will turn in our favour. In fact this is a rule cast in iron, scorned as our truths are now, they will undoubtedly be recognised in the future; when the science is resurrected, and when the politics go through sea changes.

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It's now Friday morning and I have just gathered enough strength to begin my post for Age of Autism. Sometimes it's hard to write in the face of such an emotional maelstrom. Yesterday, the Chairman of the GMC Fitness to Practice Panel, Dr Kumar, a man who during the hearing refused to answer questions about his shareholding in GlaxoSmithKline, pronounced on behalf of the multinational drug companies and the British government that there was no such thing as vaccine damage and that any parents who claimed that their children had suffered such, would be treated with scorn and contempt.

Dr Kumar had been selected as Fitness to Practice Panel Chairman following the outing by campaigners of the GMC first choice, Professor Dennis McDevitt who had been a member of the original adverse reactions sub-committee of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunology (JCVI) that had manipulated and disguised the reported adverse reactions of the unsafe MMR. In 1988, McDevitt had declared funding for a Research fellowship from Glaxo and Smith Kline and French (as the present day vaccine manufacturers GlaxoSmithKline were then named).

Dr Kumar, also, thought obviously not in so many words, proclaimed the complete confidence of the GMC in the medical authority of Brian Deer, the only man in the world to make a formal complaint against three of Europe's leading gastroenterologists. Brian Deer has carried out his campaign against Dr Wakefield from the pages of the Sunday Times, a paper managed and owned by James Murdoch a man who sits on the board of GlaxoSmithKline. Deer researched his case with the help of Medico-Legal Investigations a private enquiry company funded solely by The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry.

The panel gave their verdict after two and a half years partial scrutiny of the case, after legal aid for the parents claims to be heard in a real court, against vaccine manufacturers, was denied by High Court judge Sir Nigel Davis, whose brother, an executive board member of Elsevier the publishers, was on the Board of GlaxoSmithKline. During the hearing, some of the apparently most authoritative evidence, not about science, but about conflict of interest, was given by Dr Richard Horton the editor of the *Lancet* one of the most prestigious medical journals in the world. The *Lancet* is owned by Elsevier and Sir Crispin Davis is Dr Horton's line manager.

Since the beginning of this GMC charade, I have though that anyone who even entertained a verdict other than one of guilty for the three defendants, was setting themselves up for a fall.

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From 2.00 o'clock onwards, right into the late media evening, the last two and a half years of conflict over the MMR combined vaccine, was reduced to simplicity itself. So simple did it all become that I found it almost impossible to believe that I was

hearing about the same hearing in which the prosecution had produced two and a half years of evidence.

In his announcement of the verdict Kumar, reduced the whole of the panel's verdict to an assessment on Wakefield's 'care' for the twelve children written up in the 1998 case review study published in the *Lancet*. In order to introduce this paper and the resultant verdict to you in this post, I have to simplify the hearing and the evidence given during its two and a half years, I ask your forgiveness for this.

In 2004, six years after the *Lancet* paper was published and nine years after the children cited in the paper had been seen by clinicians, Brian Deer, the British government, the GMC and all their drug industry connected supporters made this case:

Dr Wakefield and colleagues had applied to the research ethics committee at the Royal Free Hospital to carry out research programme 172/96, this programme was to study children who had inflammatory bowel disease. Dr Wakefield had also agreed to a Legal Aid Board funded study of two groups of five children. Dr Wakefield had published the results of his research into 12 autistic children, under programme 172/96, in the *Lancet* in 1998. The paper showed clearly that Dr Wakefield and his colleagues had included children in this research for whom they did not have ethical committee approval. That children were given aggressive procedures for which the doctors did not have ethical committee approval. That experimental research had been carried out on these 'autistic' but otherwise healthy children, that did not have bowel disease, without ethical committee approval, nor even in some cases parental consent. The prosecution frequently tried to show that children who attended at the RFH, had been garnered by Dr Wakefield in an illicit manner. Taken the children to the RFH had, the prosecution said, been a way of parents hoping to rid themselves of the guilt at having autistic children. The objective of the 'research' upon which the paper was based, was to show that the MMR vaccination had created 'regressive' autism and the motive of Dr Wakefield who had engineered the paper and the involvement of the other 11 authors, was to aid the claim of the parents against the three pharmaceutical companies being sued.

