

DIRTY POLITICS and **HIDDEN AGENDAS**

**COLIN CRAIG
VS THE
DIRTY POLITICS
BRIGADE**

**...AND THEIR
CAMPAIGN
OF LIES**

A STORY THAT HAD TO BE TOLD

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Thou shalt not bear false witness.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

DIRTY POLITICS

Dirty Politics is a phrase used to describe political activity that is unethical. To use a sporting comparison it is when players forget the rules and deliberately target an opposing player by any means. It is a professional foul on a grand scale and the corruption of a process that should be free and fair. In the case of those targeted by dirty politics the results can be damaging for a lifetime.

A book called “Dirty Politics”¹ was written last year and it talked about the corruption of public debate in New Zealand. It drew attention to the new media commentators who, rather than being media professionals operating according to ethical codes, are, instead, highly opinionated commentators who have political agendas. These commentators often run “blog sites” on the internet and are guided by their own conscience (or lack thereof) when it comes to ethics. They do not seek to provide fair or balanced reporting.

Of particular concern is that some engage in the practice of “attack politics” to harm opponents. Attack politics is where a person deliberately targets an opponent by finding their weaknesses and leveraging that to publically embarrass them or to bring them down. It can even involve deliberate foul play such as “false allegations” or “entrapments”.

We are a nation that believes in a fair go. We want our referees to be fair and every game to be played in a sportsmanlike way. We do not like corrupt people, and honesty is one of our core values. We must therefore reject the “Dirty Politics Brigade” who are seeking to hijack the political debate in New Zealand.

This booklet details the latest action by the Dirty Politics Brigade, this time in an attack on Conservative Party leader, Mr Colin Craig. What they have done is not legal and therefore court action is being taken against them. However he is not the first to be targeted by them and he is unlikely to be the last.

It is our hope that as the actions of the Dirty Politics Brigade are brought into the light, and they are exposed, that we as a nation of fair and honest folk will say that we have had enough.

Truth will ultimately prevail where pains are taken to bring it to light.

GEORGE WASHINGTON



WILLIAMS



SLATER



STRINGER

THE SCHEMERS IN PLOT AGAINST CRAIG

Jordan Williams

- Romantically involved with MacGregor
- Compiled the “attack dossier”
- Provided the attack dossier details to Cameron Slater [Whaleoil]
- Defamed Craig in private meetings with key people

Williams is a well-known member of the Dirty Politics Brigade having already been identified in the “Dirty Politics” book as *“acting as an apprentice to ... Slater”*.² He is a lawyer and currently works full time as a political lobbyist.³

It was Williams who gathered the initial information and accusations against Craig. His source was Craig’s former press secretary Rachel MacGregor with whom Williams had a romantic relationship.

Using the information he had gathered, Williams built a compelling story of MacGregor’s alleged harassment which he supported by an “attack dossier” of information. His presentation of events was in part her story (as he says she told it to him), some personal notes by MacGregor regarding the matter, and selected details of alleged correspondence from Craig to MacGregor.

The allegations presented by Williams included claims that (a) Craig had sent MacGregor “SEXT” messages,⁴ (b) MacGregor had resigned due to harassment but was lured

back by big money,⁵ and (c) Craig stopped paying MacGregor for 6 months and put sexual pressure on her with requests she stay the night.⁶

These are false allegations and easily proved so. Sexually explicit texts, resignations, and invoicing/payment records are by nature documented events.

Once Williams had put together the “attack dossier” he provided the details to Cameron Slater [Whaleoil] which ensured that there would be a media agenda at work against Craig.

Williams however did not stop there. He also had confidential meetings/discussions with people including some of Craig’s key supporters and Board members. In these “confidential” discussions Williams would attack Craig’s character undermining support for him. Williams was always careful that Craig did not know of the meetings, that no copies of the supposed “evidence” were taken, and that his [Williams’] involvement was kept secret.

