

## COMMENT ON THE BEREJKLIAN-COMBET EXCHANGE

Although Greg Combet's use of phrases, such as *the NSW government which shoots first and asks questions later*, and *get back to her day job tackling NSW's public transport issues rather than moonlighting as one of Tony Abbott's scare campaigners*, succeeded in attracting the attention of the media, the context of the exchange is deeper than "shooting first" and "moonlighting". In her column for *The Washington Post*) Ruth Marcus<sup>1</sup> noted the culpability of the media (including internet bloggers): "If a lie gets halfway around the world before the truth gets its pants on, imagine what bloggers in pajamas can do. We journalists used to joke about tips that were too good to check. Now it is items too good not to repost.

Even more persuasive is the impact of information technology on the general public:

In a world of siloed<sup>2</sup>, self-selected information flow and knee-jerk willingness to attribute irredeemable stupidity and bad motives to opponents, the inclination to assume the worst is no surprise. Information – or pseudo-information – is trusted when it clicks neatly into our jigsaw puzzle of preconceptions.

Perhaps we are moving into a time-warp in which reason is either dead or dying, where constructive thought is being discarded as too neurologically energy-intensive and where we lose recognition of who we are. I am reminded of the comedian George Carlin's famous "riff" on high tech terms, which includes, as a very small sample of the total product in "A Modern Man".<sup>3</sup>

I've been uplinked and downloaded.

I've been inputted and outsourced.

I know the upside of downsizing.

I know the downside of upgrading.

I'm a high tech lowlife.

A cutting edge, state-of-the-art, bicoastal, multitasker,

And I can give you a gigabyte in a nanosecond.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ruth-marcus-paul-krugman-and-our-gullibility-for-satire/2013/03/12/a8073be2-8b4a-11e2-b63f-f53fb9f2fcb4\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ruth-marcus-paul-krugman-and-our-gullibility-for-satire/2013/03/12/a8073be2-8b4a-11e2-b63f-f53fb9f2fcb4_story.html).

<sup>2</sup> For those who are not fully immersed in the jargon of information technology, a "silo" in the IT context is an information management system that is not integrated with other management systems so that it stands alone like a grain silo. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information\\_silo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_silo).

<sup>3</sup> Available at: [http://www.openculture.com/2011/05/george\\_carlin\\_the\\_modern\\_man\\_in\\_three\\_minutes.html?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1363211722.0569450855255126953125](http://www.openculture.com/2011/05/george_carlin_the_modern_man_in_three_minutes.html?doing_wp_cron=1363211722.0569450855255126953125).

Returning to Greg Combet's notion that politicians should ask questions before they shoot and should adhere to their main task instead of basking in the glory – if one could call it that – of media attention. Perhaps the same should be said about rest of us, who comprise the vast majority, to stop depending upon politicians to do what they said they would do but never intended to do it and with the full knowledge that only fools would believe that they were capable of doing it, if they were elected, and elect politicians for other reasons. Discarding (or reconstituting, to use the more modern expression) our “jigsaw puzzle of preconceptions” would probably help also.

John Zerby  
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j.zerby@bigpond.com