Finally, the prosecution had said that Dr Wakefield played a part in the clinical treatment of the children despite the fact that his contract as a researcher forbade him to do so. Further the prosecution claimed that while Legal Aid Board money had been used to fund Dr Wakefield's work he had made no declaration of this conflict of interest in the publication of the study.

It was in light of this prosecution evidence that the panel made its findings on Thursday. The verdict re-iterated the charges originally framed by Brian Deer in the Sunday Times as if no defence evidence had been presented, in fact, as if neither the defendants nor their counsel had never been involved in the case.

The defence case had been straightforward and unlike the prosecution case, had seemed more or less unarguable. Around 1994, various parents whose children suffered from terrible bowel problems, and regressive autism, sometimes immediately after their MMR vaccination, began to approach the Royal Free Hospital, wishing the country's gastrointestinal experts to examine them and give a diagnostic opinion.

Throughout 1994 to 2002, such parents were always passed by Dr Wakefield to Professor Walker-Smith who involved Dr Simon Murch, in clinically reviewing these cases. Dr Wakefield's involvement in these cases had deepened when it began to become evident that many of the children were suffering from a new, or novel bowel illness. Dr Wakefield was, after all, the head of the Experimental Gastrointestinal Unit at the Royal Free Hospital.

In 1997, before any formal research trials were begun or carried out, Dr Wakefield with a number of other colleagues, began to assemble 'a case review paper', which involved recording the cases of 12 children who had arrived at the Royal Free consecutively in the preceding few years. Such a paper serves two purposes, it advertises the work of the department and can be used to argue for new funding, and it gives an early warning to other clinicians who might well come across similar cases. The resultant paper, was not the report of 'a trial' or 'a research project' of any kind, it was simply an account of the presentation of twelve children. Although Professor Walker-Smith did have ethical committee approval for the extraction of histological samples from child patients, research ethical committee approval is not needed for such a paper unless the children have been examined with such a paper in mind. No money was used or received from outside the National Health Service, for either the clinically necessary evaluation of the children or for the case review study. All twelve children were examined by clinicians and not Dr Wakefield who had nothing at all to do with their clinical examination, review, or agreed treatment. Most importantly, no research of any kind was carried out on the condition of these children prior to their clinical review by clinicians at the Royal Free Hospital. All the children were examined on the understanding that it was the clinicians duty to find a cause and to understand the painful and exceptional bowel trauma experienced by these children.

Claims by the prosecution that the clinical care of the children had been in the hands of Dr Wakefield, proved to be so 'off the wall', that the prosecution had to change the wording of some charges to read, 'Dr Wakefield caused procedures to take place'. How one causes a colonoscopy, as if it were an act of God, remains a mystery to me.

This case review paper, made absolutely no attempt to prove that vaccination caused autism. MMR vaccination was mentioned at one point in the paper, when the authors made it clear that some parents had drawn attention to the coincidence of MMR and their child's illness. The authors suggested that more research might be useful in this area. Nor was there any mention that MMR or any other vaccination caused autism, rather the paper described a possible link between Inflammatory Bowel Disease possibly affected by an unidentified environmental trigger and regressive autism in some children.

It became clear part way through the hearing that the prosecution had got everything wrong. They had rested their case entirely upon a study, for which ethical approval had been sought but which by the time of the publication of the *Lancet* case review study, had not actually taken place. Clearly, the GMC prosecution and the panel did not want to hear or admit to this huge error, contained originally in Brian Deer's toxic writing for the Sunday Times. Unable to concede to clarity of the defence case, the prosecution continued head-banging as if it were a national sport. The false description of a research trial paid for by the Legal Aid Board that proved MMR

created autism continued to be used to stir up great clouds of dust, misapprehension and confusion.

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It is perhaps important that we understand what really happened on Thursday, that we understand the language that was used and its meaning. Following the verdict, most of the lay public will be thinking that the professional behaviour of the three doctors had been seriously scrutinised at great length and considerable cost, using significant analytical, intellectual energy.

