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Tell people something they know already and they will thank you for it.  
Tell them something new and they will hate you for it.

## Madder and Madder

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Lord Monckton's increasingly extravagant claims threaten to destroy the movement he champions

By George Monbiot. Published on the Guardian's website, 8th June 2010.

The longer this goes on, the better it will be for all those who take science seriously. Lord Monckton is digging his hole ever deeper, and dragging down into it everyone stupid enough to follow him. Those of us who do battle with climate change deniers can't inflict one tenth as much damage to their cause that Monckton wreaks every time he opens his mouth.

He has now answered the devastating debunking of his claims published by the professor of mechanical engineering John Abraham(1) with a characteristically bonkers article(2). It conforms to the cast iron rules of climate change denial, which are as follows:

1. Falsely accuse the other person of ad hominem attacks, while making vicious ad hominem attacks of your own.

I have seen it done many times before, but never as blatantly as this. Monckton manages to pack his double standards into a single sentence:

“So unusual is this attempt actually to meet us in argument, and so venomously ad hominem are Abraham's artful puerilities, delivered in a nasal and irritatingly matey tone (at least we are spared his face — he looks like an overcooked prawn), that climate-extremist bloggers everywhere have circulated them and praised them to the warming skies.”

Those who have followed Abraham's destruction of Monckton's wild claims will know that he doesn't make any ad hominem attacks at all(3): in fact he goes out of his way to be civil and courteous to his subject and does his best to give him the benefit of the doubt. Unlike the bad-mannered lord, he sticks to the facts. Just for the record, Abraham looks nothing like an overcooked prawn, but quite normal and pleasant(4).

Does Viscount Monckton possess so little self-awareness that he couldn't spot the contradiction between the standard of argument he expects of others and his own behaviour? Or does he take his followers for morons?

2. Ignore or gloss over the most substantial criticisms. Monckton concentrates on some of the least damaging of Abraham's revelations. Abraham has replied to him(5). You'll note that, unlike Monckton, he remains courteous and calm. And that he swiftly destroys the viscount's specious responses.

3. Never admit that you are wrong. Even when your errors are staring you in the face, do not

acknowledge them. Never apologise, never concede. This is the crucial difference between scientists and charlatans. True scientists welcome challenges to their work, admit their mistakes and seek to refine and improve their hypotheses in the light of them. Charlatans raise the volume and denounce the people who expose their errors. Or they quietly drop their claims, without ever acknowledging that they were wrong, and replace them with a new set of implausible assertions.

I have now read thousands of articles by climate change deniers - far more than I would like to have done - and have never come across a single admission that they have got something wrong. I challenge the deniers who are about to populate this thread to produce an example of someone on their side of the debate acknowledging an error.

4. Project your worst characteristics onto your opponent. Without providing any evidence to support his claim, Monckton repeatedly accuses Abraham of being a liar and of using “flagrant and deliberate misrepresentation”. This comes from a man who has, among other interesting assertions, falsely claimed to be both a member of the House of Lords(6) and a Nobel laureate(7). He also lambasts John Abraham for not being a climate scientist, though Abraham does in fact work in closely related fields. Monckton’s own qualification, of course, is a classics degree.

To these well-trodden tactics Monckton adds one of his own: run to daddy. He says that

“I have already initiated the process of having Abraham hauled up before whatever academic panel his Bible college can muster, to answer disciplinary charges of willful [sic] academic dishonesty amounting to gross professional misconduct unbecoming a member of his profession.”

There is, as yet, no evidence that he has done such a thing: the university is not aware of any complaint from Viscount Monckton and nor is Abraham. But it must be the 20th such threat I have seen him make. He throws threats of libel around like confetti, reported me to the Press Complaints Commission (his complaint was not upheld(8)) and claims to have initiated disciplinary proceedings against another academic who criticised him (oddly, this didn’t materialise either(9)).

For all his bullying and bluster he is (to deploy the Scots he often uses) a “wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim’rous beastie”. He is capable, as you have seen, of astonishing viciousness, but as soon as someone questions or criticises him, he runs off to a complain to a higher authority – or threatens to. This suggests that, like most bullies, he can deal it out but he can’t take it.

When Abraham published his destruction of Monckton’s claims, the Telegraph had a brief moment of sanity, allowing its blogger Tom Chivers to post a celebration of “one of the most magisterial scientific take-downs on record.” Chivers noted that:

“Lord Monckton is a fantasist, a blethering popinjay useful only for amusement. He can be safely ignored in all serious scientific debate. But it reflects badly on those people who want seriously to argue against the science of climate change that this capering jester is among the public figureheads of their movement. If I were, for example, m’colleagues James Delingpole or Christopher Booker, I would publically wash my hands of Lord Monckton, and soon.”

No sooner was the post up than it was down again. Chivers reported in an update to the blog that he had refused to take it down pending a conversation with his editor. But shortly afterwards the blog was removed from the Telegraph website without explanation. Fortunately Chivers’s post had already been

reproduced elsewhere(10).

As Chivers suggests, Monckton's claims to be a serious contender are over. From now on, like the defrocked Vicar of Stiffkey(11), he'll be a circus act, a figure of fun whose only followers are as crazed as he is.

Delightfully, he has just been given a whole new ring in which to perform. In the craziest political decision since Gordon Brown put Digby Jones in his cabinet, the UK Independence party has just made Monckton its deputy leader. His appointment has provided him with yet another opportunity to inflate his credentials. Among other claims he maintains that he was the "Author of a 1200-word article for the Daily Telegraph on the reasons in international law why the Falkland Islands are British, read out on the BBC World Service's Argentinian broadcasts every 20 minutes during the Falklands War."(12)

I phoned the BBC World Service. They do not have an Argentinian service, and have never made specifically "Argentinian broadcasts". There was, however, an entirely separate organisation set up by Thatcher's government to beam propaganda into Argentina during the Falklands war, called Radio Atlantico del Sur. It had nothing to do with the BBC. The idea that it might have read out Monckton's essay every 20 minutes is entirely plausible: I can't think of a better means of demoralising the enemy.

His Ukip CV adds more details to Baron Monckhausen's wonderful claim to have invented the universal cure.

"Patients have been cured of various infectious diseases, including Graves' Disease, multiple sclerosis, influenza, and herpes simplex VI."

But what happened to the other diseases? When he joined UKIP in December, he claimed that

"Patients have been cured of various infectious diseases, including Graves' disease, multiple sclerosis, influenza, food poisoning, and HIV."

Never mind. The best bit is the name of the company he has set up to market this miraculous treatment: Resurrexi Pharmaceutical. Last week I proposed that it was only a matter of time before Monckton proclaimed himself the risen Christ(13). Looks like we didn't have to wait too long.

Anyway, UKIP is now led by two aristocrats. One, Marina Hyde suggests, is "the sort of patrician dullard you pray not to be seated next to at dinner"(14). The other is clearly deranged. This is going to be a lot of fun.

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