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06 October 2005

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**Hate-mail writers are stagnant critters. So much about the world offends them or makes them fearful, and they deal with that by pushing offensiveness to its limits.**

No new ideas make it into their heads, and no bitterness is ever assuaged. Theirs is not an enviable lot. They seriously lack laughs.

The most virulent, I find, are Christians and animal-rights supporters. Somehow they twist positive feelings into dark, nasty knots, which they fling through the mail system, hoping to ruin someone else's day.

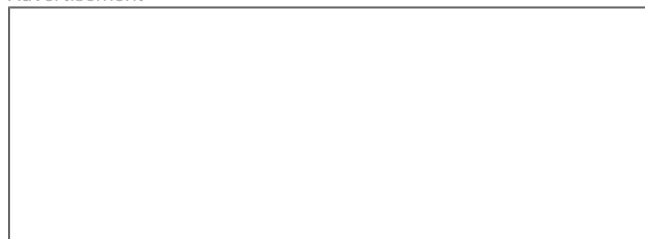
Many people love animals but hate human beings. Are Christians but bags of misery. Why don't they just eat chocolate or gamble? Maybe these are the people mind-altering drugs were designed for. Maybe they'd make the poor beggars smile momentarily in a bleak sort of way, before getting back to stamping on snails.

I was struck by a recent photo of an Upper Hutt man who had bombarded Wellington's Muslim community with hate mail. Craig Dalton Lindsay, 53, was found guilty of harassing women by sending offensive and insulting mail to them, knowing that it would make them fear for their safety.

Typically, for hate-mail writers, he'd wanted to remain anonymous and have his name suppressed.

I've always thought the urge to hurt others under the cloak of anonymity is sinister and vile. It's a hair's breadth away from blackmail, another evil that thrives in hidden places, which is why I'm glad he got the exposure he deserved. There should be more of it.

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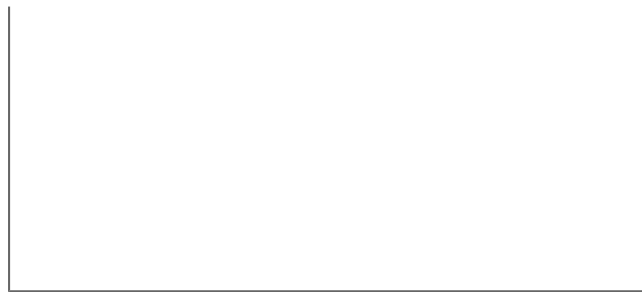
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There should be a register of hate- mail writers posted at every post office, with photos attached, so that they are known for their works.

Otherwise, like woodlice, they'll continue to breed under old bricks and outdoor pot plants, and we don't need more of them.

Lindsay got six months jail for what a judge called "unrestrained and hate- laden" letters to Muslims. He illustrated his works with pictures of pigs, and sometimes enclosed a piece of pork or ham for added impact. Confronted by the police, he couldn't explain why he'd done it, although I thought it a bad omen that he reportedly had a tidy home. This is unnatural for a man living alone, and suggests he had much too much spare time to think of mischief.

The average man longs only to live in a fug of stale sock smell, and never washes his frying pan or cleans his loo. This is how we can be sure that they're well-adjusted.

Most hate-mail writers, in my experience, are male, and they must share Lindsay's neatness problem. I never open a neatly lettered hand-written letter without trepidation, and hold it at arm's length in case a spider jumps out.

Lately I've copped a few from Exclusive Brethren women, an interesting aberration from the usual pattern, and one which cheered me up immensely. Most of them signed their names, too.

I'd written about Don Brash's contact with the Exclusive Brethren, and its implications before the general election; how the Brethren had had meetings with him about their concerns, and how the Brethren (never the Sistren, you'll notice) had helped the National Party with its campaigning, although they don't actually vote.

They'd wanted to be anonymous supporters, but were exposed.

I'd commented, too, on the typical appearance of Exclusive Brethren woman, in the headscarves and 1950s-style frocks, which make them so conspicuous, along with their lack of lipstick, and their reluctance to use tweezers to good effect as they age.

This riled the women immensely, and I am rather pleased about that.

Heck, they are women, after all, and commendably concerned about their appearance. They are also as nasty as the most redoubtable atheist, although seeking blessings from the Almighty; and whereas I'd described them as a distinctive group, they replied with personalised abuse about myself in particular –

they take particular offence at my haircut. Despite being exclusive, in other words, they are typical hate-mailers. They can't bear anyone to see things differently, and think abuse is persuasive.

Dear Brethren: let the girls lighten up. Buy them some less conspicuous frocks, discourage them from wearing those awful old-lady sandals this summer, and let them sweeten their mouths with a spot of lippy. Nasty letter writing is always a cry for help, and rather sad.

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