However, this is not true description of what had happened. A truthful reflection on yesterday would go as follows. Towards the middle of the 1990s Dr Andrew Wakefield wrote to the Senior Medical functionaries in the National Health Service, warning that a public health crisis might occur if the government continued with its MMR triple vaccine programme. This communication came roughly two years after the UK Chief Medical officer had withdrawn two MMR vaccines which contained Urabe mumps strain. Over the previous decade, in various countries this vaccine had been found to create serious adverse reactions in children. With the British government left holding only one brand of 'safe' MMR and having caused already perhaps thousands of diverse adverse reactions in the children who had received the vaccine, the government and the pharmaceutical industry was not about to listen to Dr Wakefield or anyone else who mentioned the words adverse reaction.

In 1998, Dr Wakefield along with eleven other authors published 'a case review' paper in the Lancet. The paper charted the details of 12 children who had sequentially arrived at the Royal Free Hospital in search of clinical treatment for serious bowel conditions. Dr Richard Horton of the Lancet, even today, maintains that the science of this paper was beyond reproach, although he gave evidence to the hearing that Dr Wakefield's non-declaration a conflict of interest in the journal of which he is editor was unforgivable.

From 1998 onwards, the government and the pharmaceutical companies organised a merciless campaign against Dr Wakefield. Brian Deer wrote a number of stories in the Sunday Times with the intention of discrediting expert witnesses in previous vaccine damage cases in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2003, legal aid was withdrawn from the claim being prepared by parents against three vaccine manufacturers. In 2004 the appeal on behalf of the parents was turned down. Immediately after this, Brian Deer published in the Sunday Times his first major attack on Dr Wakefield, a complete character assassination written with the help of the private enquiry agency Medico-legal Investigations, solely funded by The Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries. With the help of various people including the then Secretary of State for Health John Reid, Deer tendered his paperwork upon which he had based his skittish article, to the GMC and from then on it formed the basis of the developing Fitness to Practice Hearing against Dr Wakefield, Professor Murch and Professor Walker-Smith.

In 2007, the GMC began their trial of the three doctors that has continued over two and a half years and is yet to finish with the sentencing of the doctor in the period between April and July of this year. In the time between Brian Deer lodging his complaint with the GMC in 2004 and the verdict on fact on Thursday, a period of six

years, the government has continued to introduce new and unsafe vaccinations damaging hundreds if not thousands of young people and children. This programme has culminated with the International fraud over swine flue vaccination, with which major pharmaceutical companies conned governments out of billions of pounds.

So, yesterday's verdict was not what it might appear, a reasonable judgement of a wise and considered tribunal. Rather the verdict was what the pharmaceutical companies hope would be a death blow, an end to the battle with a troublesome doctor. When Big Pharma and the corrupt New Labour government asked the question 'Who will rid me of this troublesome doctor', the GMC was the first to put its hand in the air.

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It's 11.30 pm on Thursday night, I have watched a number of news broadcasts, I think in the believe that sense would prevail on one channel and the truth would break through the screen. It didn't happen. Watching the news was a little like taking a bath in Walt Disney animations. Relentlessly, Wakefield was portrayed as a scaremonger, and worse as a criminal, a man who carried out damaging experiments on autistic children.

Even the parents tended to come across in news extracts as a confused entity because the media does not have time to explain that these people are parents of vaccine damaged children who have supported Dr Wakefield and his colleagues in their attempt to find a diagnosis for their children's illness. The media simplifies and distorts everything making it eminently clear who are the good guys and who are the bad guys yet brings you no evidence as to how they arrived at these opinions.

There is a peculiar sense in which all messages are broken, or twisted; nothing is continuous, deep or simply expressed; all statements are based on false premises.

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It seems important to say something about the media in Britain - at least as far as medicine is concerned, though it could easily be stretched to the invasion of Iraq - in the throws of corporate totalitarianism.

Having sat through the two and a half years of the hearing, I know that the media generally have only been ghosts in the machine, never present, never making a clear or analytical record of the proceedings. Turning up as they did like cattle on the day of the verdict what could they report apart from the panel's corrupt verdict? But, inevitably the situation is far worse than this lapse in concentration as the headlines last night and this mornings papers testified.

