

burn things down, can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. The task huge, let's not pretend otherwise. But the prize is also massive. Survival is no small thing, but beyond that is a world of potential where hierarchy is abolished and everyone can thrive. Building mass movements, rioting or setting things on fire is frowned on by many, but history shows it works – and it might also be the therapy we all need.

We can't conjure up scary, assertive, mass movements overnight but, in the face of current horrors, those who reject them as an aspiration should be laughed out of the room. The immediate task is to create spaces, events and activities that are free from the state and money. People need to experience anti-capitalist activity, and be educated to understand that this is what they are experiencing. Do small things now, and celebrate them, knowing that they are not full solutions in themselves, but offer respite and relief, and are necessary training for building broad resistance to capitalism.

The danger is, having suffered this shit for a long time, we could continue to do so. As I said at the start of this essay, we are a hardy bunch. We can't expect people to at some point reach breaking point and rise up against 'the system'. People need to be inspired by participating in something better.

Discard the fake and retain the real. Things outside of capitalism already supply our best moments in life. The things that spark joy exist and can be enlarged and strengthened.

Heaven is other people. Grow community, shrink capitalism.

"Under the loudly-voiced assumption that the people at last are in the saddle and that democracy is triumphant, the masses are bound to the chariot wheels of money as they never were before. The world rings with fine sentiments, but those who mouth them have no thought of being held responsible and always it is tacitly understood that money is to speak the final word"
– William C. Owen.

shitegeist!

Sam Buchanan

Thanks to Sheitgeist, a Wellington “trash rock miscreants” band back in the 2010s for inspiring the title of this essay.

Design and cover graphic by the author.

William C. Owen quotes from *Land and Liberty: Anarchist Influences in the Mexican Revolution*, Cienfuegos Press 1977.

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problems they are too scared or lazy to address themselves. The best thing they could do is to get the fuck out of the way and allow young people some real power. Which they'll never do. The only thing young people owe most of the older generation is a kick in the teeth.

There are three things older people, with lived experience, can do. Most importantly, to trumpet our admission of failure loudly and bluntly. Nothing can advance until the left acknowledges how badly it has fucked up and how little influence it holds as a consequence. Secondly, to present a history of radical thought and practice, and of community, that is not merely nostalgic and filtered to remove the bits the middle class aren't comfortable with – the confrontation, sacrifices and casualties. Thirdly, we need to teach practical skills, not just theory. Information isn't power if we just have highly informed people with no capacity to take action. Informing people of how screwed up everything is without building the competencies they need to do something about it is tantamount to abuse.

Young people need to be clear that whenever they engage with older activists, they are dealing with losers. There's nothing wrong with being a loser, but there is something wrong with a person who won't admit it. Without an acknowledgment of failure we will just repeat the same cycles of ineffectual activity, disillusionment and stagnation that have exemplified the last couple of decades.

Never doubt that a huge movement of thoughtful, committed, citizens motivated by a vision of a better world, and willing to

the tools for our liberation have already been invented, and don't need to re-invented, just exhumed. Too often, each generation has to reinvent those tools – thinking they've discovered something new and missing out on much of the understanding that has been previously developed.

Old people (like me) should be treated as the mining industry treats the planet – as a resource from which for anything useful can be sieved out and extracted before being discarded and ignored.

There is much intellectual wailing and gnashing of teeth amongst ageing middle class leftists over impending economic and ecological disasters, but rather than address these with the necessary energy, they focus on renovating their kitchens, presumably getting things nicely sorted in order to endure the apocalypse in comfort.



First Dog on the Moon by Andrew Marilton. Date unknown.

A common excuse for inactivity amongst the middle class left is to praise young people, pretending to be impressed by their energy and intelligence, but actually just dumping them with the

The ability of ordinary people to carry on as normal, in the face of a totally fucked up world and the current industrial-grade lunacy and bestiality of those in authority, is a testimony to our stoicism. Humans are hardy little vermin.

But it's also a testament to our idiocy. Watching the world, I experience the same mix of exasperation and astonishment as when I'm working in mountains and seeing hopelessly equipped and incompetent hikers doggedly advancing up steep slopes in freezing winds and rain. Not turning back is very stupid, but their lack of being dead is still impressive.



From *Judge Dredd, the Cursed Earth Saga*, in *2000AD*, 1978, by John Wagner and Alan Grant.

