

Letters

The Faction that Fools the World

Mike Small, Variant issue 24

Dear Editors,

For years I subscribed to *Living Marxism*, until it ceased publishing. I noticed the magazine's libertarian turn and it published a number of letters I wrote, criticising articles which were becoming increasingly bizarre, at any rate in an ostensibly left-wing publication.

Mike Small is correct to say that the LM group are right-wing, but his suggestion that a clique is conspiring to enter the media is not correct. LM may or may not have an agenda, whatever that means, but there it is no secret that rightwingers and establishment supporters are welcomed by a media only too willing to offer them space. Ever since Thatcher the political scene have moved steadily right. Frank Furedi and Claire Fox enthuse about this. LM are not going to subvert anything and conspiracy is unnecessary: they are part of a ruling establishment.

When Mike Small says that the Moral Maze is the apogee of British broadcasting intellectualism, I hope he is being ironic. The Moral Maze, Any Questions, Thought for the Day (are no thoughts expressed outside this 4-minute sermon on the Today programme?), all are products of a narrow, philistine, querulous middle-class for whom preserving the status quo is a paramount aim. Besides, since when has Radio 4 usurped Radio 3 to become the intellectual station?

Mike Small complains that it is disingenuous of LM to present themselves as beyond left and right. No, it is not disingenuous: it's the age-old, transparent argument of the right. Perhaps too, it was not naive of the book festival organisers to invite LM to its platform. It might have been exactly what they wanted and now they too, can bask in the reflected glory of the right.

Yours,

René Gimpel

Mike Small replies:

After writing the piece I have heard many more examples of LM members co-hosting radio programmes with fellow members of LM front-groups. René Gimpel writes: "Mike Small is correct to say that the LM group are right-wing, but his suggestion that a clique is conspiring to enter the media is not correct."

It is quite correct. I was not advocating conspiracy but describing a clear and evident process, being tracked and researched by Spinwatch amongst others.

Most disturbing perhaps is their infiltration of key posts in areas of ethical debate and policy. For example Juliet Tizzard is not the only Furediite embedded in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), the government body which, amongst other things, licenses and monitors all human embryo research conducted in the UK.

Ann Furedi, wife of Revolutionary Communist Party founder Frank Furedi, used to work at HFEA (before she went back to direct the abortion lobby group BPAS), and Ann's good friend Vishnee Sauntoo moves between HFEA and BPAS. Ann Furedi (also known as Ann Bradley and Ann Burton) is director of communications at the British Pregnancy Advisory Service.

Then there's Emily Jackson who is a member of the HFEA committee itself. She co-authors with Dr Ellie Lee on abortion rights and is part of the ProChoice Forum network. Both Lee and the ProChoice Forum are closely associated with Furedi, Tizzard, et al. As I described, at a conference at Kent University Jackson publicly endorsed human reproductive cloning.

As well as contributing articles to LM, Tizzard has also contributed to the LM network's later fronts: Spiked, and the Institute of Ideas (I of I).

She also wrote a chapter for the I of I publication, 'Designer Babies: Where Should We Draw The Line?' (Hodder and Stoughton, 2002).

Then there's Dr Ellie Lee the co-ordinator of the ProChoice Forum and lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Kent, cosily enough where Ann's husband Frank Furedi works. Lee was on the Moral Maze last year (funny that eh?) where she stated her mantra that "abortion should be available as early as possible and as late as necessary". She was asked: suppose a mother gave birth to a baby at full term, and then just as the umbilical cord had been cut, found that the infant repelled her. Should she be allowed to have the baby killed? "I think so, yes," replied Dr Lee.

These people aren't trivial. We have a pro-cloning lobbyist in charge of regulating cloning.

I have no problem with Gimpel's argument that: "LM are not going to subvert anything and conspiracy is unnecessary: they are part of a ruling establishment." Accept that they are presented as being iconoclasts, critical theorists, the cutting edge of post-left thinking.

I would suggest that they be opposed when given platforms and the organisers or broadcasters should be forced into acknowledging these connections. I have no fear of their tired and repetitive ideas—and so do not advocate censorship—but we should demand transparency and integrity from those who host these people.