Yesterday, early outside the GMC, I watched Brian Deer being interviewed by Sky News, he said things about the hearing which seemed to me to be a product of his own fevered imagination, things that bore not the slightest relation to any reality I had observed. After the interview was over, I approached the Sky journalist who had

carried out the interview and asked him politely whether or not, when the interview was run that evening, an announcement would be made of the place of James Murdoch, one of the family owners of Sky, on the board of GlaxoSmith Kline the vaccine manufacturer.

'No', the journalist said, already turning away from me. 'We give a balanced account and there is no need for that kind of declaration'.

Obviously I had expected nothing more than this, but even so, I couldn't help but be astounded again, at how crooked the contemporary world is and at what shysters these people who call themselves journalists are.

I think that it is time that we turned 'secret ties to industry', from conflict of interest into corporate crime and made it a clearly defined criminal offence for any person to hold a position of authority or to be quoted on any material matter without citing either personal or organisational, contemporary or historical, links with corporations involved in the area under discussion.

I will end this report with a clear example of the criminal misinformation indulged in by the British press. Not having lived in the US, I have no idea of how the media deals with the matter of vaccines, but I fear that most North Americans can have no understanding of the unmitigated rottenness of the British Media, and without such an understanding they might find it hard to grasp how this tidal wave has crashed down upon Dr Wakefield.

A report appeared this morning in the Mirror newspaper, a vaguely Labour leading tabloid, quoting Dr Miriam Stoppard who is a septuagenarian columnist in the paper. Stoppard has campaigned against alternative medicine, in favour of Hormone Replacement Therapy and in favour of MMR, in everything from the most immature teen girl's magazines to the Mirror newspaper.

On Friday morning, previous writing of hers was repeated in the Mirror newspaper. Stoppard is just one of the many medical hacks that keep the wheels of vested interest turning inside the UK pharma-soaked media, but I think for reader world wide a brief look at the inanity on the morrow of the verdict against Andrew Wakefield, Professor Murch and Professor Walker-Smith might help readers outside the UK understand how the GMC is presently getting away with its lamentable corruption.

Miriam Stoppard writes an agony aunt column for the Daily Mirror Newspaper. She has a company, Miriam Stoppard Lifetime through which she sells her books and health products. After training as a doctor she began working for the drug company Syntex and eventually becoming one of the companies a managing directors. In 1997, she married Sir Christopher Hogg, who until 2004 had been Chairman of GlaxoSmith Kline, the vaccine manufacturer.

Here are Miriam Stoppard's remarks on Dr Wakefield's work, read on Friday morning by thousands of Mirror readers.

Knowing the MMR was probably one of the most highly tested vaccinations ever, I was shocked by Andrew Wakefield's words in 1998. I looked at his paper and I found it was very badly researched with lots of holes. It certainly didn't constitute any kind

of cause or relationship between the MMR vaccine and the appearance of autism. I was astonished it was even published. Shortly after, I wrote a big piece for the Mirror about how it was flawed and irresponsible. I tried to reassure parents it didn't show a connection between MMR and autism, the jab was safe and they should vaccinate their kids. However, a lot of the media came out and emphasised the autism connection and my attempts at reassurance were ineffective. Parents were driven towards single vaccines. But single vaccinations aren't licensed in this country so we don't even know if they're safe or effective. And while you're giving children single vaccinations, they're not protected against the other illnesses. So there is absolutely no reason, science or logic in using them. And the argument that the MMR overloads a baby's immune system is rubbish. It can take more than 10,000 doses of the MMR vaccination and not turn a hair. Wakefield and his bad research have an awful lot to answer for'.

Although it is hardly necessary, here is a brief rebuttal

MMR was probably one of the most highly tested vaccinations ever - *not true*.
I was shocked by Andrew Wakefield's words in 1998 - *which words*.
I looked at his paper and I found it was very badly researched with lots of holes - *evidence?*

It certainly didn't constitute any kind of cause or relationship between the MMR vaccine and the appearance of autism - *the paper didn't claim to show any causal link between MMR and autism - how did you read it and miss this?*

I was astonished it was even published - *Thank God your not the editor of a medical journal*.

