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"A Different Light"

A Different Light – 26th October 2024 – “Halloween horror: The Monster Mash that is our current Government and other stories”

BOO!! It's Halloween time already. Last year I wrote a Halloween Special about the then brand-new Government Coalition. Over time their ghoulishness has morphed.

Last year I portrayed the Prime Minister as the conniving Doctor Evil from the Austin Powers movie franchise. However, twelve months down the track he is acting more like a vampire, sucking the life out of public services. Promising to "streamline" and "cut the bureaucracy," draining the life blood out of the country's collective civil servants with victims such as the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development. This ministry is facing a massive \$1.81 billion cut, primarily affecting Kāinga Ora and emergency housing services. This includes scaling down funding for Māori housing initiatives and reducing contracted motels for emergency housing. Then there are agencies such as NIWA and GNS Science having to lay off scientists due to \$903 million in cuts to research funding, impacting on projects addressing climate change and natural disaster resilience.

Last October I naively framed David Seymour as the Scarecrow from the Wizard of Oz. Now he is more like Ghost of King Hamlet. The Act's leader embodying the spirit of free-market extremism, floating through parliament like an apparition, whispering about the evils of taxes and the wonders of deregulation, forever chained to his neoliberal ideology, unable to move on. His budget-slashing ideas might sound good at first—until you realize he's haunting your local schools, hospitals, and transport services, turning them into ghost towns themselves.

Enough of monster mash that is our current Government. Here in Aotearoa we are not big on Halloween, compared to America, where it's all about the costume. From Beetlejuice to Barbie and Ken, the Yanks really get into it. I nearly gave myself a permanent Halloween costume last weekend. I had been fixated on making pulled pork, using Jamie Oliver's one pot wonder pulled pork extravaganza recipe. His first instruction was to turn your oven on to "full whack", which I dutifully did. I then spent the next hour fiddling around making a trivet of onions, apples and sage and rubbing a large pork shoulder roast with spices. By this time the oven was hotter than the Devil's arse. Normally I would ask my wife to place a roast in the oven as the dexterity required is somewhat challenging for me, however she was outside fastidiously water-blasting in a fit of spring-cleaning fervour. I thought (being frivolously impulsive), 'you can do this, Jonny'. Famous last words. I got down on my knees,

opened the door and started to lean towards the oven with the heavy pork roast. Gravity took over. Slow motion kicked in. I'm going to burn my face off! I thought. My face was heading straight for the horizontal bars of the oven rack. The top of my head hit the top of the inner oven, stopping a face plant into the oven rack and gashing my scalp. I flailed around frantically on top of the searingly hot oven door and rolled off. Blood immediately dripped out profusely from my head as scalp wounds tend to do. I bellowed out for my wife, but to no avail, a water-blaster prevailed over me. After slipping and scrabbling around in my own blood on the tile floor, I managed to get up and started to pour running water over my singed hands. Wow. When good times go bad. My wife appeared aghast. Once she had worked out that I hadn't been knifed by an intruder, she patched me up, cleaned up the blood and poured me a gin and tonic.

I was very lucky, I escaped having horizontal burn marks across my face from the oven rack. Unlike our Coalition Government- things could have been a lot worse.

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation