

Politics, health, and justice are intertwined

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I support Delamothe's editorial and the point made by several respondents that to try to ignore politics is itself deeply political because it allows other views to go unchallenged.¹ ² Your pages should reflect a diversity of opinion. But perhaps the clearest bias of a journal concerned with health should be towards the poorest of society, not only because they usually have the lowest life expectancy but because they are also likely to have the weakest voice.³

Health generally is embedded in social circumstances, and that relates not only to the division, but to the size, of the pie. However, public health has rarely been able to go beyond pointing to larger issues such as poverty, economic globalisation, and lack of political will.⁴

An ideological and political debate rages in the world, with enormous consequences to human health and wellbeing. These include the runaway epidemic of HIV/AIDS, famine in part caused by the loss of farming expertise as a whole generation of farmers sicken and die, and a persistent unwillingness by wealthy countries to keep their numerous promises for a fairer world, whether these relate to reducing hunger, funding the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, or eliminating nuclear weapons.

There is an opportunity to narrow this ideological divide. The genie of technology and information is out of the bottle. Globalisation

has drawn us so close together that the welfare of the developed world is no longer best assured by maintaining misery in the developing world. Convergence of these two ideologies may yet save us from a future riven by hatred, revenge, and the perennial fear of terrorism.⁵

Colin D Butler *postdoctoral fellow*

National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University, Canberra 0200, Australia
colin.butler@anu.edu.au

¹ Delamothe T. How political should a general medical journal be? *BMJ* 2002;325:1431-2. (21 December.)

² Electronic responses. How political should a general medical journal be? *bmj.com* 2002. bmj.com/cgi/eletters/325/7378/1431 (accessed 3 Apr 2003).

³ Chambers R. *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last*. London: Intermediate Technology Development Group, London, 1997.

⁴ Mann JM. Leadership is a global issue. *Lancet* 1997;350:23 (suppl iii).

⁵ Butler CD. Inequality, global change and the sustainability of civilisation. *Glob Change Hum Health* 2000;1:156-72.

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