Shortly after, I wrote a big piece for the Mirror about how it was flawed and irresponsible - *How much were you paid for this article. Did you declare any conflict of interest?*

I tried to reassure parents it didn't show a connection between MMR and autism, the jab was safe and they should vaccinate their kids - *The paper didn't claim to show any connection between MMR and autism, however to assure parents without any evidence to the contrary is a disgusting abdication of medical responsibility, do you still have your doctors practice certificate?*

Single vaccinations aren't licensed in this country, so we don't even know if they're safe or effective. And while you're giving children single vaccinations, they're not protected against the other illnesses. So there is absolutely no reason, science or logic in using them - *How is possible to pack so many mistakes into 3 sentences? Single vaccines were licensed at the time of the publication of the Lancet paper. We do know that they are safe and effective because in the case of measles they were used from 1976 onwards. In the case of mumps, the NHS advised against vaccination and in the case of Rubella, vaccination was suggested only for women likely to become pregnant. Interesting that you say that we shouldn't be using single vaccines. Is this the case for say, malaria, I mean if it doesn't also protect people against measles I think you must clearly be right!*

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At the end of the day, we have to keep the parents at the forefront of our mind and we have to consider that everything that can be done, should be done to find some kind of safe haven for them. All our battles, whether they be political, scientific or cultural have to be directed towards getting diagnosis and treatment for the children, while at the same time mercilessly pursuing the criminals within the pharmaceutical industry and the government who now profess the new creed of vaccine damage denial.

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The End of Science History

Last week, following the guilty verdict of the GMC Fitness to Practice Hearing in the case of Wakefield, Murch and Walker-Smith, the *Lancet* and one other journal expunged Wakefield's work from the academic record. A person's work is often their life and erasure of this work from the record under a determination of dishonesty, is very close to erasure of the subject's life. To erase scientific work from the history and progress of science, is perhaps the closest you can come to academic assassination; it is not, however, something new. It is perhaps a sign of the growing power of the chemical and pharmaceutical corporation that what was

Those who imagine that this liquidation of a person's work from the record is a novel technique invented solely for the use of pharmaceutical companies in relation to Dr Wakefield, should take a look at the shenanigans that surrounded the 1985 Australian Royal Commission on Agent Orange and dioxin on Australian personnel during the Vietnam War. [1] Agent Orange was a herbicide dropped by the US and their allies on forested areas of Vietnam so as to expose insurgent fighters and groups. Agent Orange contained dioxin in large quantities. Shortly after involvement in dropping Agent Orange in Vietnam, US and Australian troops and even the dogs used by the military showed serious adverse reaction to the chemical. The Vietnamese are still having to cope with familial genetic damage caused by Agent Orange forty years later.

The Australian Royal commission was from the start a 'get-up'. Two Swedish doctors, Lennart Hardell and Olaf Axelson, had some years before the commission managed to get dioxin-based herbicides banned in Sweden. Hardell gave evidence to the Royal Commission but he paid dearly for this privilege. The judge's final verdict that there was no evidence that exposure to Agent Orange, including TCDD (Dioxin), was a health hazard turned out to be an almost verbatim account of a Monsanto submission on the issue.

In the days following the verdict of the Royal Commission, Richard Doll, the 'great' epidemiologist, who unbeknown to his colleagues and fans had since the nineteen seventies been receiving \$1,000 a day (later raised to \$1,500) on a consultative basis for recommending the chemical products of Monsanto, [2] one of the companies manufacturing Agent Orange, wrote to Justice Evatt who had presided over the last part of the hearing. [3]. Doll's unsolicited letter to Evatt supported the Commission's conclusions. In the letter Doll stated:

'relating to 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T (the phenoxy herbicides in question) that there is no reason to suppose that they are carcinogenic in laboratory animals and that even TCDD (dioxin), which has been postulated to be a dangerous contaminant of the herbicides, is at the most, only weakly and inconsistently carcinogenic in animal experiments . . . I am sure, however, that it [your review] will be widely quoted and that it will come to be regarded as the definitive work of the subject. [4]

Doll's letter goes on to question the veracity and validity of the work by Dr Hardell and his colleagues, and without one word about science, epidemiology or methodology, its very legitimacy as scientific work.

