

## Free Speech in NZ, RIP

By Paul Collits, Quadrant Online, 5 September 2018

Australians who gaze across the Pacific at America and its First Amendment can only feel short-changed, thoughts of Bill Leak and police charging promoters to protect free speech from thugs coming readily to mind. Look at New Zealand, however, and know that things there are even worse

Many Australians will by now know of [the recent happenings in Auckland](#) and the “un-platforming” of “far right” YouTubers Lauren Southern and Stefan Molyneux. These scary Canadians had [the gall to visit sleepy New Zealand](#), seeking to spread a little debate and, apparently, angst.

One can only guess at the back-of-house pressures brought to bear on the poor old venue manager in Auckland who flipped, having initially offered Southern and Molyneux a venue at which to speak, hat-tipping free speech as he went. Then it was all off, as the now quivering venue manager succumbed to the forces of power in our society. The non-elected celebrity who “governs” New Zealand had her say, naturally, presuming to speak for all of us here apparently when she said that [“we New Zealanders” don’t like this sort of thing](#).

More recently, though, and perhaps less well known to Australians, has been the un-platforming of a former NZ National politician by a New Zealand university. The politician is Don Brash, the university Massey, and its vice-chancellor (who made the decision to have Brash uninvited to speak on campus) is none other than an Australian mediocrity by the name of [Jan Thomas](#) — my old boss, in fact. She another of those massively overpaid, glorified bureaucrats who now run bloated, over-funded, corporatised centres of non-learning and non-debate throughout the West.

Brash is a former leader of the National Party and of the Act Party and, to boot, a former governor of the NZ Reserve Bank. He was invited by the politics club at Massey to speak about the National Party. His crime is his more recent leadership of an organisation called [Hobson’s Pledge](#), whose vision is, per its web site:

*... a society in which all citizens have the same rights, irrespective of when we or our ancestors arrived.*

This “far right” entity which basically refuses to bow and scrape before the gods of Waitangi (whose “principles”, incidentally, were actually created in the 1980s, not in 1840 as many believe) seeks to push back against the separatism — indeed, as might be argued, against the quasi apartheid that exists in quite a bit of New Zealand society, public life and governance. Out among the Kiwi deplorables, many people would think like Brash on this topic, but would never, ever say it. Think Pauline Hanson with even stranger vowels, only here is someone who also ran the Reserve Bank! A serious individual, one might think.

But of course Brash is persona non grata in polite, politically correct New Zealand circles. And, trust me, this is indeed a politically correct country. For an indication of just how politically correct, spare a moment to watch TV talking head Paddy Gower’s encounter with Southern and Molyneux.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCv1glJx5b4>

The Massey vice-chancellor, in her wisdom and having listened to voices on campus, decided that Maori staff members in particular might not be up for Brash's visit, even though it was not compulsory for anyone to attend his talk, which was not even about Maori rights and privileges.

There is a huge irony in this. In view of the just-below-the-surface grumpiness of many Kiwis about many things Australian (see under "banks", "flags", "adopting famous Kiwis as Australians", the "underarm incident", and so on), one can only wonder how they feel about being told by an Australian import who they can and cannot hear. Even New Zealand's fearless leader has said – despite her own over-the-top comments on Southern and Molyneux – that Massey's decision to un-platform Brash is not the New Zealand way! Brash's successor as Act Party leader has called on Thomas to resign as vice-chancellor. For the record, I am no fan of the libertarian Act Party or of its current leader, who is driving the current push in New Zealand to create euthanasia rights).

And this has happened not a month after Thomas gave three cheers for free speech on campus. Universities, she said, were places of free speech and debate, just not hate speech. The term "hate speech", like "alt right", "Islamophobe" and "climate denier", is a classic example of the use of the standard leftist meme, where certain terms only need to be stated in order to shut down the conversation and silence opponents. Thomas' take on Brash was that his views were "close to hate speech", therefore *verboden* on her campus. Adern showed the same attitude to Southern and Molyneux.

Certainly free speech gets trumped in these circumstances. But what the left actually achieves through the routine use of memes and the support of goons (*aka* useful idiots) in the public media, government instrumentalities and universities is to create their own political space in the sensible, "liberal" centre and to cast those with "other" views on contentious subjects like mass migration, Islam, refugees and globalism out on the kooky fringe. Again, let me cite alleged journalist Paddy Gower, who de-briefed fellow small-screen "news" people on his Southern/Molyneux encounter. Adhering to at least tenet of decent journalism, Gower concedes the truth that his guests are much smarter than he before basking in his fellow panelists' admiration for his interruptions and refusal to let them make a point.

<https://youtu.be/oTSSmLySzpc>

Once these folks are so placed, then it becomes possible, even easy, to play the hate speech card and to be seen as reasonable in their curtailment of free speech. Throw into the mix the implied threat of violence, generally created by initiating a whirlwind of social media blather, and hey presto, we have a cancellation. This is, indeed, the new Alinsky playbook, updated in the age of instant mass communication and fake news.

The use of memes and goons is especially noteworthy in the New Zealand context, and in particular in relation to the recent non-platforming controversies. Some background might be useful here.

There very few right-of-centre voices or nodes of activity in New Zealand, Brash and his organization notwithstanding. The National Party is a shadow of even the LINO who run the Coalition in Australia. John Key was, and is, a rich wet. (Key replaced Brash as National leader in 2006). The former's very competent but far from ideological National-led Government owed more of its success to [Bill English](#) and [Stephen Joyce](#), rather than Key, who favoured vanity projects (the [change-the-flag debacle](#)) and virtue signalling (gay marriage, of course) over conservative values. He loved schmoozing with Obama and Turnbull. Still does.

There is no Abbott, no Hanson, no Bernardi in New Zealand. Nor are there voices and strategic nodes on the right in the New Zealand media, which is very thin in ability and narrow in worldview. There is no Alan Jones. No Andrew Bolt. No Michael Smith. New Zealand's public broadcaster is a joke, consisting of mostly talk radio (no television, mercifully) and goons stringing together memes they have acquired and learned from international leftist sisters and brothers or from easily accessible overseas mainstream media outlets and feeds (often the ABC). There is certainly no Bill Leak here to tar and feather leftist canards through cartoon humour, only tedious and unfunny jibers at what they perceive as a "right wing world". All the expected targets are there – Australian racism, climate change denial, xenophobia and (of course) Trump!

New Zealanders, or at least their audible voices in politics and the media, simply do not "get" Trump. Having little understanding of the nuances and drivers of American politics beyond the standard MSM talking points, they are led to perceive some far right nutter on the verge of destroying the planet. New Zealand's liberalerati are simply appalled by Trump. (Of course, Kiwis are not alone here, but they seem especially dumbfounded).

A peaceful little country at the end of the earth consumed by its own affairs, achievements and virtue as a liberal, open, welcoming society perhaps might not be expected to be greatly engaged with the world — a world of trouble indeed. Nor might one expect Kiwis to be actively engaged with the world of ideas, for the same reasons of general contentment with their lot.

But in view of the narrow, very thinly based and stifled media and intelligentsia here, where memes go unargued, even undetected, and where the goons control what gets said and not said and where the examined life is often not chosen, one does feel quite depressed. Especially when a highly respected figure holding quite sane and defensible views that are shared by many in his country cannot even traipse onto a university campus to give a talk. And all because an imported university bureaucrat spouted a meme about hate speech. In New Zealand, alas, that was enough to see the further scuttling of free speech.