

Why, Twenty-One Times Why?

By Dr Walter Starck, Quadrant Online, 3 May 2018

Is there no limit to the demands of political correctness, the burden of hypothetical solutions to imaginary problems, and the detachment from empirical reality that can be imposed on a society? Here, a list of questions whose answers would be obvious were they not being obscured.

Although the basic principles of logic are fundamental to the form of symbolic communication and reasoning we know as language, these are all too readily ignored where personal gain or emotional satisfaction are involved. Such disregard for truth not only varies between individuals, but also between cultures and within cultures over time. Currently Western Culture seems to be in a period of decline in this regard with the rise of post-modern political correctness playing a major role and with social media aiding and abetting the malaise through easy propagation and ready access to social affirmation for almost anything one might choose to believe.

Every day the news media spew an irrational swirl of dubious opinion parading as fact. Even when directly conflicted by sound readily available evidence, it is simply ignored. Remarkably, and no matter how ill-founded it may be, much of this effluvium is swallowed by a large audience already primed for unquestioning acceptance.

That we should prefer to believe what we find satisfying and seek comfort and support in others of similar belief is understandable. What is difficult to comprehend, however, is our willingness to lie to ourselves with irrational conviction simply because we find the indications of reason and evidence discomfiting in some way. This is especially remarkable in view of the repeated and disastrous consequences of beliefs clearly not in accord with the actual world in which we exist and/or contrary to the observable nature of our own being.

The following is an arbitrary selection of a score of examples from recent news. They range in import from the trivial to the critical, but all beg for an answer as to why:

1. Why do we facilitate the largescale ongoing immigration of refugees from failed states with no assessment of the outcomes? In particular, it would seem worth trying to better understand the effect of a common factor for almost all of the failed states, which is the nature of the culture they share and [how this may be affecting the successful assimilation of these immigrants](#).
2. Why is there such a political obsession in Australia with climate change and carbon emissions when no recent extremes of climate are outside the bounds of earlier natural variability, when the claimed warming trend is less than the margin of error in measurement and when this is the only developed economy in which the level of natural uptake exceeds the emissions. [As Australia is a net carbon sink](#), why are we not then receiving credits from other nations who are large net emitters?
3. Why is there a massive drive for wind and solar power when they require three to four times more installed generating capacity than they deliver and, at current levels, are providing [only about 10% of baseload demand](#) at already exorbitant cost with [increasingly difficult load management problems](#)? Especially, when the full baseload capacity of conventional power is still required to provide backup for the highly erratic

alternative power and it must then be running inefficiently in standby mode much of the time.

4. Why are we seeking to re-equip the RAN with a handful of extravagantly expensive and vulnerable frigates and submarines which have a very limited capacity to defend the nation when, for far less cost, we could have hundreds of versatile long-range drone ships and aircraft which would provide a truly formidable defence capability?
5. Why does it require 100 hours driving time to get a provisional drivers licence in Queensland but less than half that time to get a private pilot's licence, especially when our road accident and fatality rates indicate no benefit over jurisdictions with far less onerous requirements? (see Figure 3.1 to see how the state's road toll had already decreased to a fraction of its 1970 high when the new measures were introduced)
6. Why is the commercial fishing catch limit on the Great Barrier Reef limited to 3041 tonnes (*e.g.* 9 Kg per square Km of reef and lagoon area) when the global status report on coral reefs cites 15,000 Kg per square Km as being sustainable for well managed reef fisheries?
7. Why is it that with the largest per capita fishing zone in the world we must import between 66% and 75% of the seafood we eat and thus add to the pressure on marine resources with orders of magnitude greater demand on them?
8. Why do we heavily restrict our tuna fishermen, then import \$165 million a year in canned tuna largely from the same stocks we won't allow our fishermen to catch?
9. Why do GBRMPA, academics and environmentalists repeatedly and blatantly exaggerate the economic value for GBR tourism by claiming the gross value for tourism in the region when only half of visitors visit the reef at all and for almost all of those who do their reef experience is a single day trip which is an activity that comprises only a few percent of the gross value of tourism? Why, too, is this never challenged, as it surely would be if any other tourism sector claimed credit for the entire value for tourism?
10. Why do we repeatedly see Aboriginal culture described as being 50,000 years old and "the oldest on Earth" when, all cultures are the same age but some have changed more than others, nothing is known about the culture 50,000 years ago and even the most recent pre-European culture is no longer practiced? Wouldn't it be a lot more honest to just say that Aboriginal culture is rich and unique with ancient roots. By emphasising the age are we not in effect implying something primitive and backward.
11. Why do we use the term "Aboriginal civilisation" when the culture was that of hunter-gathering with none of the key characteristics by which the term "civilization" is defined? These include such things as agriculture, social stratification, buildings, civil works, urbanisation, specialisations of labour and some form of symbolic record keeping.
12. With a national petrol and diesel reserve only sufficient for a couple of weeks and it being at the end of a long vulnerable supply chain while draining billions of dollars from the economy, why do we not have our own synfuel industry using our abundant coal or natural gas? Especially, when the cost per litre would be no greater.

13. Why the phobia about nuclear power when we have the largest reserves in the world, ideal conditions for it and, with current technology, can enjoy the cheapest, most reliable, safest and cleanest power of all? Better still, we also have vast areas of the most remote, geologically stable and driest places to store any waste.
14. Why do we ban the clearing of native vegetation and increasingly hamstring our farmers and graziers with myriad environmental costs, restrictions and demands? We used to have an abundance of some of the least expensive high-quality food in the world. Now we have some of the most expensive with increasing dependence on imports.
15. Do our eco-saviours have no awareness that ecology is above all holistic and that what we do not get in one place only shifts the effect to somewhere else?
16. Why is it that Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea *et al.* are always having to impose gross violations of human rights and subject their populations to severe deprivations for some higher purpose which remains permanently in the future? Might there not in fact be some fundamental fallacy in collectivist philosophy that renders freedom, prosperity and equality permanently unattainable?
17. Why do eyeglasses and dental implants, bridges and caps cost vastly more in Australia than they do in the now-advanced economies in Asia, where training, equipment and overhead costs are otherwise similar? Is there some government-enabled monopoly that permits this?
18. Why all the celebration of having the most expensive housing in the world when houses are simply a cost of living that is turning Australia into a land of indentured servants owned by the banks? Is it not like celebrating increases in food prices because they make the food in our pantry more valuable?
19. Why is it that the prevailing demographic of the Green vote is inner-urban non-producers whose own chosen habitat where nature has been virtually annihilated, is the fraction of 1% of the continent?
20. Why is it that so many of those who profess such great concern over threats to the environment greet any evidence that something may not be as bad as they fear with anger and rejection, never with hopeful interest? Might it be that their real commitment is not to nature but, to displaying their virtue and pleasuring themselves with a delicious sense of self-righteousness?
21. Why are we continuing to indenture a whole generation with exorbitant HECS debt when most of the education they are receiving could be better delivered at higher quality and only modest cost through online courses?

In short, is there no limit to the demands of political correctness, the burden of hypothetical solutions to imaginary problems and the detachment from empirical reality that can be imposed on a society?

That, at least, would seem to be one question for which we seem well on the way to a decisive answer.

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