

Time for that performance review, Jimbo

Written by Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear | Chrys Stevenson
Friday, 02 September 2011 13:39

This article comes from the blog, [Gladly, The Cross Eyed Bear](#). It's a great read.

Not everyone is a cut out to be a media performer. Being in front of a television camera or radio mike is nerve-wracking. So, when your average 'Joe (or Jo) Blow' finds themselves in the media spotlight and ends up babbling incoherently, you have to have some sympathy. It's not an easy gig.

That's why companies pay good money for polished professionals to represent them. When the reputation of your business or organisation is at stake, you simply can't risk hiring amateurs.

So, I was surprised by [Jim Wallace's performance](#) on Seven's Sunrise with Mel and Kochie this week. Speaking about same-sex marriage - a topic with which he is very familiar - Jim explained the Australian Christian Lobby's objections as follows:

Well, ah, Kochie the reality is that ah the Scriptures are very clear about the fact that ah Jesus and ah when people become a Christian it's an individual and a personal experience but from that point on we try to live more like Jesus would want us to and certainly in the Scriptures it's very clear ah he wouldn't have ordained homosexual marriage. Now, the reason, though, is couched in the ah natural and that is ah whether you believe that God created ah nature, or whether you believe that there was nothing at all exploded and then there was everything, the reality is that, ah in this issue that it still takes the involvement of a man and a woman to create a child ...

And I find it absolutely amazing that at a time in our history when we're jumping through hoops to try to make ☐ that every tree on the planet ah has its natural environment so that it can flourish that we would be challenging the definition of marriage which creates exactly that environment for a child requiring that it's between a man and a woman ☐ ... the reality is here we're about holding up an aspirational mode ah in society which government has the right to do to make sure that – to make sure that children can flourish in the same way we are demanding for trees.

Frankly, regardless of your views on same-sex marriage, it was a woeful performance from someone who is paid to do better. Someone has to ask – and it may as well be me – has Jimbo

Time for that performance review, Jimbo

Written by Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear | Chrys Stevenson
Friday, 02 September 2011 13:39

[jumped the shark](#)

?

If I was one of the shadowy figures pouring money into the Australian Christian Lobby, I'd be having a long hard think about the way the organisation's been travelling over the last 12 months and asking myself if it's time for new leadership: "Has Jimbo done what we hired him to do or has he made the organisation a national laughing-stock and damaged the ACL's reputation beyond repair?"

Inexplicably, I'm not privy to Jim's job description or performance goals, but I reckon I can make a pretty good guess about why he was hired. But first, I need to tell you a bit about the ACL's history.

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) was founded way back in 1995, only it wasn't called the ACL then, it was known as the Australian Christian Coalition (ACC). The name was derived from its American cousin, the scandal-ridden [Christian Coalition of America](#), established by the rabid, right-wing televangelist, Pat Robertson.

At first, it seems, there was little attempt to hide the ACC's dominionist agenda. In fact, one of the organisation's early journals was called Mandate – an allusion to [the belief](#) "that Christians alone are Biblically mandated to occupy all secular institutions until Christ returns". That's right, folks, the long-term goal for these people looks a lot like TOTAL WORLD DOMINATION.

The aims of the ACC could not have been clearer: "to reclaim our society and our government for God and to have the Christian voice heard". Did you hear that, non-religious and secular Australians? You've got their country and they want it back.

Not surprisingly, the ACC soon found its dominionist theology and fundamentalist lunacy simply wasn't going to fly in the Australian political landscape. If it wanted to appeal to 'middle Australia' it needed a little cosmetic surgery.

Of course, this didn't mean the ACC planned to abandon its Christian nationalist agenda and

Time for that performance review, Jimbo

Written by Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear | Chrys Stevenson
Friday, 02 September 2011 13:39

ditsy dogma. God forbid! No! It simply meant that a shiny new veneer was added to make it seem ... well ... somewhat less batshit crazy.

In fairly short order, the name was changed to the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL), former SAS chief Brigadier Jim Wallace was brought in to provide the group with some mainstream credibility and a Christian marketing group, Capacity Builders, was engaged to help the ACL build a shiny new non-threatening image. The aim was to position the group as “a balanced and compassionate ‘voice for values’: a lobbying force influencing all levels of Government”. You have to admit, that sounds so much less alarming than reclaiming the government for Jesus.

But, as Barack Obama said, (allegedly in allusion to that poster girl for fatuous fundamentalism, Sarah Palin), “You can put lipstick on a pig – but it’s still a pig.”

And so it was with the ACL. Behind the glossy website, the highly staged ‘[In Focus](#)’ in-house ‘news’ interviews with CEO Wallace and artless attempts to tone down the fundamentalist rhetoric, the ACL remains what it originally set out to be – an organisation intent on gaining ideological control of Australia’s key public institutions.

Of course, despite putting the former head of the SAS in charge, the ACL isn’t plotting a military coup. Its strategy is far more covert. Following the tried and true approach of American [dominionists](#), the ACL plans to achieve its aims through the quiet infiltration and colonisation of our secular public institutions – and the apathy of the Australian public is crucial in facilitating its advance.

It sounds like a conspiracy theory, doesn’t it? But why else would the ACL set up [Compass Australia](#), an offshoot which identifies and mentors up and coming young evangelicals and facilitates their career paths into positions of influence? We don’t have to develop hypotheses. In a 2007 interview with “Christian Today”, David Yates, the coordinator of Compass naively [blurted out](#) the whole sordid plan:

*“One of the key things that ACL likes to focus on is areas where it can have a **disproportionate***

Time for that performance review, Jimbo

Written by Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear | Chrys Stevenson
Friday, 02 September 2011 13:39

impact

Gospel. So, the area of politics and government, where ACL works in, is one particular field. If you can get through government and policy makers then it can influence laws and it can have a

for the

dispro

portionate effect

within the culture.

