

## Those Who Talk of Victory Have Often Already Been Defeated And Other Slogans For Toothless Parliamentarians

By Martin J. Walker

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I am coming late to the One Click Michael Connarty exchange. Before I comment I would like to make an observation. How is it possible to be against the War in Iraq prosecuted by the New Labour Government and remain a part of New Labour in government? While I have never myself had to deal with the difficult decisions of conscience faced by Member's of the New Labour Parliament, I would have thought that if one disagreed with the war in Iraq you should not add your authority to it by remaining a member of the party.

Of course, some would convince us that politics have become so complex in the contemporary world that anyone who sticks doggedly to principles is by definition mentally ill or a conspiracy theorist. Those who have followed the conflicts and politics over ME/CFS, know just how hard it is to remain confidently committed to a principle while facing the onslaught organised by psychiatrists, the medical insurance industry and benefits system as well as the cynicism cultivated by our market shackled society.

Those of us who adhere to the principles involved in the representation of people suffering from ME or parents of children fighting on their behalf have shown that they would rather be in a group of one, than shed their opposition to the psychiatric lobby *and all that this involves*. If they found themselves to be part of a collective group pursuing a policy with which they could not agree, they would undoubtedly leave that group. Thankfully, this has never been an issue for One Click members because thousands of people with ME or advocating on behalf of those with ME share their principles.

Unfortunately this has not been the case within the other leading groups and individuals involved in ME campaigning. In the main, this 'leadership' has steadily fallen away and come into line with organisations and interests whose objectives have to be seriously questioned. The last of these initiatives which appears to have swayed a number of the previously steadfast, has been the Gibson Inquiry.

In his last email, Michael Connarty a Labour MP supportive of Gibson and his initiative, gave us an excellent example of the type of homily, used by pragmatists who are used to fighting with words and not actions. 'An older colleague of mine' he intoned, ' who had many successes to his name on behalf of the oppressed in society. . .' an auspicious beginning which confused some of us as to whether he meant that his colleague' had succeeded in making these oppressed more or less oppressed. He went on to recite the homily as 'Fight the

First Enemy First' which while it sounds like wisdom in the mouth of a parliamentarian, actually presents the ME community, especially those trying to defend and advocate on behalf of their children, in the real world, with serious problems.

How do you define an enemy which over 20 years has changed shape and content like smoke and whose core activists are so adept at using mirrors that they can conjure up the most powerful illusions from a broken compact. More exactly how do you face an enemy that is deeply and darkly in connivance with the government of the day, its NHS and aligned corporate interests. While MP's can pontificate about fighting the first enemy first, how do those without power respond when MP's are themselves the first enemy?

It might be possible to draw up some basic criteria, when examining the integrity of those who claim to be fighting on behalf of ME sufferers.

**First**, do they have a good track record of opposition to the psychological theories of Professor Simon Wessely and his colleagues?

**Second**, are they aware that the group that Simon Wessely belonged to in 1985, (first called the Campaign Against Health Fraud then HealthWatch) when he laid the foundation for his attacks on those with ME, has proved to be part of an international lobby initiative funded by multinational corporations? These include especially the pharmaceutical industry and linkage to such groups as the Science and Media Centre and Sense About Science and the New Labour Cabinet Office. Meanwhile Professor Wessely has gone on to join one of the most powerful industrial lobby groups in the world of corporate spin, the American Council on Science and Health.

Have they made decisions about where they stand in relation to the lobby groups which now more or less control Public Health epidemiology and health care?

**Third**, do they have a good track record of supporting, defending and advocating for patients who have been badly affected by the ideas, work and policies of Professor Simon Wessely?

**Fourth**, are they prepared to go to the line against the government backed policy of a network of clinics already in place across Britain to receive, treat and carry out psychologically based research on people reporting to their GP's with ME?

**Fifth**, have the careers of these people at any point been affected or enhanced by their contact with the pharmaceutical or chemical industries?

**Finally**, if the government and the major public health institutions fail to cough up the millions of pounds needed to research and put into effect, biological testing for every patient who presents to their GP or local hospital with ME, are they willing to take radical steps?

In answer to all these questions, Michael Connarty does not even appear on the horizon and his friend Ian Gibson MP falls at each fence, causing sufficient injuries and confusion to himself and others that were he a race horse he would be put down.

Reading the latest adulatory flattery of Gibson from Michael Connarty leads one to conclude that his proffered support could well be the kiss of death to any principled organisation. When he says that he will lend One Click his support if we explain our case to him rationally and convince him our science is as

exacting as Gibson's, we should reply; ' *First enemies first* old chap. We will happily discuss the matter following your resignation from New Labour over the question of Iraq.'

In the contemporary world of spin, illusion and the copious use of smoke and mirrors, you can determine who your *first* enemy is almost entirely by their actions, but discern next to nothing from their words.

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