

## Seriously Satirical

Whenever a political or social tradition is driven by psychological hang-ups (and at present they all are, to a greater or lesser extent), there is a potential for satire because the unfortunate sufferers of the hangup can neither defend their opinions rationally nor modify them. So they are sitting targets and, literally, **ridiculous**.

This is especially so when the opinions in question are currently being refuted by collision with cold reality. Refutation only **rarely** cures hang-ups, but it does increase the work that their holders have to do to cope with the 'cognitive dissonance' of living in a world that simply *is not* as they feel it *must be*. Satire likewise plays the important role of increasing the psychological cost of clinging to untenable views. For instance, the treatment that Muhammed Saeed al-Sahaf has received at the hands of **satirists** will make it harder, in future, for totalitarian Ministers of Information to get themselves taken seriously by Westerners – or even by the average idiotarian journalist.

Before 9-11, the ridiculousness of idiotarianism lay largely concealed under layers of complacency and political correctness. The fact that such a significant strand of political thought *did not even have a name* before 2002 when Charles Johnson **coined the term 'idiotarian'** (the very term being a form of serious/satirical criticism) is testimony to the psychological power of these concealment mechanisms. Their sudden failure – the sudden removal of the idiotarian emperors' clothing – may go some way towards explaining why there are many extremely good satirists among today's warbloggers. The funniest that we know of is **IMAO** – see, for instance, **these** masterpieces, but perhaps better examples of what we are talking about are **Scrappleface** (who coined the term '**Axis of Weasels**') and **The Skeptician**, who are masters of harnessing genuine, relentlessly logical arguments in the cause of satire. Of course, **so** are **we**, when we put our minds to it.

It's a good time for visual satire too. The 'Weasels' metaphor was **memorably** taken up by the New York Post. **Here**, blogger **Laurence Simon** pokes fun at idiotarian 'human shields' by ingeniously reinterpreting a much-mocked government emergency poster (via **LGF**). Here is a **parody of the New York Times**, which beautifully skewers a whole range of ridiculous postures that idiotarians have felt compelled to adopt in response to the recent

Coalition victory in Iraq. Here is a **cartoon** that did the same for post-9-11 postures. The most consistently excellent political cartoonists that we know of are **Cox and Forkum** – not so much funny as **clear-sighted**.

We are living in exceptionally interesting times, which, as the **urban myth about that being a 'Chinese curse'** indicates, means that we are in trouble. However, it has its consolations too. One is that we can witness, or perhaps even assist in, troubles being fixed. Another is that there are some seriously ridiculous people and situations out there at the moment. If it is worth **setting the world to rights**, it is worth laughing at them while doing so.

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"The devil... the prowd spirit... cannot endure to be mocked." -- Thomas More.

"Nothing deflates a windbag faster than the prick of laughter." -- Me.

Curmudgeon Emeritus, Palace Of Reason

by [fporretto](#) on Sun, 05/04/2003 - 11:02 | [reply](#)

## Keep up the excellent work!

The blog looks great. I especially liked your shameless plugs of other blogs when talking about satire. It was also very interesting to see your realization that people can absolutely *fail* to spot satire at times. Keep up the excellent work!

by a reader on Mon, 05/12/2003 - 18:55 | [reply](#)