

THE AUSTRALIAN

Environmental convert Michael Shellenberger turns the tables

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By **CHRIS KENNY**, ASSOCIATE EDITOR (NATIONAL AFFAIRS)1:18PM JULY 5, 2020 •  129 COMMENTS

Apart from alerting the world to the fake news of climate hysteria, Michael Shellenberger last week gave us a masterclass in how to deal with jaundiced journalism. For daring to challenge the catastrophist zeitgeist on global warming, this highly credentialed environmentalist has quickly become a prime target of the green left media.

Rather than accept their attacks and skewed reporting, Shellenberger has exposed their tactics, demonstrated their cowardice, and offered full transparency and accountability. He is forcefully trying to change the media climate.

Shellenberger's strategy is worth noting as a template or a guide for tackling biased media. Let me explain how this unfolded.

Despite a long interest in environmental issues and the climate debate, I have to confess I had not heard of Shellenberger until last week. On Tuesday morning I read, via social media, about the piece he had written for Forbes.com previewing his new book, *Apocalypse Never: why environmental alarmism hurts us all*.

A lifelong environmentalist, who has published a series of books and been declared a global environmental hero by Time Magazine, Shellenberger was now apologising for his activism. His book accuses climate activists of exaggerating the threats and turning their backs on obvious solutions, such as nuclear energy.

The Forbes.com piece was strong and replete with good sense while playing into all the main threads of the climate policy debate, but an additional controversy was brewing because, in yet

another example of our stifled cancel culture, Forbes had taken it down. Immediately, I decided to editorialise on the issue, quoting Shellenberger's piece, for my SkyNews program The Kenny Report that night, and organised to interview him from California the following day.

In the interim The Australian noticed the controversy and got permission to run Shellenberger's piece off the front page on Wednesday morning. It immediately became the online hit of the month.

Andrew Bolt and Miranda Devine had written about the controversy for The Daily Telegraph and The Herald Sun. Meanwhile Apocalypse Never went on sale and instantly became a US bestseller.

What happened next tells you just about all you need to know about how the so-called progressive media — the Love Media — conducts itself. Obviously, it would be worth speaking to activists, advocates and scientists who might disagree with Shellenberger's thesis or pick apart his assertions. But the green left media do not have an appetite for facilitating these contests about ideas; their modus operandi is to discredit or de-platform anyone who disagrees with their view of the world. Much of our media and political debate now turns on the unknowable guesswork of motives rather than consideration of the verifiable reality of facts.

No sooner had Shellenberger's article appeared in The Australian than the Crikey website was viewing him through that ever-present prism of progressive journalism, the News Corp conspiracy. Crikey's Kishor Napier-Raman wrote a piece devoid of even any pretence at fact, argument or enlightenment; rather, the thrust of his article was merely to complain that Shellenberger had appeared in News Corp media.

"There is nothing more powerful than a conversion narrative," wrote Napier-Raman. "And News Corp has found its latest convert." We must have reached a nadir in our public debate — the dumbing down of our political conversation — when journalists write pieces criticising other media for daring to interview an author or publish an expert opinion.

The Crikey article was retweeted by none other than former prime minister Kevin Rudd, who said Shellenberger was "News Corps latest golden" environmentalist and derided him as having "no formal qualifications" (which is not true: he has a masters degree in cultural anthropology). Still, this is the same Rudd who has encouraged people to heed Greta Thunberg on climate change, and she hasn't even finished high school.

Rudd also accused Shellenberger of “pushing the Murdoch line against renewables” which, apparently, won him “adoration” from people like me and Bolt. Say what you will about the paranoia, delusion and bitterness in this sort of commentary, it adds no substance and contests no facts.

Spare a thought for Shellenberger; he agreed to an interview with a TV host he had never heard of, and allowed a newspaper to reprint a piece he had written for Forbes.com, yet this was enough to have him tagged as part of some vast News Corp climate conspiracy. Still, when he received accusatory queries from The Sydney Morning Herald and The Guardian Australia, the way he handled them was exemplary.

Shellenberger wrote letters to the editors of these publications, detailing how their journalists (Nick O’Malley for the Herald and Graham Readfearn for The Guardian) appeared to be setting him up for a hit job by questioning his motives and his funding sources without daring to actually interview him. He then shared those letters publicly on Twitter.

In each case, after relaying their dealings, the environmentalist said he was still willing to make himself available for interviews, any time. The only proviso was that they would be conducted over Zoom, which he would record and upload on to YouTube unedited.

Brilliant. Shellenberger was calling their bluff, daring them to make their claims face-to-face, allowing him to answer them, so that they could publish whatever they liked but leaving him with a record of everything that was said, that could easily be shared.

How could any fair person disagree? How could any fair journalist resist?

When delivering media training I always used to advise people to record their interviews — it puts the interviewer on notice and ensures an accurate record if there is a dispute. But Zoom and other apps now take this to a new level of ease and openness.

The Shellenberger strategy is faultless so long as you are on top of your brief. Happy to argue his case, answer any question, and allow journalists to report on the exchange, his only condition is that he will have a recording of their conversation he can make public if he chooses.

Shellenberger’s tactic shamed The Guardian into a rather weird recounting of their communications at the end of Readfearn’s weekend hit piece. But the article finished by saying Shellenberger had

failed to respond to some questions — without mentioning Readfearn had failed to take up the offer of an interview.

As for the Herald, Shellenberger's Twitter feed shows that his public exposure of O'Malley's tactics eventually pushed the journalist into agreeing to an Apocalypse Never interview — the horror, the horror.

Chris Kenny hosts The Kenny Report, Monday-Friday at 5pm, and Kenny on Media Mondays at 8pm on Sky News.

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Commentator, author and former political adviser, Chris Kenny also hosts *The Kenny Report* Monday-Friday 5pm, and *Kenny on Media Mondays* at 8pm on Sky News. He takes an unashamedly rationalist app... [Read more](#)

