

The Media is to Blame (not) Debate

Written by fiona patten

Thursday, 25 February 2010 13:20



Last night I took part in the ACT Rotary Great Debate. The subject was the Media is to Blame. I was on the negative with ABC sports reporter Tim Gavel and Paddy Gourley a columnist on the Public Sector. The other team was Katy Gallagher ACT Deputy Chief Minister, David Pembroke from Content Group and Jack Waterford Editor at Large for the Canberra Times. It was an entertaining evening but oddly enough I was unusually nervous. I am not sure why maybe it was because my father, uncle and old English teacher were in the audience. Below is my contribution to the debate.

The Media Is to Blame.....

The greatest thing that the late Qld Premier Joh Bjelke Petersen ever said was that holding a media conference was like 'feeding the chooks'. Like a mighty Zen aphorism, the Basho of the North still reaches out to us even in death and tonight the 'suchness' of his words will smash the logic of our opponents into tiny pieces.

Indeed the chook run is a powerful metaphor which well describes the Australian media landscape. The handful of grain thrown into the chook yard each morning is like the clutch of

The Media is to Blame (not) Debate

Written by fiona patten

Thursday, 25 February 2010 13:20

stories that comes through the fax machine in a thousand newsrooms around the country each day. The first thing it reveals is the pecking order. The News Ltd chooks will look for the scandalous grain, the Fairfax media will look for the intelligent grain and the women's magazines will go for the gossipy grain. They'll all process it through their gut and eventually publish it as either eggs or poo. And you'll probably get one egg a day but half a dozen poos.

In the context of the debate here tonight though, that 'the media is to blame', the chooks are merely doing what their biology tells them to do. They are innocent and ignorant scavengers scratching around on the floor of life just trying to survive... pushing out mostly crap but with the occasional egg. Like chooks, the media have very small brains. With exception of course of my esteemed team mate, the fine Rhode Island Red, Tim Gavel. So like a criminal pleading not guilty on the grounds of insanity, editors, producers and reporters can't really be blamed for their actions. So, who do you blame?

You blame the hand that throws the grain. Politicians! They're to blame. Not only do they choose the quality and type of grain to toss into the run each day but they build and design the bloody chook runs! They control the breeding programs.

As the head of the adult industry's national association, I'm forever fending off accusations that adult media (porn) is to blame for the moral decay of modern society. Bare breasts and buttocks in magazines and movies are allegedly causing mental disorders, incurable addictions and all sorts of bad hair styles. Depictions of big breasted and surgically augmented models are said to give young women unrealistic role models that cause them to be fixated on their body size and become obese or anorexic.. as each issue demands. But just scratch the surface a little and you find that the adult media chooks are simply moving to their political masters like all the other media chooks.

The Media is to Blame (not) Debate

Written by fiona patten

Thursday, 25 February 2010 13:20

Over the last few years more and more depictions of small-breasted women have been banned as the moral panic around the serious issue of child porn grows. During Senate Estimates last November, the Classification Board was regaled by Senator Bananaby Joyce and Senator Guy Barnett for allowing adult women with A cupped breasts to appear in erotic magazines. They feared that readers would fantasise about them being under 18. Penthouse and Playboy editors have been castigated for ages for the airbrushed genitalia of their models giving the lie that all women look the same down there. But for nearly 10 years now government censors in this country have demanded this barbie style touch up under threat of official bans. The once great women's magazine, Australian Women's Forum, dared the censors in 2001 by publishing a photographic list of realistic vaginas and that was the last issue they ever published. Gone. Headless chooks. And for everyone else it was back to the unrealistic, mass produced, plastic-moulded Barbies.

X rated DVDs, the most popular form of adult media are said to contain unrealistic depictions of mindless, mechanical sex that causes their viewers to want the same. But check out the legislative parameters around the muf media and we see that politicians have their finger in the porno pie as well. By law, you can say 'fuck me' in an X rated film but you can't say 'fuck you'! That's called assaultive language and its banned. You can't show someone committing even a minor crime in an X rated film and neither can you show a fight of any kind. Try making a creative movie without any of these dramatic developments and its no wonder the X rated genre struggles to get past its 'pizza boy' delivery reputation. The X rated version of Russell Crowes' Gladiator originally featured chariot races, gladiator battles and even lions. It all ended on the floor after the censors had finished with it and we were left with sweaty men randomly bursting into bedrooms and throwing their togas off. Add to that its absolute illegality outside the bawdy borders of the ACT and you can see how hard it is to make sexual media into a meaningful and interesting medium.

In the Victorian era it was the French postcard, in the 1930s it was Hollywood movies and in the 1950s it was rock and roll music - a media form in its own right. Every new form of media was said to carry the seeds of moral decay and the end of decency and decorum. It was the media that was to blame and not those who sought to repress and control it. But somehow we've survived the battering ram of page three girls and defamatory headlines. The nightly assaults of Naomi Robson and Ray Martin and now it's the new media - social networking sites and the internet are to blame. And Senator Conroy's mandatory filter is yet another attempt by a

The Media is to Blame (not) Debate

Written by fiona patten

Thursday, 25 February 2010 13:20

politician to apportion blame. The chooks are blameless. Its what they're fed and how they're bred that counts.

In fact , in this new era of Ministerial accountability, clearly the blame is not with the media at all but with the Minister for Media our very own Communications Minister, Senator Stephen Conroy.