

Dummy Spit over 'Dead Whale' Interview

I was sent recently a transcript of a Clarke¹ and Dawe 'interview' of an Australian Government Minister about a dead whale in Bass Strait. This interview was being circulated within oil company and government offices, especially the environmental departments, where it seemed widely touted as very funny.

Leaving aside the cleverness of the script, the 'interview' linked the death of the whale with seismic surveying in Bass Strait, and portrayed the Minister as complicit in a cover-up by the company involved (un-named, but Esso) and the government.

I found myself concerned that I wasn't hearing much righteous indignation, amongst all the laughter, at our industry being so depicted. When we are wrongfully accused in this way, I wonder if we shouldn't speak out, rather than giggle along with our detractors. Wrapped with humour in this way, the message that our industry is very harmful to the environment is even more easily sold to the public.

By way of a counterview then, I offer the following Melbourne Cup Day interview on the same subject with an official from a leading environmental organisation.

Q: Mr Green, Thank you for talking with us. Mr Green is the spokesman for a multi-national environmental organisation.
A: Thank you for inviting me.

Q: I'd like to talk about the whale in Bass Strait.
A: The whale that died?

Q: Yes.
A: The oil company was doing seismic blasting there.

Q: Are you saying there's a connection?
A: With the whale?

Q: With it dying?
A: Absolute tragedy. Happens all the time

Q: Whales dying?
A: No. Seismic blasting

Q: But if it's going on all the time, and it kill whales, as you say, shouldn't there be more dead whales.
A: Isn't one enough? ?

Q: Yes. I just mean, if you're blaming the companies and the seismic surveying...
A: Blast!

Q: What is it?
A: Seismic blasting!

Q: And there's clearly a connection, in your view?
A: The whale's dead.

Q: Yes, but that might be a co-incidence. I mean, it might've died of natural causes.
A: Nothing natural about being blasted out of the air!

Q: The air?
A: Dreadful experience!

Q: But the whales are in the water?
A: Exactly.

Q: I don't understand.
A: Of course not. No one can. It's just a complete disregard for nature by the oil companies.

Q: Can we talk about the whale? Was it an old whale?
A: Yes, it was quite old.

Q: So it might've died of old age?
A: Well, it couldn't. I mean, they don't.

Q: What?
A: Die of old age.

Q: Surely they do.
A: Not where there's seismic blasting. Don't get a chance.

Q: Except maybe this one?
A: Which one?

Q: The whale that died.
A: Yes, but not of old age.

Q: How do you know?
A: Because of the seismic blasting. Couldn't die of old age. Doesn't happen. Too risky.

Q: Dying?
A: No, the blasting. Damned dangerous. Should be stopped.

Q: They do stop, don't they? When they see a whale even kilometres away, aren't the survey boats required to stop?
A: Too late if it's dead.

Q: But it's off in the distance. It's not dead.
A: Not yet. You wait till it gets closer...

Q: So you admit that if the survey...
A: Blasting!

Q: ... stops blasting a kilometre from the whale, it isn't harmful.
A: Blast!

Q: I said *blast*.
A: I know. I was swearing.

Q: Your data sheet said the seismic blasts affect the whales' sonar.
A: Absolutely. Those blasts are like underwater sonic booms. Interferes with their communication and navigation. Highly intelligent animals. Whales. Probably smarter than we are.

Q: Really!
A: We must be humble in the face of nature's truths.

Q: Can they hear the blasts a long way off, when they're faint?
A: They don't faint; they die.

Q: But when you hear noise getting louder, and you can't think straight, much less talk to your buddies, what do you do?
A: Get the hell out of there!

Q: And since the whale's even smarter than you are, as you said...
A: Blast.

Q: You're swearing again. What is this seismic blasting, as you call it?
A: Well, it's not really blasting.

Q: So why do you call it blasting?
A: Because people have to understand how dangerous it is. And they won't see that if we call it an air bubble.

Q: Is that what it is? An air bubble?
A: A big air bubble.

Q: Doesn't sound very dangerous!
A: A metre from the blast, the noise is 220 dB!

Q: Is that bad?
A: Like a whale falling on you!

Q: You mean like a whale jumping out of the water and falling back in?
A: Exactly!

Q: Like whales do for fun?
A: Nothing funny about oil companies and the damage they do!

Q: Which company was it, do you know?
A: Esso. They owned the Exxon Valdez you know. Ruined Prince William Sound in Alaska. Absolutely ruined it.

Q: How is it now?
A: Can't see a thing.

Q: Of the original beauty?
A: No. Of the oil.