The declining quality of the ordinary

Looking at the world we now live in, it's hardly surprising that instability, the requirement to make choices from a vast selection of bad options, and falling economic rewards has, impacts on mental health, especially amongst young people. Yet the greatest indictment of capitalism is that even the wealthy are miserable.

The process of enshittification is obvious to everyone. The mediocrity of AI text and graphics, the brief lifespan of can openers, on-line help desks that don't help and handles that fall off, all waste our time and diminish our quality of life. My friends who run opshops grumble about the quality of modern clothes as the material reality of fast fashion trumps the intellectual fashion of 'sustainability'.

can pretend to be doing something while not exposing itself to any danger. The state seldom cracks down on the harmless.

But there are signs of increasing interest in radical ideas AND radical practice amongst young people. The pro-Palestine solidarity movement has done an impressive job of keeping that issue alive and maintaining activity beyond the 'here today, gone tomorrow' protests of recent years, even though the actual impact on government policy has so far been minimal.

And while there's much going on in Te Ao Māori that I probably don't understand, I have sense of a move away from efforts to engage the Pākehā establishment, in favour of strengthening their own communities and falling back on their own resources.

As any colonised people know, history is an important tool in the struggle against an eternal present that pretends to be unique and without ancestry. But to be useful history needs to tell us stories that aren't about the rich, the state, the powerful, the fossilised institutions, and the spectacular, or even about radical individuals, but about our communities, ideas and the extraordinary power and potential of the ordinary.

The present situation isn't something unique caused by social media, AI, or a unique characteristic of the boomer generation, it's the normal situation of life under capitalism, just continually getting slightly worse as capitalism progresses. Rebranding old problems as new ones is one of the ways we are kept permanently off-balance. Our supposedly new problems have pedigree – as far back as the 1960s people were talking about technology ushering in 'the age of anxiety' and the potential for computer databases to cause a demise of privacy. Many of

Glimmers of hope and a few suggestions

It's not all doom and gloom. At the flaxroots, there is a rising resistance to the tedium and meaninglessness of work, culture and entertainment produced within capitalism. This isn't always noticed by political observers as they are focused on content rather than form.

Back in the 1960s Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan stated 'The medium is the message' – meaning the form of the media impacted more strongly on us than the content. McLuhan noted that the way information is transmitted affects our cognition and the way we structure society. The invention of books meant absorbing information, a collective activity in an oral culture, could now be individualised. Broadcast television and mass produced newspapers resulted in a collective experience, even if consumed individually. Today's electronic media creates choice, but is atomising.

Taking this idea more broadly, the most genuine anti-capitalist spaces are those where the form is anti-capitalist, even if the content is apolitical. Zinefests or a screening of home made horror films in a community hall are empowering, creative and disrupt the claim that capitalism can best supply our needs, whereas a copy of *Das Kapital* sold in a shop for profit is just another commodity.

Likewise, sitting passively listening to a leftist lecture is merely intellectual entertainment or distraction unless you can put that information to use. And much of the information the left produces is not much practical use, nor is it intended to be. By indulging in discourse free of real world consequences, the left

Philip Pullman, in his fantasy novel *The Rose Field*, brings up the old alchemists' hypothetical 'alkahest', a 'universal solvent' believed to be able to dissolve anything and reduce it to its constituent elements. Pullman uses 'alkahest' as a metaphor for neo-liberal capitalism, which breaks down all social and spiritual bonds, reducing people to miserable, unimaginative and atomised individuals, unconnected to any society, tradition or environment. (NB: It's a clunky plot device and certainly not his best book. Great metaphor though.)

The neo-liberal project – replacing social bonds with ones mediated by money – results in the normalisation of crisis. For most people it is the creation of a perpetual state of 'shock and bore'.

From the perspective of the rich, the 'polycrisis' – which is really just rebranding the issues that always arise in a class society – not only creates many money making possibilities, it also stymies any opposition. The term 'polycrisis' is an example of complexification – making problems appear too complicated and multi-faceted to understand, let alone deal with ('leave it to the experts').

