

## Sloppy Editing

Lesley Canold argues that the use of shame and humiliation in the hoax on Keith Windshuttle was justifiable (Opinion, 8/1/09). We disagree.

At one level, we are enjoying seeing an opponent in the culture/history wars “hoisted on his own petard”. Sarcasm, ridicule, satire and irony are effective weapons of mass amusement. However, at an ethical level, we have inconvenient misgivings that detract from the enjoyment of the occasion.

We believe that this hoax undermines a fundamental rule of academic engagement. We teach our students to play the ball, not the man. Arguments and counter-arguments should be underpinned by honest and rigorous research.

In the academic world, there are ethical guidelines for research publications. There are heavy penalties for research misconduct such as fraud and fabrication. Quadrant is not a peer reviewed academic journal and some may argue that humiliation by satire is fair enough. But the consequences of fabrication and fraud are the same for all research publications: they undermine research ethics and public trust in researchers.

This hoax shows that Windshuttle is a sloppy editor. However, that is really all that it shows. It does not show that his opinions, arguments, research are per say wrong. It does nothing to resolve the culture/history wars or the war on climate change. Perhaps with everyone firing insults instead of facts, nothing could.

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