'Your Review of Hardell's work, with the additional evidence obtained directly from him at interview, shows that many of his published statements were exaggerated or not supportable and that there were many opportunities for bias to have been introduced in the collection of his data. His conclusions cannot be sustained and in my opinion, *his work should no longer be cited as scientific evidence.*' (Author's italics). [5]

Within a few days of the Commission having given its ruling - that Agent Orange and dioxin were perfectly safe, an advert, disguised as a news feature, appeared in many of the world's leading newspapers. The main content of the advert was Doll's attack on Hardell and his suggestion that Hardell's work should 'no longer be cited as scientific evidence'.

This idea that Hardell's work is not scientific has followed him around for two decades, making him the subject of attack around different toxic industrial products from a series of organised groups and individuals. Doll never retracted this attempt to liquidate Hardell's science and his bank balance was undoubtedly enhanced with the lucre deposited by Monsanto.

The writer George Orwell is often quoted in relation to contemporary battles between governments, multinational corporations and citizens. In looking at totalitarianism, Orwell seems to have had an intelligence for getting the details right, especially in his novel Nineteen Eighty Four. [6]

What strikes such a resonance, in the modern mind with Orwell's dystopian future, is the way in which information and language is separated from the material reality of society. In Nineteen Eighty Four the work of the central character, Winston Smith, involves changing newspaper reports where they do not coincide with the contemporary circumstances of the Party. Winston loves his work and reflects upon each change he makes in back copies of the *Times* as utilising all his journalistic skills to the maximum. While he is working Smith tells us about the philosophical principles that lie behind correcting the *Times*.

'As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of the *Times* had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted, the original copy destroyed and the corrected copy placed on the files in its stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied to not only newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, film, soundtracks, cartoons, photographs - to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by

day and almost minute be minute the past was brought up to date. In this way, every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct; nor was any item of news, or any expression of opinion, which conflicted with the needs of the moment, every allowed to remain on record'.

The unfortunate fact is that progressive and patient-centred scientists are partially themselves to blame for the censorship and dirty tricks that are taking place in a number of scientific fields. Almost without thought, most scientists have happily pursued research for which money is seemingly available and have failed to involve themselves in the politics of science. Consequently, industry, especially the pharmaceutical industry, now has control of many aspects of science. It is becoming increasingly important that independent scientists form organisations to protect themselves from this onslaught of bias presently propagated by industrial science.

[1] Royal Commission on the Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam, Sweden ISSN 02808471 1986.

[2] Doll, 1986 see PP/DOL, Sir Richard Doll (b. 1912) Epidemiologist. Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine.

[3] Doll R. 1985. Letter from Richard Doll, Green College, December 4, 1985 to The Hon. Mr. Justice Phillip Evatt, DSC, LLB [ref: 40-X-016]

[4] Doll 1985. *ibid*

[5] Doll 1985. *ibid*

[6] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Penguin Modern Classics. 1987.

Dr Wakefield and the strange case of the Censorious phone call

The Strange Case of the Censorious Phone Call

I want to start this post with an apology. Writing my last piece about the liquidation of Dr Wakefield's science I was rushed. Not only was I still suffering from the trauma of the GMC verdict but I was also finishing a book. Rushed and traumatised, I wrote a very truncated post that left out one of the most important acts of attempted censorship in British science in the last decade. As it happens, the case of Arpad Pusztie does more than echo the case of Dr Wakefield; because of an apparently odd coincidence, it actually links to it.

I should warn readers that what follows is a very unsavoury tale best not read over breakfast, or any other meal for that matter.

