

I said in a story published on July 20 that the Left is using the *News of the World* scandal to attack the non-Left press, and particularly the Murdoch media, worldwide. As my story was being published, the Labor Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard -- like Obama a former leading light of the student radical Left -- launched into the most shameless and disgraceful attack on the press that her country has ever seen.

[Gillard claimed](#) that News Ltd., the Australian arm of Murdoch's media empire, had some "hard questions" to answer in light of the UK phone hacking scandal. She declined, however, to say what those questions were.

There has been no suggestion that News Ltd. or its personnel have been involved in any misconduct. There is nothing to suggest that the standards of News Ltd. publications are lower than any others. If the company's only "crime" is criticizing the Labor government, then perhaps Gillard should be answering to some "hard questions" about her own conduct.

Quite obviously, for the Prime Minister to make such comments and insinuations about a private commercial organization -- a major employer throughout the country -- without supporting facts or evidence is a serious matter.

To the best of my knowledge, Gillard's attack on News Ltd. is unprecedented in recent Australian history. It suggests either overweening arrogance or panic. With the government's popularity at an all-time low, and with even Gillard's two Labor predecessors turning against her, panic is the more likely explanation.

Australia is fairly undemonstrative about its traditions of liberty, but, like America, it has them in its bones. A snide attack like this by the Prime Minister on the press is simply foreign to modern traditions. I can recall very few remotely comparable incidents in recent years -- that is, outside of Chavez's Venezuela. At the very least, her attack demonstrates an irresponsible attitude to the well-being of Murdoch's shareholders and employees.

The Murdoch press has grown into the principal forum in Australia for non-Left commentators. It serves an important function. The Left is well-entrenched in all the other big-city dailies, from the *Sydney Morning Herald* to the *Melbourne Age* and the *Canberra Times*, to, of course, the public Australian Broadcasting Commission. All of these outlets broadly and predominantly support Gillard's proposed tax on carbon-dioxide emissions, which has emerged as the major issue in the next Federal election, and which Labor and the Greens hope to use (Obama-style) for a socialist transformation of the economy.

The chief critic of the carbon-dioxide tax has been -- Surprise! Surprise! -- the Murdoch press, the most influential organs of which are the up-market national daily *The Australian* and the *Sydney Telegraph*. *Telegraph* features editor Tim Blair runs [one of the most popular weblogs](#) in Australia, which satirizes the Left and has been keeping up a running commentary on the carbon-dioxide tax. Blair's very name appears enough to drive much of the Left into a frenzy, as evidenced by the handful of weblogs that exist solely to attack him.

The [Australian Greens Party](#) is already [calling for an inquiry](#) into Murdoch's news operations (similar to the [British Liberal Democrats](#), who are [hopping on the bandwagon](#) in the UK) and the shape of the international campaign by the Left against Murdoch grows more obvious and undisguised. Obviously Fox and the U.S. Murdoch titles will be coming into their crosshairs next.

Meanwhile, a sentence leapt at me from the pages of the London *Daily Telegraph*: "After a year, Lord Leveson will recommend how the press should be regulated and advise on the future conduct of relations between politicians and the press." What is, objectively, a relatively minor scandal over alleged (and remember *alleged*) hacking by a few reporters of a defunct, down-market paper is developing into an international battle for the future of liberty.

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