



Rebelling Against Fake Experts: Citizens Across The Globe Are Turning Their Backs On So-Called Experts Who Think It's Their Job To Tell Us How To Live

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A New Yorker cartoon earlier this year showed a passenger standing up in a plane saying to his fellow passengers: 'These smug pilots have lost touch with regular passengers like us. Who thinks I should fly the plane?' This represents a new meme where citizens must choose between mob-rule populism and enlightened expert rule. The choice is emblematic of how poorly cultural elites understand our changing world, ignoring the genuine concerns citizens have about our governing institutions and the direction of our country.

In an article in September 2016, 'The Intellectual Yet Idiot', academic Nassim Taleb said the rebellion of 2016 was 'against the inner circle of no-skin-in-the-game policymaking "clerks" and journalists-insiders, that class of paternalistic semi-intellectual experts'. Citizens across the globe have more common sense than to indiscriminately rebel against expert rule. People routinely seek and act on the advice of doctors, dentists, chefs and pilots. Rather, citizens are rebelling against illegitimate 'expert non-experts'. This new breed of non-experts routinely gets things wrong, imposes their values on captured taxpayers and rarely faces the negative consequences of their



bad advice and incorrect predictions.

In Australia, expert non-experts can be found in large sections of the three major political parties, the taxpayer funded media, many corporations (such as banks and consulting firms), the bureaucracy, the administrative state, large sections of the legal fraternity, large sections of academia (also majority taxpayer funded) and 'welfare' groups.

There are many reasons why expert non-experts have been rejected. They are often wrong about consequential policy issues. They said Brexit wouldn't happen. It did—despite opposition in Britain from the three major political parties, large sections of the business community, the trade unions, taxpayer funded media, and large sections of academia. Then they said if Brexit did happen Britain's economy would collapse. The FTSE100 is up 11 per cent since the vote.

They said Donald Trump couldn't win the Republican nomination. He won 45 per cent of all Republican primary ballots cast. They then said Trump couldn't win the Presidency. He won by winning Florida and long-time Democratic strong-holds (which they said he couldn't win). Once again, this was predicted to cause economic collapse. The Dow Jones Industrial Average is up 17 per cent since Trump's election.

They said Tony Abbott was unelectable, but he led the Coalition to win the 2013 election with a 14-seat majority. This came after a draw in the 2010 election, which was just three years after they said the Coalition was finished for a generation after Howard's defeat in 2007.

Unlike expert non-experts, legitimate experts do not impose their values on others. We tell them what our values and preferences are, and they help us achieve them. They advise, guide, and assist, but they do not command.

In the New Yorker cartoon, the passengers choose their destination and the pilot gets them there safely. In contrast, non-experts combine a penchant for authoritarianism and a love of paternalism to endlessly meddle in our lives by telling us what to eat, what to believe, who to vote for, when we can and can't speak, and what we can and can't say. As Taleb argues, 'they pathologise others for doing things they don't understand without ever realising it is their understanding that may be limited'.

Expert non-experts also have no skin in the game, and there are few downside consequences when they are wrong. The people who told us Brexit wouldn't happen, and Trump and Abbott were 'unelectable', still have jobs. If a minister acts on advice from a bureaucrat resulting in negative economic outcomes for Australians, the adviser will still receive their 3 per cent pay increment at the next performance review.

Contrast this to the pilot. If the plane crashes the pilot dies with the passengers. The interests of the expert and the people are aligned. A pilot is a legitimate expert, the diametric opposite to the expert non-expert.

But there is a deeper problem: rule by expert non-experts has been embedded into governing

institutions through the formation of a permanent political class which is not dislodged by elections. This is the functional equivalent to an oligarchy (or, perhaps more accurately a kakistocracy, which is English author Thomas Love Peacock's term for the nation's worst and least qualified citizens).

On most key issues, it doesn't matter which party, or which people within that party, forms government. The policy prescriptions and general direction of the country continues unabated. Australia has a political class almost united in support of big central government, a large welfare state, high business and personal income taxes, subsidisation of renewable energy, anti-freedom of speech, appointment of progressive judges, social engineering in kindergartens, schools and universities, international climate agreements, uncompensated erosion of property rights, reams of regulation and red tape, a bloated and unionised bureaucracy and government-funded media.

The result is a dangerous shrinking of the acceptable parameters of public debate. If left unchallenged, this shrinking becomes a form of tyranny where people stop believing there is an alternative to the status quo. Professor Allan Bloom, author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, said: 'The most successful tyranny is not the one that uses force to assure uniformity but the one that removes the awareness of other possibilities.'

The only outlet people now have for alternatives in Australia is the Senate. And many in the political class want further 'reform' to ensure the Senate is more 'representative' and less 'obstructive'. By which they mean: if only voters would stop getting in the way of their perfectly defined plans, Australia would be a better country with better people.

It may well be the case that a decent number of Australians favour the status quo. So be it. But they should have the ability to decide on these matters through the workings of our representative democracy, rather than having these issues (and the important debates that go with them) closed off from the public square.

Thankfully, the results of the 2016 elections show that the average person has plenty of common sense. They will not stop listening to the advice of bona-fide experts with a proven track record of success. But they are deeply sceptical of those self-anointed expert non-experts who are consistently wrong on the big issues, seek to impose their values on others, and have no skin in the game.

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(Image: New Yorker, 27 December 2016)