Gimpel is weakest when writing: "LM may or may not have an agenda". This is a highly charged, well resourced professional network actively pursuing a radical right-wing agenda through the media and political organisations who repeatedly use front-groups and false identities in promoting their ideology.

Notes on Watching Human Rights Watch

Macdonald Stainsby, Variant issue 21

Open Letter to Kenneth Roth, Executive Director Human Rights Watch
from Gabriele Zamparini

Dear Mr. Kenneth Roth, Executive Director Human Rights Watch,

On December 2, 2005 the *New York Times* published an article with the title 'Rights Group Lists 26 It Says U.S. Is Holding in Secret Abroad'. The article quotes Marc Garlasco, Senior Military Analyst at Human Rights Watch (HRW):

"One thing I want to make clear is we are talking about some really bad guys," Mr. Garlasco said. "These are criminals who need to be brought to justice. One of our main problems with the U.S. is that justice is not being served by having these people held incognito."

Mr. Garlasco said, "Our concern is that if illegal methods such as torture are being used against them," trials may "either be impossible or questionable under international standards of jurisprudence."¹

On December 4, 2005 I wrote to Mr. Garlasco, asking:

1. Did the *New York Times* quote you correctly?
2. If not, will you ask for a formal correction to the NYT?
3. If yes, don't you think your words are quite bizarre for a HRW's representative? Did we get to the point that even HRW doesn't care for the presumption of innocence? Is that really HRW's concern about torture?

In my e-mail I also wrote:

I had the opportunity to interview HRW's Reed Brody and Hanny Megally just a few years ago. Also because of those interviews I have great esteem and respect for the work of your organization. I fear that your words – as reported by the *New York Times*' article – will damage HRW's image and the trust many people have for its work.²

Since I haven't received any answer, I have now

decided to write you an open letter to reiterate my questions and also to ask you if someone who "recommended thousands of aimpoints on hundreds of targets during operations in Iraq and Serbia [and who] also participated in over 50 interrogations as a subject matter expert" fits a senior position at Human Rights Watch.

Mr. Garlasco's biography reads:

"Before coming to HRW, Marc spent seven years in the Pentagon as a senior intelligence analyst covering Iraq. His last position there was chief of high-value targeting during the Iraq War in 2003. Marc was on the Operation Desert Fox (Iraq) Battle Damage Assessment team in 1998, led a Pentagon Battle Damage Assessment team to Kosovo in 1999, and recommended thousands of aimpoints on hundreds of targets during operations in Iraq and Serbia. He also participated in over 50 interrogations as a subject matter expert."³

According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Mr. Garlasco also had an interesting role in damaging a study "published in *The Lancet*, a prestigious British medical journal, concluding that about 100,000 civilians had been killed in Iraq since it was invaded by a United States-led coalition in March 2003."⁴ *The Chronicle of Higher Education* writes:

The Washington Post, perhaps most damagingly to the study's reputation, quoted Marc E. Garlasco, a senior military analyst at Human Rights Watch, as saying, "These numbers seem to be inflated." Mr. Garlasco says now that he hadn't read the paper at the time and calls his quote in the Post "really unfortunate." He says he told the reporter, "I haven't read it. I haven't seen it. I don't know anything about it, so I shouldn't comment on it." But, Mr. Garlasco continues, "Like any good journalist, he got me to."

Mr. Garlasco says he misunderstood the reporter's description of the paper's results.⁵

Marc Garlasco, Senior Military Analyst at HRW also had an interesting role in a BBC's Editorial Complaints Unit's investigation following a series of Media Lens' Alerts on the BBC's reporting on Fallujah.⁶ The BBC reports:

In its verdict that the NewsWatch report was not misleading, the Editorial Complaints Unit — which investigates complaints independently of journalists — cited the evidence given to it by the HRW spokesman: "I find nothing inaccurate in what Paul stated. I think the issue is with the choice of the word 'investigation'. As Paul noted, we did not have a full-fledged investigation with testimony from eye-witnesses, etc.

"What we did have, and I communicated to him [BBC's defence correspondent Paul Wood, who was embedded with the US marines in Falluja at the time] was an investigation more on the lines of what I would term an inquiry. We had folks try to get into Falluja but were unable, and we had folks talk to people in Baghdad who had left Falluja.

