

Globe and Mail's Irony: Calling The Yes Men Cynical

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Tuesday, May 25, 2010

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The [Globe and Mail's editorial yesterday calling the Yes Men cynical](#) is a classic example of psychological projection, calling another group cynical when corporate media today cannot likely be any more cynical.

The entire editorial is below, but here are ten comments about how deluded the editorial department at the *Globe and Mail* is.

1. We live in a [post-modern world](#), if not a [post-post-modern world](#). Corporate media is modernist by design; its paradigm is authoritatively objective, one-way, profit-driven, broadcast and top-down. That sounds pretty jaded to me. The Yes Men can only be seen as jaded because they no longer recognize the primacy of modernist corporate media as being much of a useful force in society unless it is subverted and manipulated.
2. Since the medium is the message, increasing proportions of the population are rejecting the message of corporate media's medium.
3. *The Daily Show* and *Colbert Report* are not anomalies today, but they do threaten corporate media's monopoly over news/truth/opinion. In fact, [just today someone's again writing about how newspapers could even have a future!](#)
4. The *Globe and Mail* got quite badly punked by the Yes Men in Copenhagen in December, as did all other corporate media. In fact, much corporate media in Canada showed themselves with their pants down when they recently reported the death of Gordon Lightfoot while he listened to it all on the radio while in his dentist's chair. Fact-check much?
5. Suggesting the Yes Men are the actual threat to the believability of all forms of communication is laughable since corporate mainstream media are constantly guilty of suppressing critically important news while promoting their neoliberal politics and politicians while marketing sensationalism for maximizing their corporate profit.
6. Suggesting that **all** forms of communication are threatened by the Yes Men is itself sensationalist, reactionary and further proof that the editorial staff doesn't really get post-modernism in media...but then how could they, they are the established paradigm.
7. The first half of the editorial describes the Yes Men antics, thereby demonstrating the potency of their brand of satire with free publicity.
8. While the *Globe* editors are correct in describing satire as a "legitimate form of comment," their demand that there be "sufficient warning for the public" indicates a few things. The *Globe* editors didn't get the joke in Copenhagen and feel embarrassed. They think the public is too stupid to get ironic messages. Again, see *The Daily Show* and *Colbert Report*. Those in the public who are duped need to learn the lesson that we should question information authorities and verify sources, then compare stated messages with confirmed messages. Then we need to evaluate in our own minds what policies ought to be. This is the point of satire, which the *Globe* editors are clearly missing.
9. Their example about no one ever showing up for real free concerts in Missoula is a small risk to

society as a whole that is being constantly misinformed by corporate media neglecting its investigatory role.

10. I refuse to allow the *Globe* editorial staff to be the ones to inspire me to ask the question of whether anyone believes a message. Corporate media is so compromised when it comes to truth, they have very little standing to even pose that question. That they end their editorial with it, with presumably a straight face, is laughable.
11. A bonus comment: ultimately, I hope I am being duped by an editorial that is actually ironic in itself. That perhaps the *Globe* actually welcomes the antics of the Yes Men and their disciples and have written this editorial in an attempt to mock their own paradigm. If so, I will gladly tip my hat to them. But I'm not holding my breath.

May 23, 2010

Say no to the jaded world view of the Yes Men

From Monday's Globe and Mail

via [Say no to the jaded world view of the Yes Men - The Globe and Mail](#).

Their ilk threatens the believability of all forms of communications.

Gresham's Law holds that devalued money eventually drives out good money. The more inferior currency floating around, the harder it is for people to believe in the real thing. The same goes for the news.

Last week, a widely circulated news release claimed, "Shell halts Nigerian offshore drilling in visionary new remediation plan." The document carried a Shell logo at the top and was distributed via a legitimate-looking website. At the bottom was a media-relations contact number (answered by a real person) and all the standard legal boilerplate. The message: After the Gulf of Mexico oil leak, Shell was halting all its drilling operations in the Niger River delta and embarking on an \$8-billion environmental rehabilitation program.

It was, of course, entirely bogus.

A group calling itself the Nigerian Justice League later claimed credit for the ruse, saying they drew their inspiration from the Yes Men, a group of anti-corporate pranksters familiar to Canadians. In December, before the Copenhagen climate change summit, the Yes Men produced a realistic-looking press release purportedly from federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice, claiming Canada was adopting strict carbon-emissions targets and donating \$13-billion to Africa. It was accompanied by a fake Wall Street Journal article, a fake endorsement from a Ugandan politician and, later, a fake retraction by Mr. Prentice. All this to draw attention to what the Yes Men considered Canada's lack of commitment on climate change.

Both pranks got enough press coverage to be considered successes by the perpetrators. With the Yes Men now drawing eager imitators, we'll likely be seeing much more of this sort of thing. And that's bad news for everyone.

Satire is a legitimate form of comment. But it requires a deft hand; and sufficient warning for the public to get the joke. A recent prank in Missoula, Montana, falsely promoted a free thank-you concert being staged by Smurfit-Stone, a container company, and Macy's department store, two firms that recently shut operations in the city. But to what greater purpose? It had no discernible impact on the corporations in question. And if Missoula ever hosts a free concert in the future, no one will show up.

The jaded world view of the Yes Men and copycat pranksters threatens the believability of all forms of communications. It could eventually undermine the very kinds of positive achievements the activists claim to demand.

Consider the historic truce last week between environmental groups and the Canadian forestry industry on logging practices. It seems such a surprising and radical departure from both sides' normal behaviour, after years of animosity, that it might easily be considered a prank. In fact it is very good news. But will anyone believe it?