In 2007 Dr Richard Horton and Sir Peter Lachmann found themselves on the same side battling for the prosecution in Dr Wakefield's GMC Fitness to Practice Hearing. Lachmann's evidence intriguing. In his original *Sunday Times* article Brian Deer had suggested that Dr Wakefield had taken out a patent on an alternative vaccine to MMR, intimating that, had he been able to damage MMR in his *Lancet* case review

paper and future studies, he would have been able to make millions from the sales of his own vaccine. The prosecution pursued this fairy story with absurd alacrity throughout two and a half years of the hearing. It has re-emerged after the verdict as well, again propagated by Deer and his associates. However, not only was this story a complete forrigo, but the tall tale was actually dropped while Lachmann, the head honcho of British genetic modification, gave his evidence.

The patent that Dr Wakefield had taken out on behalf of the Royal Free Hospital, was for a particular type of Transfer Factor that he believed might conceivably be able to reverse the adverse reactions that some children might have suffered following MMR vaccination; in the event, it was given by a clinician to only one child with the involvement of the parents, and had no apparent success and so was not used further. Once again Deer, had turned an innocent and compassionate scientific idea into an untruthful fabrication which described Dr Wakefield as someone who thought he could take on single handed one of the biggest pharmaceutical companies in the world and produce a vaccine to rival MMR. For this was the prosecution case on this issue: first Wakefield would attack the leading vaccine manufacturers with concocted stories of adverse reactions to the MMR vaccine, then he would distribute his new vaccine, presumably on a global scale. Did the prosecution believe this? Did Miss Smith, the senior prosecutor, believe it? Could they? Would you?

Certainly they never put such a story to Sir Peter Lachmann because even he would have had to put them right about the fact that Transfer Factor wasn't 'a vaccine' that would compete with MMR. So while Miss Smith took Lachmann through his evidence - she slaloming between very general comments about the possibility of using TF to inhibit various viruses and microbes - it was Lachmann who pointed out the fact that nowhere in any of the papers did it actually state that Dr Wakefield was using TF to inhibit measles virus - and more specifically as an untested and possibly dangerous treatment. Lachmann described the history of the therapeutic use of TF, telling the hearing that it had had mildly curative effects in some trials. However, inevitably, in Lachmann's opinion, Wakefield was completely misguided; the type of Transfer Factor he suggested would do no good to an autistic child, for this is what the subjects were according to Miss Smith, not children with inflammatory bowel disease but simply autistic.

Despite it being clear that Deer's description of TF as a vaccine that could rival MMR, wouldn't stand up, after Lachmann had given his evidence, the prosecution returned to this story and it has surfaced with repetitive daftness right up to the present day. Even on the matter of dangerous experimental substances and chances of serious adverse reactions, Lachmann did next to nothing for the prosecution. Miss Smith's stroll through Lachmann's evidence ended with this exchange:

Q As far as the Dr Fudenberg version, I hesitate to ask an eminent scientist to speculate, but are you able to give any assistance at all as to whether that might have side effects and what they might be?

A In general I would imagine it is very much like drinking goat's milk; I would not imagine it was any more dangerous than that. If they have stimulated these goats to make inflammatory cytokines in their colostrum, which is possible, then it might have the same possibility of improving or creating side effects due to immuno-potentiation that you can get from other forms of transfer

factor. I would have thought it was fairly unlikely that you would have enough of anything in there to produce cytokine storms or anything of this description. The more probable is that it would have no particular effects at all.

Sir Peter Lachmann's low-key evidence that mildly ridiculed Dr Wakefield, like so much of the prosecution evidence, took what was essentially Brian Deer's random and inarticulate accusations no further.

In fact, so little effect did the evidence have that each of the defence counsel turned down the opportunity to cross examine Lachmann. At the time I felt this was to some extent a missed opportunity, at least, I thought, they should have asked him about the strange case of the threatening phone call. Or did defence counsel not know that Lachmann was slightly more than he seemed?

* * *

In February 1999 Hungarian-born Dr Arpad Pusztai, an established geneticist at the Rowatt Institute in Scotland, discovered that mice fed genetically modified potato suffered stunted growth and depressed immune function. The time of his finding was unfortunately propitious. Two years earlier New Labour had a landslide victory at the polls and Tony Blair headed up a government packed with Liberal industrial interests that had turned parliament into something resembling a stock exchange.

