

Who's the buffoon?

In 'Mbeki reaps as he sowed' last week, Drew Forrest claimed that 'Buffoons such as denialist campaigner Anthony Brink imagine the pressure on the president came from white journalists.' Actually Forrest is the only buffoon I know who thinks this. I sure don't. On the contrary, I argue in my forthcoming book, *'Just say yes, Mr President': Mbeki and AIDS*, that it's been white liberal journalists' appreciation of their irrelevance in forcing the adoption of AIDS treatment policy in South Africa that accounts for their extraordinarily vicious animus towards Mbeki in their columns – their base style epitomized by Forrest's latest dismal offering.

And what this about 'denialist campaigner'? Fact is I'm not going about denying anything. What I've been doing for nearly a decade is bringing to government's attention an enormous, growing corpus of little known research literature in the medical and scientific press concerning the exceptionally serious toxicity of AZT and nevirapine. And that unborn and newly born children, mostly black, mostly poor in this country, are at particular risk of being killed or crippled by these drugs in the most horrible way. But readers of the M&G wouldn't know any of this, because such information has been banned: 'This newspaper has always supported the need for an effective antiretroviral programme and will not in future [publish anything] which dilutes this message or creates confusion in the minds of readers,' Editor Ferial Haffajee told me on 9 December last year. 'Our newspaper has been at the forefront of the push for antiretrovirals in

this country. Our brand has suffered [from the publication of an article pointing out that ‘Hundreds of studies have found that AZT is profoundly toxic to all cells of the human body, and particularly to the blood cells of the immune system’ and that ‘Numerous studies have found that children exposed to AZT in the womb and after birth suffer brain damage, neurological disorders, paralysis, spasticity, mental retardation, epilepsy, other serious diseases and early death.']. ... Publishing [another article referring to ‘the side effects of extremely toxic pharmaceutical drugs like AZT and nevirapine’] will continue to damage our brand.’ M&G chief operations officer Hoosain Karjeiker spoke the same way: ‘We are proponents of AZT. ... Yes [it’s objectionable to] cast aspersions on AZT and nevirapine ... it’s dissident.’

In view of the M&G’s decision to black out these unpleasant facts about AZT and nevirapine (to protect its brand), readers interested in finding out what made our President, Health Minister and South Africa’s and England’s leading investigative journalists nearly jump out of their skins can do so for themselves at my website, www.tig.org.za. And then decide: who’s the denialist campaigning buffoon?

ADV ANTHONY BRINK