The old idea of a career is gone. The market in desirable skills is ever-changing and unpredictable. Younger people are growing up in a world of increased choice, but with limited and unreliable data to base those choices on. Consumerism allows you to access a vast range of entertainment, products, 'labour saving' devices but the cost is your independence and sense of achievement. And even the products up for purchase aren't what they used to be. The market empowers you to

choose from a myriad of junk and dead ends in your favourite shade of beige.

The unholy alliance of technology and capitalist economics, that extends our ability to access information while doing nothing to help us adequately process it or act on it, inevitably takes a toll on people. People are under pressure to know more, to be informed, and to upskill, just to function normally in society. Jobs require a set of ancillary skills – from typing, internet proficiency, health and safety, communications – which used to be specific roles in themselves. even recreation often requires a high level of planning, booking and communications. Very little of the oversupply of information is improving our ability to navigate and control our lives.

It's accepted that news and social media companies deliberately highlight the negative and frightening in order to draw people in, and that this causes stress and anxiety. Actual journalism is collapsing as the economic model it was based on – revenue from sprinkling actual information amongst advertising – no longer functions. But instead of the response that a healthy community would offer in dealing with abusive people, either to have those behaving irresponsibly sacked, or, in more traditional communities, sitting them down and telling them in no uncertain terms that if they carry on hurting people somebody will beat the crap out of them, we are told it's up to us to do the work to manage our own exposure to their toxicity.

Under capitalism, 'mental health' is a con trick that pretends people can be individually adjusted to live happily in an unhealthy society. When it comes to such things as climate anxiety or other

the world that characterises the elite living sheltered lives. Being out of touch with normal people, and elevated for their PR skills, obedience or lack of imagination, leaves them unable to consider doing anything other than maintaining the status quo.

Despite facing an obviously criminal ruling class, the left not only insists on working within the law, but on maintaining the rules of decorum as well. While the right behaves as if in a drunken brawl, the left acts as if hosting a formal garden party where the main attraction is tea and a cucumber sandwich. No wonder hardly anybody shows up.

Academia, ensconced in the comfort of the university, retains a stranglehold on left thinking, and offers careers to keep potentially wayward youth off the streets. Some of this work has a place as part of the whole, but a lot of academic effort amounts to digging up the decomposing body of the historic left in order to prop it up in front of a podium, put an arm around its shoulder and take a selfie. It's a bonus of focusing on irrelevant history that you can say whatever you like as the dead can't argue their case and nobody much cares anyway.

Too much leftist energy is spent pursuing respectability. Worthiness, academic value and politeness dominate at the expense of the more essential leftist values: rebelliousness, playfulness and the right to be naughty. We don't have time to be polite, nor is politeness much fun.

million people to facilitate military parades and celebrations of the state, unwittingly created a space enabling mass protest. Nowadays you need to make a reservation and go through a security check to enter the square.

Shared spaces – town squares, community halls, libraries – are defunded or redesigned to make them less communal. Much of this process isn't deliberate, but the designers are genuinely oblivious to the needs of people as a group, only attending to their needs as individuals. Spaces that people can take control over and adapt to their needs are out of fashion in favour of spaces designed for specific activities. It's not just your brain they are after, they want your physical space as well.

“Our time presents a unique opportunity for learning by means of humour – a perceptive or incisive joke can be more meaningful than platitudes lying between two covers”
– Marshall McLuhan

Politically, the left has responded to our current crop of mad emperors, ditherers and unclothed kings and in the worst possible way – taking them seriously. While there are serious consequences resulting from having lunatics in charge, the individuals themselves ought to be met with scorn and ridicule. Hannah Arendt coined the term “the banality of evil” to describe Nazi genocide manager Adolph Eichmann, a shallow and “terrifyingly normal” bureaucrat who found obeying orders easier than thinking. We are dealing with a lesser version, the terrifyingly mediocre – they may be shallow, but are mostly blundering and stupid with that very limited understanding of

‘big picture’ issues, the method of adjustment offered sadly doesn't mean giving you a rewarding job or a confident community (or enough money to be miserable in comfort), it usually means telling you to be inwardly focused and less aware of what is happening outside of you, or to do things in your community. ‘Focus on what you can control’, ‘stop reading the news’ or ‘take small actions’ we are told. The Mental Health Foundation suggests, amongst other things, writing a submission to a select committee. Anybody who has actually done that knows it is far from empowering and needs to be approached with deep cynicism as 95% of the time you are just going to do a lot of work and be completely ignored. We are effectively being told the answer is to come to terms with our own powerlessness.