"But the information was not of the quality for us to do any reporting. Beyond that, we made inquiries to the US Government, and other press. To the best of our knowledge no banned weapons were used during either battle of Falluja."⁷

Dear Mr. Roth, I would kindly ask you to re-read that last paragraph. Why didn't the best of Human Rights Watch's knowledge include:

1. "Some artillery guns fired white phosphorous rounds that create a screen of fire that cannot be extinguished with water. Insurgents reported being attacked with a substance that melted their skin."

'U.S. Forces Battle Into Heart of Fallujah', by Jackie Spinner, Karl Vick and Omar Fekeiki, *Washington Post*, November 10, 2004

2. "The US occupation troops are gassing resistance fighters and confronting them with internationally-banned chemical weapons,' resistance sources told Al-Quds Press Wednesday, November 10."

'US Troops Reportedly Gassing Fallujah', Islam Online, November 10, 2004

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3. "The U.S. military has used poison gas and other non-conventional weapons against civilians in Fallujah, eyewitnesses report."

'Unusual Weapons Used in Fallujah', by Dahr Jamal, November 26, 2004

4. "I saw cluster bombs everywhere, and so many bodies that were burned, dead with no bullets in them. So they definitely used fire weapons, especially in Julian district."

'An Eyewitness Account of Fallujah', by Dahr Jamal, December 16, 2004

5. "White Phosphorous. WP proved to be an effective and versatile munition. We used it for screening missions at two breaches and, later in the fight, as a potent psychological weapon against the insurgents in trench lines and spider holes when we could not get effects on them with HE. We fired "shake and bake" missions at the insurgents, using WP to flush them out and HE to take them out. [...] We used improved WP for screening missions when HC smoke would have been more effective and saved our WP for lethal missions."

"The Fight for Fallujah," a "memorandum for record" by Captain James T. Cobb, First Lieutenant Christopher A. LaCour, and Sergeant First Class William H. Hight, published in the March-April 2005 issue of the US Army's Field Artillery magazine

6. "Bogert is a mortar team leader who directed his men to fire round after round of high explosives and white phosphorus charges into the city Friday and Saturday, never knowing what the targets were or what damage the resulting explosions caused. [...] "Gun up!" Millikin yelled when they finished a few seconds later, grabbing a white phosphorus round from a nearby ammo can and holding it over the tube. "Fire!" Bogert yelled, as Millikin dropped it. The boom kicked dust around the pit as they ran through the drill again and again, sending a mixture of burning white phosphorus and high explosives they call "shake 'n' bake" into a cluster of buildings where insurgents have been spotted all week."

'Violence Subsides for Marines in Fallujah', by Darrin Mortenson, North County Times, Saturday, April 10, 2004

I am not making any charge. I am just asking questions. Is it still possible to ask questions in these dark times of pre-emptive wars? After embedded journalists, shall we have embedded human rights organizations? Shouldn't Caesar's wife be above suspicion?

Kind regards,

Gabriele Zamparini

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Notes

1. 'Rights Group Lists 26 It Says U.S. Is Holding in Secret Abroad', by Ian Fisher, *The New York Times*, December 2, 2005
2. 'Questions for Human Rights Watch', Gabriele Zamparini's e-mail to Marc Garlasco, Senior Military Analyst HRW and Kenneth Roth, Executive Director HRW
<http://www.thecatsdream.com/blog/2005/12/questions-for-human-rights-watch.htm>
3. Bio of Human Rights Watch's Mark Garlasco, Mother Jones, October 2, 2005
http://www.motherjones.com/radio/2005/10/garlasco_bio.html
4. Lost Count. Researchers rushed a rigorous study of Iraqi civilian casualties into print. Is that why it was dismissed as pure politics? by Lila Guterman, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 4, 2005
<http://chronicle.com/free/v51/i22/22a01001.htm>
5. Ibidem
6. Rapid Response Media Alert: Doubt Cast On BBC Claims Regarding Fallujah, Media Lens, April 18, 2005
http://www.medialens.org/alerts/05/050418_doubt_cast_on_bbc.php
7. NewsWatch complaint not upheld, NewsWatch, BBC News, 3 August 2005
http://news.bbc.co.uk/newswatch/ukfs/hi/newsid_4740000/newsid_4741400/4741431.stm