...Williams is a

well-known member of the

Dirty Politics Brigade

Cameron Slater [Whaleoil]

- Ran an attack strategy against Craig
- Added additional allegations to those made by Williams
- Co-ordinated with John Stringer on the Conservative Party Board
- Used his “Whaleoil” blog site to attack Craig ⁷
- Provided “tip offs” and “information” to other media to broaden the public attack

Cameron Slater is right at the heart of dirty politics in New Zealand. He was the “blogger” at the centre of the dirty politics scandal last year. His attacks on various public figures in the past are well documented in the best-selling book “Dirty Politics” by Nicky Hager.⁸

Slater has been a long-time critic of the Conservative Party Leader, Colin Craig. As a loyal supporter and advocate for the National Party he perhaps sees Craig and his Conservatives as a real threat to National’s long term hold on absolute power.

Slater was central in constructing the strategy against Craig. The “strategy” as he explains it in his own words was a campaign to undermine Craig on moral grounds and ultimately “mow him down”⁹ by the slow and persistent release of allegations. In Slater’s words it was to be a “death by a 1000 cuts”.¹⁰

Whaleoil was well resourced for the attack. He not only had the false allegations and documents from the “attack dossier” that Williams had collated but also a steady feed of information from Stringer inside the party. Add to that the allegations of his own making and he had plenty of ammunition to shoot down Craig.

The strategy was a comprehensive one. Whaleoil used his blog along with “leaks” to the journalists (whom he refers to as “churnalists”)¹¹ to keep constant pressure on Craig in the media space. This was the frontal attack.

It was not however the only attack. Whaleoil also fed false allegations back to Stringer within the party to undermine party leadership and ensure Craig was embattled on a second front.

As both Slater and Stringer are bloggers they could quickly link or publish material that the other had written. Whaleoil for example invited Stringer to comment for his site.¹² This gave the appearance of secondary sources and a wealth of material on the respective blog sites.

Slater was central in constructing the strategy against Craig

John Stringer

- The “Judas” within the Party
- Led the attack on Craig at the Conservative Board level
- Co-ordinated with Whaleoil
- Used his “coNZervative” blog site to attack Craig ¹³
- Provided “tip offs” and “information” to other media to broaden the public attack

Stringer was appointed to the Conservative Party Board in 2013 and by all accounts was supportive until the election campaign in 2014 when he was ranked 13th on the party list, a placing well below his expectation.

It appears that it was not long after the election Stringer began his campaign to destabilise Craig by leaking a critical report from the Conservative Party’s media consultants. In reaction to the report being posted on the Whaleoil blog site, Christine Rankin who had copied the report to Stringer was furious and emailed him to say “I am horrified. How dare you do this to the Party. What the hell would possess you and what was wrong with me to trust you. Are you truly this crazy to get your own way.”¹⁴

Stringer continued a campaign within the Board of the party to destabilise the support for Craig. While he was able to gain influence over some (notably Regan Monahan of the Young Conservatives) he was not able to move the majority support for Craig.

Stringer must have therefore thought it a “Godsend” when the allegations of sexual harassment against Craig began to emerge. This gave him at last the ability to sway the Board away from their support of Craig.

Importantly for Stringer, Rankin was convinced by the Williams attack dossier and he [Stringer] therefore gained a vital ally. Once Rankin switched allegiances from Craig to Stringer she set about convincing others. Her lobbying efforts enabled Stringer to set up the Board meeting for the 19th June 2015 in which Craig would have been rolled as leader if it had gone ahead.

Stringer is also a blogger and used his “coNZervative” website to attack Craig in an ongoing series of articles. When added to the material he traded with Whaleoil and the many media appearances that he made and subsequently linked, his website became the “go to” resource in the attack against Craig.

“I am horrified... What the hell would possess you and what was wrong with me to trust you. Are you truly this crazy to get your own way.”

RANKIN TO STRINGER

COMMENT: It is a pity Rankin forgot her own words here. As you will see she has recently once again trusted Stringer and once again is likely to get burnt.