An unquestioned priority of profit over people, creates a system that prefers damaged, lonely and isolated people, who are both needy and have no alternative to the market to fulfil those needs. As a consumer, the market prefers you to be sick, so it can sell you things it pretends will make you better, but which often either make the problem worse or create new problems. If you mess with their minds, their bodies will crumble, if you mess with their bodies, their minds will crumble, either way you'll need to buy a cure, a palliative or a distraction.

While much attention is on the chipping away of the welfare state, the greater issue is capitalism's long-term attack on the predecessor of, and traditional alternative to, the market, the massive ‘invisible’ economy of physical and mental support provided by community and extended families. Which is often ignored as it doesn't show up on any financial plan, measure or

spreadsheet. Every non-purchasable form of support is being removed. It's no wonder people are cracking under the strain.



Actual photographs of a billionaire separated from his money.
From Carl Bark's *House of Haunts*, 1966.

The political economy of the non-existent

We have successfully given up control of our economy by allowing wealthy corporations the power to buy policies that ensure they can't be brought to heel. Even if politicians did ignore their lobbyists and paymasters, and proposed putting restrictive policies into effect, corporations can threaten to pull investment or relocate production overseas. We lose either way.

The transfer of wealth from the working class to the already wealthy continues – which is self-defeating in the end, but history shows that capitalists can't help themselves. Money junkies just don't know when to stop, even when their own actions are destroying the stability they require for continued flow of their fix.

Economic technology has advanced, increasing the power of the corporation against the state. The biggest companies lean on governments to ignore their tax liabilities, threatening to withdraw services if they are pursued.

people doing political work on the ground or the people running food banks, homeless shelters, support services or otherwise dealing with the social tailing dumps of capitalism's extractive efforts. Usually this feels like a bit of a performance – it's exasperating to see a politician or academic praise people for doing 'the truly important work' that they have chosen not to do themselves, and to see the perks, privileges, salaries, career opportunities and mana that the top dogs wallow in compared to the three-eighths of fuck all those working on the ground receive. Outside of a few subcultures, there is little true respect for the efforts, skills and experience of those at the coalface.

One of our priorities should be to turn society's rewards system upside down, starting by openly refusing to show respect to people in power, and offering genuine support and respect to those on the ground.

The deep lack of aspiration on the Pākehā left means what is offered is timid and tinged with nostalgia for the 'good old days' before neo-liberalism – something best represented not by Labour, but by NZ First, which champions a policy of economic nationalism that has little basis in economic reality. No amount of rhetoric, anger or willpower is going to bring back the cost of distance and low oil prices our past prosperity depended on.

Even the physical spaces we need to organise against capitalism are being removed. Capitalism makes virtual space cheap, and real space expensive, putting a price on hanging out with real people. Bureaucratic rules restrict access further.

Back in the day, the Chinese Communist Party had the terrific idea of extending Tiananmen Square to accomodate half a

The great difference between opposition now, and opposition in the past, is that all centres of working class power – unions, media, NGOs, community organisations – which could once have been relied upon to offer some resistance to neo-liberal capitalism have had their teeth pulled by the middle class, who have successfully colonised them.

Not content with de-fanging opposition, the middle class rub it in by acting as if they are doing us a favour, bringing ‘professionalism’ and ‘maturity’ to such organisations. Often these organisations have actively encouraged the process, believing they’d be strengthened by having articulate, well-educated and presentable leaders and managers. But the comfort of professionalism creates leaders who have no interest in winning, and who won’t admit to the grimmer realities of creating change.

The left used to talk about ‘struggle’. Which was accurate. Making change is hard work and will sometimes hurt. You can’t have your cake and also eat it, nor can you have your career and also eat the rich. Most of ‘the left’ celebrates historic radicalism while condemning or ignoring it in the present. While the world burns, the left sits on a sofa watching soap operas about the Polynesian Panthers.

*“Nostalgia is the revolutionary
consciousness of the unimaginative”*

– The Pleasure Tendency

Occasionally, the left comes down from the ivory towers to see what is happening in communities, and pats a few people on the back for the hard work they are doing at the flaxroots – the

Less powerful companies structure themselves in imaginative ways to avoid tax, the simplest being to remove profit from operations in high tax countries and move it to a company registered in a ‘tax haven’. This is achieved by having one part of the company purchase things from another part of the company. By trading intellectual property, sometimes dubbed ‘franchise fees’, or using ‘transfer pricing’ to assess the cost of goods moved within a company, chunks of a company can reduce their profits, and hence their tax bill. By this sleight-of-hand, the profits, on paper, can be made to appear elsewhere.

Share prices, the value of a company, which were once assessed on its ability to produce and sell things, and the consequent dividend that can be paid out of ensuing profits, are now based almost entirely on speculation. In effect, a bet that the price you pay now is lower than the price somebody else will pay at a later date, which is itself set by what that person thinks another person will pay for the share further in the future.

According to UNCTAD over 75% of major food-trading companies’ income now comes from financial operations like agricultural derivatives – not from actual sales of wheat, coffee, cocoa or other agricultural products. When the biggest internationally traded item, more than 90% of trade by value, is money, the ability to meet demand for things people genuinely want or need no longer determines economic success.

Nor would restoring our industrial and manufacturing base, as the economic nationalists would like, necessarily improve things. There was nothing magic about high wages in manufacturing, it was just that those workplaces were easy to unionise and the cost of transport made local production of

goods worthwhile. The working class has also been weakened by globalisation, which has made class structure international.

Globalisation has been simply defined by economist Brian Easton as ‘the falling cost of distance’, that cost being what ante-diluvian Scottish economist Adam Smith was talking about back in 1776 in his much misapplied metaphor about ‘the invisible hand’ – he thought profits should be reinvested locally, benefitting those who produced them in the first place. It’s possible climate change and oil prices will increase that cost, making local production more viable, but that has yet to happen.

The old left strategy of threatening profit through strikes and other industrial action fails when production can be moved offshore at the drop of a hat – and when most people don’t have jobs that actually produce anything. The most effective industrial actions in recent years have been by service professionals such as teachers, nurses and doctors. These sectors cannot be relocated, and when these groups strike, the impacts are felt by the public, rather than on profit.

For all its evils, the old capitalist economy required stability to manufacture things and trade in goods and services. With the financialisation of the economy, instability is an opportunity. An incident like the 2026 US attack on Iran, resulting in a major trade route closing, and constriction of oil, fertiliser and other goods supply, would once have been a disaster for capitalists. Now it is a boon, with oil companies shares and profits skyrocketing, most of which is not caused by an actual shortage – there’s still plenty of oil around – but by speculation in the oil futures market fuelled by fear of a shortage.

particularly useless. To be fair, very recently they have been more on target, it will be interesting to see if that continues.

Despite our much proclaimed environmental sensibilities, every generation judges progress on ecological sustainability against a falling baseline of observed norms, so what is considered ‘normal’ is continually being lowered. We lack the basic history to understand just how bad things have become. We can look at an industrial monoculture, a ‘green desert’ and see it as pleasant countryside. Local increases in bird life, or a rare sighting of a marine mammal, can make us imagine things are improving.

Complexification plays a role here too, simple debates about justice or decisions about actions that are obviously needed, such as improving river water quality or lowering carbon emissions, are turned into technical or legalistic arguments, making the majority of people feel unqualified to participate.

*“The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.”*

– W B Yeats

Looking at overseas examples, it appears centrist parties have to reach an extreme level of vegetative inertness or rabid lunacy before a largely depoliticised population swings to a left or right alternative. Hopeless as our political leadership is, New Zealand isn’t at that point yet. Perhaps the one positive thing about our tolerance of mediocrity is that, save for ‘Bishop’ Tamaki’s absurd theatrics, we don’t see much in the way of the rise of the extreme right as has happened overseas. It exists here, but still remains a fringe element.

are comfortable with a criminal state, pointing out its existence no longer upsets anyone.

After the abuse in care inquiry presented its final report in 2024, the prime minister acknowledged and apologised for the state's history of kidnapping the innocent kids of poor parents, most of them Māori, locking them up, then torturing and raping them. The country responded with a collective shrug of the shoulders. One is left with the slight hope that we could have reached peak complacency, but that may prove optimistic.

Much of the hopes of the social democratic left, including the union movement, is based on bringing the Labour back to the fold. These leftists are acting like a depressed middle-aged man sitting on the couch smoking cigarettes and telling people his wife will come back to him one day. Somebody needs to tap the them on the shoulder and say very bluntly "She's moved on, mate. So should you".