Q: None?
A: Not a trace. That's the trouble. You can't see how bad it is. Everything's back to normal.

Q: Really?
A: Pink salmon catch even went up.

Q: Doesn't sound too bad then.
A: The sound's quite good really. We have the Green PA system going all the time, telling visitors how bad it is, even though they can't see a blemish. Well, except for the trees we had to lop to mount the speakers. And the fire scar after locals burnt our equipment because we were discouraging tourists.

Q: You were also involved in the protests over the Shetlands spill, I understand.
A: Devastating, it was. Terrible loss of life. Seals. Otters. Awful.

Q: How many seals were killed?
A: One.

Q: Not a lot really, is it.
A: Not unless you're the seal. There were four dead otters.

Q: Killed by the slick.
A: By the oil. One of them, anyway.

Q: On its skin, you mean.
A: No. In the truck.

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Wanna Make A Quick Buck?

PESA News received the following cry for help from a distraught young Nigerian woman. PESA was considering taking her up on her offer, and using the resulting income for some wild branch Christmas parties. We have since reconsidered on the grounds that US\$2,720,000 would cause too many hangovers and irreversible liver damage.

Plus we didn't believe her...

PRESIDENT / CEO.
ATTN: ASSISTANCE
CONFIDENTIAL;

Because of my personality in government I decided to make this private contact based on satisfactory information I gathered from an official of the foreign Trade office of Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Mines and Industries, although I did not disclose my intentions to them.

I am Princess Dr Monica Dantatah. Age 33

I work under the Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo as a Deputy Minister of petroleum who also was later re-appointed the Director General "Special Task Force" set up to monitor the sales and distribution of crude oil. I am also in charge of importing and exporting fuel in the country during and after the Gulf war crisis in Ogoni-Land in Nigeria.

I have in my account US Dollars (\$13,600,000.00) in the (CBN) Central Bank of Nigeria. This fund came up as a result of awarded contracts from the petroleum sector and with my mutual benefits, which I will that due to political and economic insecurity in Nigeria I should get the money transferred overseas through a foreign assistance for subsequent investment before Christmas.

I have contact with my bank manager. He also has advised me on a foreign partner whose foreign account shall be used for immediate transfer of the money in adherence to my father's will therefore, coupled with the fact that as a Minister, our account is limited to a certain minimum deposit.

I hereby offer you this opportunity of being my foreign business partner with 20 percent share to you.

I have also 5 percent mapped out expenses for both parties may encounter. If you are capable of providing an account that can carry the fund then let me have your private telephone / fax numbers for more discussion.

Your maximum co-operation and assistance is needed.

Dr Monica Dantatah, PRINCESS

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Q: What truck?

A: The one driven by the Norwegian television crew.

Q: What Norwegian television crew?

A: The one driving the truck.

Q: Regardless... the oil killed the otter?

A: It was in the truck.

Q: The otter?

A: No. the oil. Truck ran over the otter!

Q: What killed the others?

A: Peptic ulcers, two of them.

Q: Probably worried about Norwegian television crews!

A: Oh, and one died of old age.

Q: How could you tell?

A: No seismic blasting!

Q: One last point then. Did your boat try to stop the company working in Bass Strait?

A: We tried. We could hear the whales crying that night.

Q: In the ocean?

A: No. On the CD. On our boat. Terribly sad sound. Quite eerie, out there on the ocean with no lights. Sitting on deck enjoying a little smoke (nudge nudge wink wink), blaring this whale mating song across the night ...and the next thing there's this bloody great thump...

Q: You hit something?

A: Bloody big, I tell you. Felt like Moby Dick!

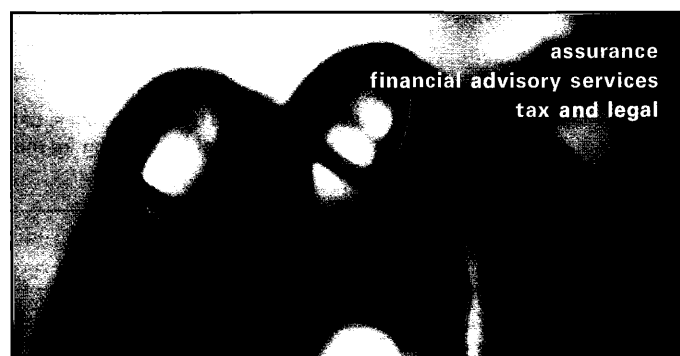
Q: A whale perhaps?

A: Blast!

A: Goodnight.

¹ John Clarke and Bryan Dawe 'conduct' an interview weekly on some topical issue for the ABC TV's 7.30 Report.

Peter Purcell



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