That is why we were thinking about the Compass program, or, alternatively, thinking about 15 to 20 years down the track, who will be in the media, education, politics, law, and history?

These fields, to us, are the strategic areas ...” (Emphasis added.)

Further evidence of the ACL’s dominionist agenda is found in the backgrounds of its personnel, the organisations which support the group, the literature they quote and recommend and the conferences they attend – in short, the company they keep. It takes a bit of detective work, but scratch the surface of the ACL and you find links (direct and indirect, current and historical) to numerous bastions of dominionist theology.

Indeed, if you search hard enough (and I have), you’ll find the ACL is [publicly listed](#) as a supporter of the Reclaim 7 Mountains movement. It sounds innocuous enough until you read that this movement claims a divine ‘mandate for taking nations’, advocates breaking down the wall of separation between church and state and provides ‘a template for warfare’. Indeed, the perky blonde who introduces

[this video](#)

about 7 Mountains breezily confirms its dominionist message. The Lord, she says, is coming back for “an overcoming church ... a church that knows how to possess and occupy.”

This kind of talk is all very good for rallying the troops. But, for the ACL to maintain some vestige of public credibility, it must maintain the charade of being non-threatening and moderate. It wouldn’t do for any theocratic aspirations to become common knowledge. (Oh, oops! Sorry Jim!) That, I imagine, is why old Jimbo Wallace was appointed as front man and CEO – he appeared to be ‘mainstream’, his military record demanded respect and who would suspect someone with his background to be involved in a group whose aim was to impose a ‘disproportionate influence’ on a democratically elected government?

Time for that performance review, Jimbo

Written by Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear | Chrys Stevenson
Friday, 02 September 2011 13:39

But, given this week's bumbling media performance, we have to ask, "How well is Jim doing his job?"

In my view, if Jim was brought in to give the ACL a veneer of mainstream respectability, he's failing badly. In fact, observing Jim over the last couple of years, I've come to the conclusion that Christian dominionism and bald-faced bigotry must be hand-crafted from polystyrene. No matter how hard he tries, Jim just can't stop them floating to the surface.

It's been a hard year for Jim. It began with him [endorsing a law](#) (labeled 'appalling' by a senior Anglican bishop) which allows religious schools to expel gay students – for no reason other than for being 'openly gay'.

Next, sexism reared its ugly head as [Jim expressed](#) the antediluvian view that women should not be allowed to serve on the front lines of Australia's defence force. Why? Because just that morning Mrs Wallace needed Jim to help open the Vegemite jar. Yes, really. You can't make this stuff up!

Then there was the shameful [ANZAC Day tweet](#) in which Jim suggested our diggers didn't fight for Muslims and gay marriage. In less than 140 characters Jim showed he was out of touch with the values and sensibilities of ordinary, decent Australians and destructively inept at using social media.

In Queensland, the ACL was humiliated when [their campaign](#) against a safe sex billboard featuring two gay men, backfired. When 30,000 people took to Facebook demanding a decision to pull the ad be reversed, the advertising company quickly caved. Even the Queensland Premier and state treasurer branded the ACL's actions homophobic.

Recently, the ACL cynically decided to [exploit the Norwegian massacre](#) to advance its agenda to censor violent video games. As one [Christian blogger](#) wrote:

Time for that performance review, Jimbo

Written by Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear | Chrys Stevenson
Friday, 02 September 2011 13:39

“... you’re trying to capitalise on [this tragedy] for political gain. That’s disgusting. It’s cheap point scoring. It’s tacky. People see right through it. You’re not convincing anybody of anything except the idea that Christians are out-of-touch and only interested in protecting ourselves.”

I don’t know how much the ACL paid Capacity Builders to develop its new image, but I’d venture to say it’s money down the drain for the organisation’s financial backers. The ACL is increasingly isolated and frequently exposed as a propagandist machine for the rabidly religious right. Under Wallace, the organisation lurches from crisis to crisis – outraging the non-religious and embarrassing the crap out of all but the holiest of happy clappers.

And so, returning to Tuesday when Jim fronted up to [Seven’s Sunrise program](#) for a little argie-bargie about gay marriage with the intelligent, articulate (and gracefully gay) Dr Kerryn Phelps. It was a pathetic performance which revealed Jim no longer has what it takes to represent the ACL.

Jim’s arguments against same-sex marriage were weak and easily refuted. Worse, his claim that Jesus would not have approved of same-sex marriage shows either a cavalier disregard for the truth or a pitifully poor grasp of the New Testament. As ex-Christian author, Jake Farr-Wharton explains, “Here’s what Jesus says about homosexuals in the New Testament: “
—”

Once again, the ACL cemented its reputation as a national laughing-stock.

Now, if the powers that be decide Jim’s still their boy and elect to keep him on, well, that’s just dandy. I’m happy to sit back and watch the continuing decline of the ACL under his increasingly inept leadership. But I reckon when Jim comes up for his annual performance review the ACL puppeteers might just think about this week’s [Sunrise performance](#) and the events of the past few months and start wondering, “What is it we pay this guy for?”

It might be time to think about an early retirement, Jim.

Source: [Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear](#)

Time for that performance review, Jimbo

Written by Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear | Chrys Stevenson
Friday, 02 September 2011 13:39