THE [ATTEMPTED CHARACTER] ASSASSINATION OF COLIN CRAIG



THE CAMPAIGN OF LIES

HOW DIRTY POLITICS WORKS:

As was said in the introduction dirty politics is about playing the man not the ball. It is about finding whatever you can to publically attack and injure the reputation of an opposing politician. If, as in this case, you don't have sufficient facts you simply make up the claims. The idea is that if you keep throwing mud eventually some will stick.

The Strategy against Craig

In this case the strategy against the Conservative Party Leader Colin Craig was well planned. There were the allegations of sexual harassment, a well prepared "attack dossier", private meetings with key people to undermine Craig, and plenty of salacious and fascinating allegations that would allow for a prolonged and drawn out media attack. The final and most telling element was a Judas (Stringer) within the leadership of the party to disrupt Craig's support base while feeding new allegations back to Whaleoil.

Whaleoil has acknowledged he has a copy of the "attack dossier" ¹⁵ and he is confident that he will take out Craig using his preferred method of "*death by a thousand cuts*". ¹⁶

He reveals substantially more however in this email to Stringer:

What appears to the public to be random revelations is nothing of the sort, there is a clear agenda in place.

EMAIL: Whaleoil to Stringer:

*... I wouldn't say we are in a hurry but sh*t is coming CC's way, the strategy is being worked out ... Craig ...with his various out-of-marriage conquests.*

Let's put it this way, if the CP go into the next election and he's still there, he'll be mowed down on moral issues. He can not ... [survive] ... as the leader of a conservative party that espouses family values because he may not have gone for kids but that's the only difference between him and Capill.¹⁷

Firstly what Whaleoil clearly acknowledges here is that there is a deliberate “strategy” against Craig that “is being worked out”. What appears to the public to be random revelations is nothing of the sort, there is a clear agenda in place. Whaleoil confirms this is a campaign against Craig on moral grounds. He seeks to cast Craig as an unfaithful husband participating in “out-of-marriage conquests” which will go down badly with a party espousing “family values”.

COMMENT: Craig has only ever had one sexual relationship which is with his wife [Helen] of over 23 years. Slater is perhaps overestimating his own abilities to sell this version of events.

Finally Whaleoil concludes his email with the reference to disgraced politician Graham Capill, this is a damning association. Capill committed a series of sexual offences against children and was prosecuted for them.¹⁸ It is a standard dirty politics trick to defame your opponent by making association with a disgraced personage.

This part of the attack strategy was not lost on Stringer who has also likened Craig to Capill both on national television¹⁹ and in writing.²⁰

Craig did see the attack coming and he dodged the Board meeting ambush choosing instead to stand down publically subject to an investigation. This bought him time to rally support and to counter the strategy/allegations against him. Nicky Hager in his book “Dirty Politics” makes the following observation: “Attack politics is also effective because other people may not even realise an orchestrated campaign is occurring”.²¹ It would be interesting to know how many of the Conservative Party Board members and other supporters were perceptive enough to realise this was an orchestrated campaign.

As we reveal in this booklet the strategy against Craig is already underway and doubtless the detail of the attack on Craig could fill many booklets. We have therefore chosen just 4 of the false allegations against Craig to illustrate the way the Dirty Politics Brigade have tried to assassinate Craig's character.

LIE #1 SEXUAL HARASSMENT

All attacks have to start somewhere and it was the Williams dossier with its claim that Craig had sexually harassed his press secretary that became the starting point.

The fact the claim had been withdrawn by MacGregor was perfect for the Dirty Politics Brigade. If the claim had instead been heard, then there would be a result, but without a judgement Craig could now be declared guilty by them without any defence.

Even better for them, Craig had signed a confidentiality clause and was unable to respond to the false allegations now being made by Williams. MacGregor was labelled a victim, and Craig ... well he was labelled many things ... none of them complimentary.

DEFINITION: [Sexual Harassment] Behaviour of a sexual nature that is unwelcome or offensive and which is either repeated or of such a significant nature that it has a detrimental effect on another person.²²

LIE #4

THE BIG PAYOUT

The “Big Payout” story was one of the most effective lies that Whaleoil produced in the attack on Colin Craig. Whaleoil successfully got mainstream media to report this lie (e.g. Newstalk ZB²³ and Radio New Zealand²⁴) and from there it was re-reported many times.

While the media went to work on Craig externally, Stringer inside the Party used this lie to get Party Board members to doubt the honesty of Craig. Despite Craig having accurately reported to them the part payment of MacGregor’s final invoice he now found himself facing allegations by fellow Board members that he had “misled them”²⁵ and that there was an “undisclosed payment”.²⁶

Behind the Lie:

It is interesting and informative to see how the lie was built and sold. Below is an excerpt of the email communication that took place between Stringer and Whaleoil on 15 June 2015:

Whaleoil to Stringer: *The actual Settlement number is close to \$107,500 and it was paid by the business, not him personally. I’m told you have been told a number a lot lower than that.*²⁷

Stringer to Whaleoil: *None of us ... had even been told he’d settled until just recently. I was unaware of that. Gee nice if you can get it...*²⁸

Whaleoil to Stringer: *... we have access you would not believe from multiple sources ... luckily, we have information and documented proof written by CC himself*²⁹

Later that day Stringer received further reassurances from Whaleoil:

Whaleoil to Stringer: *... I’m as confident as I can be of any fact in this particular house of cards. The source has this number directly from a party involved in the transaction. This isn’t rumour.*³⁰

COMMENT: It is staggering when you think just how many lies take place in this short exchange. Firstly we know there was no amount or \$107,500 or anything like it, there were no multiple sources, no information or documented proof, nothing from Colin Craig himself, and certainly no “number directly from a party involved in the transaction”. Yet this utter fabrication was accepted as valid both publically and within the party.

LIE #7

SEXT MESSAGES

DEFINITION OF SEXT: *A sexually explicit text message.*³¹

If you want to attack a Conservative public figure what better way than to accuse them of sending SEXT messages to their secretary? After all the word “SEXT” is exciting all by itself. Maybe it’s the fact it gets typed in capital letters or that the sound of the word when spoken is so full of connotations.

The “worst” text that Craig sent MacGregor was:

*“you are wonderful (and the rest)”.*³²

Frankly even Craig’s most fervent opponents would be drawing a very long bow to call that a SEXT message. Furthermore once it is considered in the context of the conversation at the time it becomes nothing at all.

It is unclear whether the false allegation of SEXT messages was from MacGregor or whether others embellished the story along the way. Williams did, in presenting the “attack dossier” to individuals, say the SEXT messages claim was directly from MacGregor.

Whaleoil in referring to the supposed SEXT messages even came up with a new phrase to add excitement. His new version was “*sext bombs*”³³ and he suggested once they “*started dropping*”³⁴ it would undermine Helen Craig’s support of her husband.

COMMENT: It seems odd that Cameron Slater would presume Craig’s wife was unaware of the details. She has, it turns out, read all documentation including all details of claims, including texts from both parties, and all supporting documents. Perhaps Slater should pause and ask himself whether she may be in a better position to judge the actions of her husband than he is.

The SEXTing claim was most effective it seems when shared privately and particularly when conveyed to women. According to Craig, Christine Rankin was an example of someone influenced by the claim of SEXT messages. Craig says Rankin raised the wording of a couple of supposed SEXT messages directly with him and then she did not believe him when he vehemently denied ever sending them.

COMMENT: Having reviewed all the evidence it is clear there were no SEXT messages. However once again from a Dirty Politics perspective it is not about the truth of the matter but only that allegations get made and that some stick.

LIE #14

ANOTHER VICTIM

Another one of the big lies that was circulated was the claim that there was a second victim. Of course there was never a first victim, unless you count Craig himself, who is clearly the victim of many and repeated false allegations.

It seems the need to create a “second victim” may have been necessary to continue the momentum of the campaign against Craig after the Craigs went public. When they denied the sexual harassment and big payout allegations³⁵ much of the Whaleoil agenda against Craig began to falter. After all Whaleoil had seemingly staked his reputation on the big payout claim and was now being made to look bad. The timing at least supports this conjecture as the Craigs went public on the 22nd June³⁶ and Whaleoil first published the second woman allegation just a few days later on the 26th June.³⁷ Of course we also know from Whaleoil directly the strategy was to cast Craig as a serial offender³⁸ and so the creation of a second woman was essential to support that storyline.

