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Welcome to **ATTACK!** a two-page occasional publication. Most of **ATTACK!** will be concerned with the holistic curriculum which, if acted on, is a fundamental way to undermine the present undemocratic education system. Don't be discouraged if opportunities to teach holistically are limited, do your best, be a guardian, and act as a witness to this culturally significant and inspiring way of teaching and learning. **ATTACK!** is a partner to <https://networkonnet.wordpress.com>

Attack! 105 Sir Patricio Grinch, Wekiu Tomata, Weary Gardener, and Tugger, the then PM

I think that one of the problems we have with the education galumphs who have proselytised *Tomorrow's Schools* and its anti-democratic philosophy is that because of the damage it has wrought on the fabric of New Zealand society especially the children of the poor, also on its sense of democracy, we have been distracted from recognising what a Snarkian lot they are.

What a Lewis Carroll poem – drawing on ignorance, arrogance, delusion and eventual tragedy – the ludicrous and terrible *Tomorrow's Schools* days would make. And no episode more fitting for the purpose than the one with the cast of Sir Patricio Grinch, Wekiu Tomata, Weary Gardener, and Tugger, the then PM. Seeing for decades we have had to put up with the nonsense *Tomorrow's Schools* has meted out and the party these characters and a cast of hundreds have held out our expense, it's time we got some fun out of it, too.

So I turn to one of the Snarkian-like stalwarts.

Sir Patricio Grinch who, by writing a recent article on Wekiu Tomata in the *Herald* (Wednesday, 28 December) headed **Wekiu Tomata a stand-out performer in education portfolio**, suggests a good place to start because he must be joking.

Let me get this out the way first: Grinchy goes into exaltations of praise at how Tomata brought together the sector leaders along with senior education personnel and it was all sweetness and light, choirs of angels sang, finally soaring into the stratosphere with: 'It was a master stroke'. It might have been that way for you Grinchy from where you sat in the hierarchy, but it was a blight for teachers and children back in the classroom, and a cynical manipulation of the democratic process.

In a posting in which I predicted Parata's resignation two weeks before she resigned, I wrote: Her way of proceeding was a complete unwillingness to consult, to properly negotiate, then to rub it in by using cronies for support – the more incompetent the better, which she had a hand in promoting both within education and the bureaucracy – also utterly craven organisations, some of them big, many miniscule, given a rampantly free say in the irrelevant forums that were Parata's conception of negotiation. This was Parata's way of rubbing her opponents', as she saw them, and teacher organisations', face in it. What crunching joy she got from that.

Spot as many differences as you can between the two accounts and post to Katrina Casey, Deputy Secretary, Sector Enablement and Support: PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140. The winner gets a free trip, accommodation, and a candle-lit dinner with Katrina.

Dear reader, don't wear yourself out guffawing too much at the beginning because I want you to still be there at the end, but Sir Grinchy says: '**Tomata [of all the ministers he had worked with] has been a standout performer and in my view, has been quite extraordinary in the way she has handled her portfolio.**'

To me, the only extraordinary thing about the way she handled her portfolio were the circumstances of her leaving it.

Grinchy, Grinchy, Grinchy – high-heels licking smarminess has led you to miss the point – and that was the point at which your stand-out performer stood-down.

Tomata is married to a Weary Gardner, but not as weary, it seems, as characterised by Tugger, the then PM.

Tugger said, in trying to explain Tomata's sudden resignation: 'I think it's a combination of, she came to the job and she's done a lot of what she planned – you never get the job done, but she's done a lot.'

Please note Patricio that Tugger only said 'she's done a lot' – and nothing there even close to Tomata being a 'standout performer' or 'extraordinary'.

Tugger continues: 'But Tomata's husband, Weary Gardener – who's a great man – but he's in his early 70s, and he's had a couple of health issues recently.'

Early 70s, my goodness, he's had great run; I hope there is an old folks home close by.

But Tomata was having none of it: 'My family, including Weary, are hale and hearty.'

Tomata's resignation, as interpreted by her, seems to have brought the philosopher out in Tugger.

'I think the prime minister was referring to the fact we are all ageing.'

(My god! The depth – it must have taken its toll because he was to resign shortly after.)

Tomata said she wasn't disappointed at the PM's comments 'and no apology was sought or needed.'

Translated that means she was highly ticked off.

'I don't think,' she continues, 'it is a major at all, and certainly Weary is completely relaxed about it.'

