

Title:

UK & World News reviewed by The Bitch! (a weekly column)

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Summary:

Every week The Bitch! passes her beady eye over the news and current events and gives you her opinions. Sometimes funny; sometimes serious, this popular column will often make you question, and maybe re-think, your own values.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Well darlings,

Whoa up, now! This last week in politics has been better than watching one of those loveable old Laurel and Hardy films, hasn't it? That's another fine mess you've got us into, Tony! And another, and another...

In education, after eight years and twelve White Papers that have had schools reeling from one disaster after another, it looks like we're going right back to where we started. I do hope everyone enjoyed that rather bumpy trip around the block. Fun, wasn't it? Education, education, education? It certainly has been!

The ban on smoking rules has got everyone mystified. Neither those for or against a ban seem happy with the result, and nobody seems to be able to explain the rules clearly. Do the little bowls of heavily salted peanuts left nonchalantly on bars, the ones that are really there to entice you to have a free nibble to develop your thirst further, do they qualify as food? They are free to be taken and are not charged for or served, so how does the law stand on these? And how about the little packs of Cheddars, or even crisps, those that come sealed in airtight bags and so cannot be contaminated - are they food in the sense of the law? Do they make the ban compulsory if they are displayed, or nibbled? Will all licensed B & Bs have to stop serving breakfasts to remain within the law if they have a multi-purpose room and wish to permit smoking? Their licensing regulations are very similar to those of a pub landlord and

their rights of refusal are exactly the same - so how do they stand? Ask any two politicians any of these questions and, if you should be lucky enough to get a straight answer, they'll probably give you two different interpretations of the same rule.

In Ireland many landlords are finding ways around their total ban in a desperate attempt to save their businesses. The licensed premises, bars and restaurants, remain no smoking areas according to the letter of the law - but outside, in the gardens and in the car parks, various lean-tos, conservatories, garden shed type erections, and even a few old busses have now been left easily accessible for the smoker to use. They are not designated smoking areas, no-one is told or encouraged to use them, and the no smoking law is not being broken as they do not constitute a part of the licensed premises. It's all a nod and a wink job. The fact that alcoholic drinking is now taking place off of the licensed premises, and may be breaking another law, seems to be of little consequence - nobody appears to be bothered. Will such a "get out" be received here with equally blind and sympathetic eyes? Again, nobody seems to know.

Such a hotch-potch was this law turning into that Tony Blair seemed to wash his hands of it entirely; content in leaving Jack Straw to try and sort it all out. Little wonder the result has been the last straw in absurdity!

That is to say, it was the last straw in absurdity until once more our Tony started wagging his forefinger! Groan, and double-groan! Here we go again! Unlike Iraq, where Saddam Hussein was telling the truth and the investigators failed to find any evidence of weapons of mass destruction either before or after the war, Iran is openly going nuclear, and that coupled with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's outright declaration that Israel should be "wiped off the map" has had many western politicians reeling and wondering what to do about it. It's becoming generally accepted that whatever the UN may say, and any sanctions that it may impose, will hardly do much to solve this fast escalating threat to world peace.

I'm sure this time around we don't need intelligence reports (for what use they are!), or any dossiers - sexed up or not - to tell us what is going on here. Iran, with all that heat and sun in the summer, and sitting on all that oil for the winter and the dull periods, is one of the last places on earth where a nuclear power station would be genuinely needed. Like North Korea (another tinderbox), Iran has bided its time and waited until the West had played its

hand. The war on Iraq has left us with a costly and a no-end-in-sight disaster - a weeping sore that will have us tied up there for years. Everyone with more than two brain cells trying to mate knows that there is no appetite left in either the UK or in America to become embroiled in yet another war. And with both Bush and Blair having lost favour and credibility over the Iraq fiasco, for them to be able to take their countries into battle on a new front is very much an improbability.

So, with our hand played out like the greatest premature ejaculation the world has ever known - we can only wait, embarrassed, to see how the game will finally end. My money is on a surprise by Israel, should the Iranians progress too far with their plans - and that surprise might be another biggest thing the world has ever known! But then that's life isn't it? If you suffer from PE then it can't be that uncommon for someone else to do the banging, can it? Shock and Awe? More like fed-up and sore!

Talking of banging: American research at Baltimore's John Hopkins University has found that Viagra is good for the heart and may prevent heart attacks by counteracting the effect of adrenaline, thereby putting "a brake" on the organ should it attempt to work too hard. It's also been suggested that: "We may not be too far away from taking Viagra one-a-day instead of aspirin." That'll certainly extend the stiff upper lip a bit over here, won't it?

I find this beneficial revelation to be quite strange as it comes only days after other bodies have been calling for the government to force the manufacturers to add warnings to the labels of Viagra (and other impotence drugs) telling users that people have gone blind through using the drug. Do you think it might be some sort of a governmental wheeze to keep the people happy, but in the dark? Shock and Awe? Who said that? Who's there? Who is it? Put the ruddy light on - I've just fallen over a broom! At least, I think it was a broom...

The facts I've found:

Non-arteritic ischemic optic neuropathy, a loss of vision that is frequently irreversible, is one of the most common causes of sudden blindness (especially in older people) with an estimated 1,000 to 6,000 cases a year occurring in America. (I can't find any UK figures for it.) People mostly at risk are those with diabetes and / or heart disease which, as they are also two of the leading causes of impotence, make it hard to prove that the tablets are actually to

blame.

And finally, I don't like what I'm seeing at the Beeb and I bet I'm not alone. Ten foreign language services, with the loss of more than 200 jobs, are to be axed from the BBC World Service in order to fund a new £19million Arabic TV channel that will be broadcast across the Middle East in competition with al-Jazeera. And in further cost-cutting, job losses are soon to be announced in the news gathering department.

Whilst this new TV channel is obviously a good idea, it should not be at the expense of the other services. The broadcasts to be sacrificed are in Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Greek, Hungarian, Kazakh, Polish, Slovak, Slovene and Thai because, we're told, "they have lost their relevance since the end of the Cold War." Really? Well, up until now we've all known that, far from its ideals of being free from both political and commercial influence and answerable only to its viewers and listeners, the World Service of the BBC was basically government propaganda led. However, nobody before now has ever had the balls to come out to say that quite so plainly! As this new TV channel, an obvious portal for propaganda, is likely to have been the idea of the government and not that of the cash-strapped Beeb, I feel that they should fully fund it as an "extra"; not as an "instead of".

The facts I've found:

The BBC motto is: Nation Shall Speak Peace Unto Nation. But is that now only when it is paid to do so by the government?

The BBC World Service HQ is located at Bush House, a central London building that is apparently not named after any American President. Are we absolutely sure of that? You might have imagined that a company that forced Top Cat to become Boss Cat to avoid confusion with a mere feline food product when it screened the cartoon moggie over here would have been sensitive enough to change the name of their Worldwide Services HQ building the day the first Bush popped up as a President, mightn't you?

Above the main Aldwych entrance you can see two imposing figures which represent England and America and between them they hold the torch of human progress above which is the motto "To the friendship of English speaking peoples". A little inappropriate for the use of the building, isn't it? What about the friendship of non-English speaking peoples? Don't they matter?

The BBC Worldwide Service is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and

the grant for 2005/6 is £239million. Now that's what I call impartiality! But I guess that if, as it appears to me lately, the BBC is to all effects exclusively to operate to the pleasure of Blair and Bush then it's only right that they should pay for their initials to be in the corporation's name!

Folks, just keep your eyes on that BBC crest. The day that one of those eagles is moved above the lion, I'm emigrating!

See you all next week...

"The Bitch!" 29/10/05.