Once more Whaleoil worked on the media agenda while Stringer worked inside the party. Again let’s look at what they were actually saying:

Firstly - Whaleoil email to Media:

“There is a second victim. Similar circumstances - him trying to get a staffer to sleep with him. Also went to human rights commission with a settlement to shut her up. Discovering that there was a second victim was why the chairman finally resigned.”³⁹

Secondly - Stringer email to key Party Members

“Hi Team. Christine Rankin rang me today and is 100% behind us. She advised us to hang on, as she has a whisper from her media sources that something is about to break re Colin that will bury him. I already know about the “other woman”, an ex ... employee north of Auckland also sexually harassed by Colin and involved in legal wrangles with Colin now. Her problems occurred at the same time as Rachel’s and have no link to the Party whatsoever. The media know about this matter too, and it will out eventually ...”⁴⁰



COMMENT: I have checked and this is again an absolutely false claim. What is amazing here is the detail of the lie. Indeed it seems that adding detail to a lie makes it more convincing; a fictional story is made so much more believable by the creative detail. As with the other false allegations Craig has been fending off repeated questions from media about this.

CONCLUSION:

There are many more examples of the Dirty Politics Brigade attacking Craig over the last month but they all follow a similar theme and therefore I think the above examples suffice to paint the picture. Essentially it is a series of false allegations, each constructed with a plausible story. Each allegation is then broadcast as widely as possible to undermine and destroy Craig’s public credibility and reputation.

Nicky Hager in his book “Dirty Politics” says that “part of the tactic [is] to discourage opponents”⁴¹ and there is no doubt that Craig was targeted in that regard. Both Stringer⁴² and Rankin⁴³ publicly criticised Craig and his wife Helen for going public to deny the false claims. In addition there have been threatening and harassing emails and texts not just to Craig but also to those who are supporting him.

I genuinely wonder whether Craig can recover from an attack that has been so prolonged and so determined. Certainly exposing the Dirty Politics crowd and their schemes against him has to be a start in the right direction.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: WITH MR X

The identity of Mr X will remain anonymous but he is someone who knows those involved. His observations and information is to the best of our knowledge accurate although his opinions are of course his own and not endorsed in any way.

“
Don't forget it's
about ratings,
money, money,
money and
sex sells... ”

[A lot of expletives have been deleted from this dialogue]

INTERVIEWER: Well thank you for agreeing to talk to us. I assume that you have read the information that we have provided. What do you think of it? Will you make some comments?

MR X: Yeah ... well ... you know quite a lot I guess. Cam's [Cameron Slater] normally a bit more discreet than this. Did you hack his emails?

INTERVIEWER: Does it surprise you that there has been an attack of this nature on Colin Craig?

MR X: Nah get real ... Cam hates him and he's an easy target, all Conservatives are. Don't forget it's about ratings, money, money, money and sex sells, especially when it's allegations about someone in office. Remember Len Brown and the web traffic that gave Cam ... it's dollars in the door that matter.

INTERVIEWER: Well technically Colin Craig is not in Office.

MR X: Well no but he nearly ... got there last time. He gets votes and the media love him so that qualifies him to be a target.

INTERVIEWER: Obviously Cameron Slater and John Stringer have worked closely on this one, are they friends?

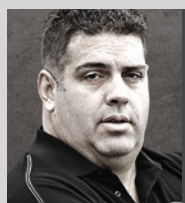
MR X: Actually it's John and Pete [Peter Belt who works at Whaleoil] who know each other from way back. Still it was definitely Cam who made up the second victim story but you already know that ... John Stringer is a ... idiot really. I think he really believes he is some sort of crusader for good in this whole thing ... [laughs] maybe he should look at who he is working with here.

INTERVIEWER: It seems pretty clear that the allegations against Craig are false. That is to say he never harassed MacGregor, there was no sexting, he never paid her out, there is no victim, and no second victim?

MR X: I don't see why that ... matters ... just that it gets reported so it looks like it's true ... [laughs] Welcome to politics and the media, it ain't what happened, it's what the media say happened that people believe. The damage is done just by the allegations, and anyway Stringer has been going hard on this for weeks so Craig is shaky now even with his own supporters.

INTERVIEWER: That's an interesting opinion but Craig says he has been getting pretty positive feedback from supporters.

MR X: Yeah well maybe he says that but ... don't forget they are mostly a bunch of bigots, they will dump him, just wait and see. Most media have already written him and the party off.



... Cam hates him and he's an easy target all conservatives are.

INTERVIEWER: So there is no way back for Craig after this?

MR X: No chance ... well OK there is a chance but only because he [Colin Craig] is freakish under pressure and he seems to be largely unphased by this whole thing ... its weird that. You can never say never ... Mind you Cam hasn't finished with him yet.

INTERVIEWER: So the attack on Colin Craig will keep going?

MR X: Yep.. it will keep going as long as Cam and Stringer have information. There is even an investigation going back through Craig's history. In the meantime its death by a thousand cuts, one little piece of information at a time.

Cam thinks Craig is an easy target on this as he [Craig] keeps responding and getting himself in deeper and deeper.



"Rankin ... swallowed it hook, line, and sinker ..."

...the real genius was to strike when the Board was vulnerable

...it was definitely Cam who made up the second victim story but you already know that.

INTERVIEWER: Ok but what if the allegations are false as we have laid out? Craig has always been honest in the past. If he is honest this time it means he has been defamed. What if I were to tell you that Craig is thinking of going public not only with the full story but also that he is planning legal action against Stringer, Slater, and Williams?

MR X: Damn ... wow ... He might do that too... [laughs] Jeez that would make a mess. It's unusual for Cam to get it wrong ... it's like he's got a blind spot when it comes to Craig. ... Stringer would be well and ... truly screwed. Cam on the other hand is a hard target, still if Craig is in this for the financial attrition then Cam won't be happy.

INTERVIEWER: What can you say about Craig's Board resigning?

MR X: Well the entire Conservative Board was taken out in 5 days, what can I say ... except that is artistry at it's best. You have to admire the work of a master. Cam has been called an "evil genius" and sometimes he proves that is so.

... the real genius was to strike when the Board was vulnerable; Craig was out of the way and Laurence Day who was by far the most experienced politico was away overseas ... that left the whole thing wide open for a combined Stringer/Rankin coup. They [Stringer and Rankin] both went public against Craig and when Cam began naming and shaming specific Board members they couldn't resign fast enough.

INTERVIEWER: It seems Rankin was the key for Stringer then?

MR X: [laughs] For sure, she swallowed it hook, line, and sinker and then went crazy doing whatever she could to pull Craig down ... Stringer could not have done it without Rankin.

INTERVIEWER: In your mind is this a triumph for dirty politics then?

MR X: Forget the term "dirty politics". This is about smart people, who know the game, making sure they get the outcome they want. How they get there doesn't matter, the point is they get results.

THE DIRTY POLITICS BRIGADE vs COLIN CRAIG



MODERATOR DISCLAIMER: I have reviewed the booklet entitled "Dirty Politics and Hidden Agendas" and have included annotated references, background documentation, statutory and at-source correspondence as part of my review. I regard "Dirty Politics and Hidden Agendas" booklet as a representatively balanced and fair record of the events that are recorded in the narrative.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT: There are a number of contributors to this publication. They have chosen to remain anonymous partly due to privacy and partly due to the potential risk of retaliation.

AUTHORISING STATEMENT: We have authorised this publication. While we do not agree with every statement made nor endorse all viewpoints we believe this is a story that needed to be told. We are mindful of the words from our national anthem that ask "from corruption guard our state" and hope that this publication may result in a better fairer democracy in this wonderful country. Colin and Helen Craig, PO Box 35566, Auckland 0753

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