Patricio, translated that means that it could well be a major because, as she points out, she is still thinking about it; and in relation to Weary it is unclear whether he is now stretched out in a state of complete relaxation at that old folks home we had hoped was nearby or collapsed in a heap following a frenzy of pulse-taking at home.

Patricio – there is something going on here you bozo.

A tiff, if you know what I mean?

If we had an anywhere decent media they would have they would have been on to it like a dog down a rabbit hole.

I could suggest a lot of scenarios but they all add up to Tugger and Tomata having a serious falling out making your smarmy, fantastically absurd tribute to Tomata heroically wrongheaded and misplaced, revealing your chasmic-deep lack of curriculum understanding – it is something of a tragedy that your administrative talents weren't used to better ends. (Put it this way Patricio: Basil Kings was a friend of mine – he would have been pleased with the way integrated schools are such a settled part of the education system, but horrified at what is happening in all schools; a situation to which you have contributed.)

'Tomata,' you said, 'made it clear from the outset that Maori and Pacific students did not deserve to be destined to a life of under-achievement and this view spread to become very contagious with the leaders in the sector, as well as most teachers.'

Oh dear what a card!

For your information Sir Patricio Grinch:

As said above, two weeks before Tomata resigned, I predicted she was about to resign and sent out a posting saying so.

'We have watched each other for five years like hawks, I think with this flutter of her wings I have got it right. I predict her imminent resignation.'

Of Tomata I said:

Those in education will recognise what is happening as the neoliberal tragedy-go-round: neoliberal policies are imposed and of course fail because they are about meeting adult ideological needs, and of the most devious kind, those of neoliberal politicians – not about children's needs in all their complexity – and that failure is being blamed on schools which is then used to justify even more repressive neoliberal policies. I give no quarter in my judgement of Hekia because she has, indeed, been the worst minister of education ever. She deserves no sympathy for her appalling behaviour; like Anne Tolley, she has been used as a cover for English's neoliberal drive and Key's deep hostility to public education – but Hekia did some even more unforgivable things and I stand by every word of my criticism of her. A top academic said surely Lockwood

Smith was worse; no I said he was a bumbler, more old-style conservative as against someone with an unrelenting anti-teacher, power-hungry obsession.

Hekia knows, except for some academic and principal cronies, she won't be missed, and that she will go down in education as the worst minister of education ever, unparalleled in never allowing a fact go by without seriously interfering with it.

Deep down she knows history will condemn her: the most telling condemnation being her betrayal of Maori children with her pernicious 18% rhetoric; and the mayhem created by her leadership style, locked as she was into an inability, because of her personality, to introduce education change, even in the rare circumstance where it had the potential to do good, without revelling in the power of imposition and thereby extinguishing any possibility of it.

What a five years of crashing failure! The 2012 attempt to increase class sizes which, if successful, would have devastated children's learning, especially children of the poor and children with special needs; the idea of performance pay – and the back down; charter schools even though she now hints she is opposed to them; and oh my god! Christchurch – this was bureaucratic sadism; the insistence on large open spaces which teachers are struggling to make work and the towering administration buildings which are a symbolic declaration of hierarchy; the reduction in real terms of primary school funding and, within that, funding being wasted on harmful impositions and bureaucratic-heavy schemes; the badmouthing and scapegoating of schools, especially primary schools; the incompetent and haphazard way technology has been introduced; the official support for intensified phonics; the dumping of successful Maori programmes like Te Kotahitanga; the bureaucratic cluster idea, sponsored by the Treasury, which is struggling to get off the ground and is proving hugely expensive to administer; the drop in achievement in international testing regimes (for what they are worth); the revelations about the drop in achievement as revealed in the machinations around NCEA; the degradation of professional development; and now a return to bulk funding (though it is sure to be withdrawn) and performance pay; and a form of funding special needs which will leave tens of thousands of children unsupported; and underlining all this the failure to genuinely lift Maori achievement.

Sir Patricio Grinch: through your long and sustained support of the *Tomorrow's Schools* philosophy you have helped steal our beautiful primary school holistic culture.

As was said in *Snark*, the overriding theme was overweening *ambition* ... once set in motion, in innocence or malevolence, for good or for evil, it carried all before it on a pitiable journey. And that ladies and gentlemen sums up the tragic story of *Tomorrow's Schools* and the one about Sir Patricio Grinch, Wekiu Tomata, Weary Gardener, and Tugger, the then PM.

