

Why Patrick Moore calls GMWatch "a bunch of murdering bastards"

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GM Watch

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According to Patrick Moore, GMWatch are "low-life" "murdering creeps", "profiteering on ignorance". Not to mention, "a bunch of murdering bastards" with an "anti-human, murderous agenda." How come?

It all started with What the Greens Got Wrong - the Channel 4 documentary featuring Mark Lynas, Stewart Brand, Patrick Moore and Adam Werbach. These stalwarts of the environmental movement were now thoroughly disillusioned with green groups, we were told. But Adam Werbach began disowning Channel 4's polemic even before it was broadcast, while critics complained about claims in the programme that they said were just plain wrong.

In the studio discussion after the programme, Lynas and Brand took a drubbing, not least because they were unable to back up claims of a green-inspired global DDT ban having lead to the deaths of millions from malaria.

In correspondence between Brand and George Monbiot that followed the studio discussion, Brand turned for support to Patrick Moore. And that's where we came in.

According to Monbiot, when he accused Patrick Moore of being in effect an anti-green attack dog, "Moore asserted, 'I do not attack environmentalists, show me an example.' It happened that on the same day he had sent an email to the green group GMWatch, in which he told them, 'you are a bunch of murdering bastards.' When I pointed this out to him, he told me 'I made an exception for murdering bastards...'"

So who exactly is Patrick Moore and what's his beef with GMWatch?

Moore first came across our radar a decade or so ago when he was flown to New Zealand by the biotech industry to promote GM crops. Moore was presented at the time, as in the Channel 4 documentary, as a leader of the environmental movement. But we quickly established that despite a prominent role in Greenpeace more than a decade earlier, Moore had moved on and now made his living as a spokesperson for corporations engaged in environmental destruction.

To this end, Moore runs a company called Greenspirit Strategies, which, as Monbiot notes, has developed "sustainability messaging" for logging, mining, lead-smelting, biotech, fish-farming and plastics companies, among others. Monbiot describes Moore as a "clever rhetorician, skilled at turning an argument around," who is "seen by some environmentalists as the most brazen of the spin doctors they face."

In recent years Moore has been touting nuclear energy for groups bankrolled by the nuclear industry. Although Moore uses the issue of man-made global warming to promote nuclear power, he has also promoted climate scepticism in defending Exxon.

Moore's PR work seems to have first kicked off in 1991 when he was hired to represent a logging industry front group set up by the PR firm Burson-Marsteller. That's the same firm that represented Exxon after the Valdez oil spill and Union Carbide after the Bhopal chemical disaster.

Moore's most recent corporate client is Asia Pulp and Paper (APP) which, according to WWF, is responsible for "more natural forest clearance in Sumatra ... than any other company". Monbiot argues APP could "make a fair claim to be one of the most destructive companies on the planet." APP also stands accused of serious human rights abuses.

Moore's attack on us was in response to our article from May 2009 criticizing the way Golden Rice has been abused for PR purposes. The article notes the extreme claims made for Golden Rice; that there are better, cheaper, and less risky ways to counter vitamin A deficiency; and that Golden Rice has not been proven safe to eat.

After reading the article, Moore sent us the following critique: "Your piece on Golden Rice is enough to make one puke. The beta-carotene level is well above required amounts and it is perfectly safe and you are a bunch of murdering bastards."

We replied by pointing out that we were merely asking for less assertion and hyperbole about Golden Rice, and for more evidence and transparency. Moore replied:

"Not sure what you mean about transparency but I can see right through you and your anti-human, murderous agenda. If you know of some better way to save millions of people from suffering and death why don't you do something about it you low-life, profiteering on ignorance, murdering creeps?"

On a slightly more rational note, Moore also provided the following links as evidence supporting his case for GM Golden Rice. Below each link, we comment on this "evidence".

Supporting evidence for Golden Rice - link No. 1:  
[http://whqlibdoc.who.int/bulletin/1992/Vol70-No2/bulletin\\_1992\\_70\(2\)\\_225-232.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/bulletin/1992/Vol70-No2/bulletin_1992_70(2)_225-232.pdf)

GMW comment: This is a 1992 bulletin (long before Golden Rice) from the World Health Organisation (WHO) which establishes that there is indeed vitamin A deficiency in the third world and notes that solutions include:

- \*standard vitamin A supplements
- \*breastfeeding

Sounds very sensible to us.

Supporting evidence for Golden Rice - link No. 2:  
<http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/vad/en/index.html>

GMW comment: This is a WHO report which recommends the following solutions to vitamin A deficiency:

- \*Breastfeeding
- \*Standard vitamin A supplements
- \*Growing fruit and veg in gardens

WHO provides a link to studies on vitamin A deficiency here:

[http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/micronutrients/vitamin\\_a\\_deficiency/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/micronutrients/vitamin_a_deficiency/en/index.html)

But none of the studies mention Golden Rice. GMWatch endorses the approach of this WHO report and indeed we cited it in our own article on Golden Rice that Moore so objects to. Maybe that's where he found the link.

Supporting evidence for Golden Rice - link No. 3:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/15/opinion/15ronald.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

GMW comment: This newspaper article is not evidence but an opinion piece by the well known GM enthusiast, Pamela Ronald. Ronald, in fact, only refers to Golden Rice in passing, and makes no reference at all to research on it.

Supporting evidence for Golden Rice - link No. 4:

<http://www.goldenrice.org>

GMW comment: This is the Golden Rice promoters' own website. Referring people to it for evidence on Golden Rice is a bit like referring people to Monsanto's website to get evidence on Roundup! However, their home page does at least contain a link to a peer reviewed study on Golden Rice, which appeared a month after our GMWatch article was published (which is why we didn't refer to it in that article).

Why Moore didn't refer us directly to it as his no. 1 source of evidence is a mystery. But does this study stand up?

The study: Guangwen Tang, Jian Qin, Gregory G Dolnikowski, Robert M Russell, and Michael A Grusak. 2009. Golden Rice is an effective source of vitamin A. *Am J Clin Nutr*; 89:1-8.

Methodology: Five healthy volunteers were fed a single meal of cooked Golden Rice.

Finding: It was found that the beta-carotene was effectively converted to vitamin A.

GMW comment: This study doesn't tell us anything about whether Golden Rice is the best way of solving vitamin A deficiency in the developing world. The 5 experimental subjects were all healthy adults - not the malnourished people who are the intended consumers of Golden Rice. People need to ingest sufficient quantities of protein, iron and fat to take up vitamin A properly. That's why the experimental subjects were given butter to eat with their Golden Rice. Will the promoters of Golden Rice be giving out dollops of butter with it to people in the developing world??

It is problematic to focus on feeding a single nutrient to malnourished people when it's unlikely they will be able to utilize it efficiently without the benefits of other nutrients. But if you do want to take the single nutrient approach, then why not use standard vitamin A supplements, as is recommended in the WHO report cited by both GMWatch and Moore? These are low-cost, readily available, and unlike genetically engineered Golden Rice have some sort of track record.

Anyway, Moore rounded off our correspondence with the following warm-hearted valediction: "May you rot in hell."

You can read GMWatch's article about Golden Rice here:  
<http://www.gmwatch.org/gm-myths/11130>

See if you think it deserves such a violent reaction.

For more about Moore:

<http://www.monbiot.com/archives/2010/12/02/the-great-ventriloquist/>

[http://www.powerbase.info/index.php?title=Patrick\\_Moore](http://www.powerbase.info/index.php?title=Patrick_Moore)

<http://www.pej.org/html/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=5641>