The bio-industrialist Lord Sainsbury, a life time Liberal who had gifted around £6M to Blair's election war chest, was thanked for his contribution by a knighthood and given the position of science czar, head of the Department of Trade and Industry, and all matters scientific.

This was the period when the brilliant US journalist Greg Palast wrote his dream-shattering book *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*, and coined the term Lobbygate to describe the scandal that he uncovered in the offices of Westminster. It was a time when Britain and everything in it was up for sale, auctioned off by elected and selected politicians and those YUPPIES in double breasted suites who might only a decade earlier have been called civil servants.

Lord Sainsbury and his trusted lieutenant Liberal peer Dick Taverne, both with an involved history with pharmaceutical and PR corporations, were hell-bent on introducing genetically engineered (GM) crops into Britain at Monsanto's behest. Accusations that he might have taken this tack because he was himself the owner of massive GM concerns worth millions of pounds, were laid to rest when he told the public that all his estates and Trusts were blinded for the duration of his time in ministerial office.

But of course it was hardly Dr Pusztai's fault that the results of 35 years hard work, hundreds of peer-reviewed papers and a commitment to honest scientific research, should produce such results at exactly the same time that the moneylenders had squatted the temple. Within weeks of his announcing the results of his research, Pusztai's career was terminated, and he became Public Enemy Number One. Having

talked on Newsnight and the World in Action programme Pusztai was accused of breaking the rules of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) funding by breaking a gagging clause that prohibited scientists from becoming 'involved in political controversy on biotechnology and biological science'. Now as his life went rapidly down the tubes, he was, it was suggested, a second-rate research scientist, and, at age 68, past it: 'an old man who had muddled his results'. His grants were withdrawn, he lost his position at the Rowett and the 18-strong research team that he had assembled was dismantled.¹

Sainsbury, who since he assumed his position as head of Trade, Industry and Science had, amongst other covert operations, begun to put together what was later referred to by a *Guardian* correspondent as a GM 'rebuttal unit', was, even then, building a science fire brigade, ready to rush to the scene of any research finding that did not suite it's funders. After a rather shaky start using the amateur crisis management scientists at the Royal Society, the rebuttal unit settled in at the Royal Institution and became the Science Media Centre. In the early days, however, it was just a loose collection of scientists briefed by one of Sainsbury's personal staffers at the Dti on how to fight off claims by those who 'got their science wrong'.

Pusztai was no push-over and although corporate and government interests tried to make him, in another word coined by Orwell in Nineteen Eighty Four, an 'unperson', he pursued his agreement with Dr Richard Horton of the *Lancet* to make ready his research paper for publication. Of course trying to stop a journal from publishing a paper is quite a different kettle of fish from taking a paper out of a journal once it had been published.

However, the rebuttal unit - some of the most decorated scientists in Britain - put their heads together and came up with what they saw as a good solution and in the Autumn of 1999, Dr Richard Horton revealed that a senior fellow of the Royal Society had threatened him with the loss of his job if he published Pusztai's research. The threat was carried out in the manner of all good thrillers, over the phone, probably with a white handkerchief over the handset, and although Horton, always the slippery gentleman, wouldn't name his antagonist, intrepid reporters from the *Guardian* newspaper took only a short time to deduce who had made the threat.

Chief amongst those in the Rebuttal cabal was Professor Lachmann, a vehement opponent of the precautionary principle whose extensive CV included at that time, a position on the scientific advisory board of the pharmaceutical giant SmithKlineBeecham (now GlaxoSmithKline), vaccine manufacturers that invested heavily in biotechnology. If you imagine that Lachmann's role in this unsavoury affair earned him a serious rebuke from his peers you imagine wrongly. In the Alice in Wonderland world of British science, the Neanderthals rule and the odd threat to a journal editor is seen only as robust science strategy.

In retrospect, the GMC Fitness to Practice Hearing looks increasingly like a fairground during a power cut glimpsed over the shoulder of a man on the run.

¹ George Monbiot, *Silent Science, in Captive State: The corporate takeover of Britain*. Pan Books, London 2000.

Increasingly as well one's mind is blocked with a traffic jam of thoughts about how it might be possible to get some of its leading prosecuting actors into criminal court and then to Jail where they belong.

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