Given it's still getting into government on a regular basis, Labour is actually doing OK as a centre-right party. The left isn't able to offer anything to induce them to change that position. The party has found success by making mediocrity a mission in itself – a political version of 'try not to bother anyone'. Fearing being seen to be out of fashion, it is walking around naked, and displays its harmlessness to its purported enemies, the wealthy.

The Green Party has something of a forward-thinking vision of a functioning ecological social democracy, but that vision doesn't appeal to people concerned with trying to put bread on the table. They seem stuck, mostly attracting the middle class vote and making temporary gains in support when Labour is being



Globalised enshittification: Shwekoko, a scam centre in Kwathoolei, Myanmar. In an area characterised by small-scale agriculture and trade, by far the largest infusion of capital is financing internet scam centres run by criminals, using Elon Musk's Starlink to enable global reach, which dwarfs 'legitimate' economic development. Photo by the author.

We are even having to grapple with a falling quality of crime. Technology and more effective policing has killed the opportunities exploited by old-school bank robbers, jewellery thieves and counterfeiters to make an honest living and become folk heroes. Traditionally, economic inequality leads to banditry, banditry becomes revolt, revolt either succeeds or creates pressure for reform.

Today banditry still exists, but has been colonised by capitalism. Any examples of successful criminal enterprise by the poor quickly attracts the notice of big crime. The drug trade, internet scams and piracy began with small, working-class players looking to make a quick buck – Somali pirates, Nigerian scammers and small farmers or independent operators – but these enterprising individuals and small groups were soon displaced by large outfits with deep pockets, resources and a much greater capacity for violence. Profitable crime has been

seized by the rich, while the poor are reduced to stealing copper cable and car wheels. Crime has been corporatised, only accessible to the already powerful.

The economic situation is maintained, when necessary, by the state's ever-present capacity for violence. Internally by policing and prisons, externally by the military. After a period in history in which for 'western' countries, war was, to some extent, formalised as a conflict between nation states with an identifiable beginning and end, we are returning to the more traditional model, in which conflict is continual, sometimes hot, sometimes cold, and conducted against an ill-defined enemy. But now the capability of combatants to bring about destruction and suffering is unimaginably greater.

The 'war on terror', conceived by the United States government after September 11th has no rules, no constraints on levels of violence, or respect for other countries' borders or 'sovereignty'. The methodologies of the war – invasions under George Bush, drone strikes under Barack Obama, special forces incursions and blockades under Donald Trump – vary but it never stops.

Even amongst powerful nations, acts of war such as military espionage, which once caused uproar when discovered, are now routine. For example, in 1960 the United States admitted to carrying out surveillance flights over the Soviet Union after one of its U2 spy planes was shot down and its pilot captured, a massive diplomatic row ensued. Today aircraft and spy satellites carry out such surveillance as a matter of course. Nobody bothers getting upset about it. For poor countries, of course, intervention by richer ones has never been been

anything but normal. The old 'send a gunboat' 'policing' methodology of colonial days has been updated to 'send a predator drone'. Foreign policy is routinely conducted by violence.

Israel's war against Lebanon may be a model for future conflicts, a 'hot war' that has been on again and off again since 1978, coupled with a permanent 'warm war'. Even when supposedly at peace, Israel has conducted surveillance flights, occupied pieces of Lebanese territory and has conducted air strikes and bombings whenever it feels an advantage can be gained. What used to be considered obvious acts of war are now happening in what is described as 'peace', which has come to mean 'a level of violence that the outside world can easily ignore'.

Meanwhile, in downtown Whanganui...

So having sketched out the dystopia we are all enjoying, what are we doing to fix things?

In this country, opposition to the class warfare and associated atrocities of the rich has been as effective as a moth picking a fight with a car windscreen. Those in power, whether elected or appointed, have an inherent interest in maintaining the status quo. The rare individuals willing to look beyond self-interest are caught in a quagmire of delay, disinterest and distraction fostered by the rest.

Local journo Aaron Smale, writing in the NZ Listener on the use of solitary confinement in state institutions said "We have grown comfortable with a criminal state". The trouble is, once upon a time, this statement appearing in the mainstream media would have stunned people. But since he's right that we