

A close-up photograph of a woman with brown hair, wearing a red button-down shirt. She has her hands pressed against her eyes, and her expression is one of intense distress or anger. Her mouth is slightly open, showing her teeth. The background is plain white.

**A Week in Politics That Stole Our
Rights and Changed Our Nation
Forever**

Hatchard Report

Dr. Guy Hatchard

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This week, Judith Collins, Minister for Science and Technology, and Chris Luxon, Prime Minister, decided to [introduce a policy change with a Laurel and Hardy double act](#) on Twitter full of bonhomie and laughter designed to mask a sinister intent. Deregulation of biotechnology will contain provisions that take away our basic human rights of choice. They will change the face of our small island nation forever (yes, forever).

According to their vaudeville performance, biotech deregulation will enable amazing scientists to mitigate climate change, improve our health, boost our horticulture, and grow our economy. **Collins effused “it is so great to be part of this government”.** **Luxon agreed, calling it “an amazing day”.** As he sees it, some laws formulated in 1996 to protect consumers make no sense in 2024 because they prevent incredibly smart biotech scientists from releasing their products into the environment without having to go through public scrutiny.

Luxon added “We’re going to make sure we do it safely, don’t worry about that.” (at this point Luxon appeared to be channelling Jacinda Ardern). It would be easy to poke fun, but the consequences are too far reaching and serious for levity. The 1996 laws do not prevent biotech food products from reaching the market as Luxon implied. Instead, they require that gene altered ingredients be labelled as such. In other words, Luxon is taking away our right of consumer choice, our right to know what we are eating. In the near future “*incredibly smart scientists*” will be deciding for us.

Aside from our right to know, there is one other very important reason for the 1996 law. It involves one word “*traceability*”. If novel gene-altered food substitutes are not labelled, there will be no way for anyone to find out if they are causing illness. Compulsory food labelling has been a fundamental part of our global food safety system since it was first introduced in 1913. Bypassing this principle is a key strategy of biotech marketing for the simple reason that consumers don’t want biotech foods and manufacturers don’t want to face lawsuits. Thus in one stroke Luxon’s government has taken us back into the 19th century world of food adulteration, in his words: “*amazing*”.

Watching the video of Luxon and Collins I was forcibly struck by how far out of touch they are with reality. They appeared to me as a pair of simpletons smirking and chuckling with glee as they thought they could pass off iron pyrites as gold. We are still in the shadow of a pandemic era where incredibly *intelligent scientists* (???) were given free rein and funding to develop a deadly virus and then a botched vaccine that killed rather than cured.

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Luxon and Collins were part of a parliament that forced it on us as a nation with promises of safety and efficacy. Currently, we have [a rate of excess deaths more than 10% above the long term trend](#). Yet here they are again with the same meaningless mantra: *“don't worry, we will do it safely”*. Anyone who swallows that needs to have their head examined. But this time the ante has been upped, if Luxon's government has its way, we will be swallowing it without knowing we are.

The current National led government aspires to a Thatcherite ideology whose narrative no longer fits the facts on the ground, not even close.

Our birth rate, [along with those of other western nations](#), has fallen so low that our population is no longer renewing itself, not even close. Before long, there won't be enough youthful workers to keep the economy going, yet David Seymour is obsessed with the idea that [poor people need to stop having children](#).

Our health service is in crisis because [too many people are falling sick](#) with heart disease, cancers, and other illnesses in numbers that dwarf previous trends, but the government believes this is [due to administrative inefficiency](#).

[The number of people suffering long term disability is ballooning](#), but the government believes this is due to malingering.

These are all recognisable Thatcherite tropes, and they no longer fit the reality of social statistics. We are in the midst of a health crisis engineered by biotechnology. Our government wants to go further down that road by removing the very few safeguards that we have left. As we know very well by now, biotechnology edits can spread without limit and they can never be recalled. Luxon wants to deny us our right to know and he is laughing about it to our face on Twitter. We need to raise our voices and push back.

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