

Nick Doe, *Blinkered beats blind*, Flying Shingle, p.7, July 30, 2012.

Background:

[Larger view improves perception of reality](#) by David Bouvier, Monday, July 23, 2012

Dear Editor

Those of us who believe that reality is discovered, not created, have become distressed recently over the tendency of the federal Conservatives to ignore contributions to policy-making by the scientific community. Scientists working for the government are no longer free to discuss their work with the public; the collection of comprehensive census data has been curtailed; and expert reports that present a reality that clashes with the reality that the government wishes to portray are being misrepresented, suppressed, or ignored.

One would have hoped that those who support scientists who research the cause and effect of, say, climate change, would also extend their support to all people who devote their careers to furthering our knowledge of how the world works, and to do so without making the revealing of observations and conclusions subject to opinion based on anecdotes, irrational beliefs, and unsubstantiated and ill-informed guesses as to what are the facts.

This trend is especially distressing because some on the liberal left, encouraged by purveyors of postmodernist nonsense and some CBC commentators who think ignorance of science and technology is cute, have of late been increasingly supportive of the idea that the opinions of the “many”, who don’t really know what they are talking about, are in some way superior to the opinions of the “few” who may have devoted large chunks of their lives to a detailed study of the matter at hand. David Bouvier’s letter (July 23) is an example of this. David cites James Surowiecki with approval, but fails to mention the inconvenient fact that while Surowiecki’s arguments sometimes hold water, in many cases they do not, as Daniel Tammet, Janon Lanier, and others have pointed out (Wikipedia, The Wisdom of Crowds-Criticism).

In one experiment for example, chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov played against over fifty thousand online chess-players working together. It was Kasparov that won, not the crowd.

While there may be something to the wisdom of crowds, not to mention such limitations is to me just further encouragement of a Harper-style disdain for expert opinion and the promulgation of what are tantamount to lies in the media in support of widely-held but false opinions as to what are observed truths.

Scientists are of course well aware of the phenomenon of emergence—the arising of new properties in large and complex systems. They deal with it all the time. String theorists use it to explore dualities in their competing theories, but they do so with the understanding that looking at a large and complex system in terms of its fundamental properties and its emergent properties can be shown to be just two different ways at looking at the same thing, and that looking in both ways, not one or the other, is what is most enlightening.

“Blinkered” may be bad, but in my book, it beats being blind.

Sincerely