

Sue Bradford: New Roads for Activists

Activism, as defined in the context of this hui, a gathering of like-minded people, is not neutral; it has a kaupapa of social and economic justice; and it involves a huge range of tools and communities, including faith communities.

Some key sites of struggle, currently include:

- Unions and the employer offensive ie nil wage rise in the public sector
- "Invigorate" the Warehouse forcing people to work family unfriendly hours
- Telecom contracting out line engineers' jobs
- Talleys - cheese factory in the Waikato trying to deunionise
- Bus drivers protesting low pay, and being locked out by employers
- UNITE Union's rallying cry to increase minimum wage to \$15ph
- Issues for the unemployed and for beneficiaries
- Climate camp activists who link impacts of climate change with economics
- Housing and homelessness
- And Treaty, Foreshore & Seabed, Disability, Family violence, Gambling, Public health, Changing demographics, and Ageing population...

BUT

- Sense of passivity and stoicism after 9 years of Labour government
- Market culture & ideology has infected many with a strong sense of individualism
- The "parliamentary effect" means that some activists have been lost to parliament either as MPs or support staff
- Loss of strong national activist networks around NZ

Looking ahead:

- Deepening inequality eg 70,000 Cambodian clothing workers lost their jobs last month with factory closures but who knew?
 - Bankers and financiers have benefited from the post-global crisis bail-outs, and are now repackaging and reselling toxic debt
 - Places of struggle likely to continue to be: low paid workers, unemployed & beneficiaries; housing/homeless issues; refugee & migrant issues; dealing with impacts of climate change; ecolocalism; increasing role of church and other faith communities.
- Activism as "translation service" by those who know what is happening for those who don't
 - We need reciprocity and local action, but also to take on power structurally to effect change.

- Media
 - Need to learn from the Right: what works
 - The Right is not afraid of being emotional or controversial
 - Use strong narratives/stories carefully eg Problem Gambling's use of peoples' stories which they tell themselves
 - Have spokespeople who are adept with the media, and are the media's "go-to" people
 - Do our own analysis of what works
 - Use strategy and tactics and direct action
 - Hone information into a weapon
- Looking ahead
 - More economic polarisation
 - Will New Zealand drop out of the "rich nations club"?
 - Climate change
- Key roles and responsibilities
 - Civics education: economic and political literacy
 - Courageous activism
 - Power in numbers (Thomas Keneally's book "The People's Train" a good reminder)
 - Power of information
 - Don't be afraid of giving power to trusted media spokespeople
- Much-needed Workshop
 - How to counter the misinformation of such groups as Sensible Sentencing Trust; how to learn to use media more clearly and effectively ourselves.
- 3 types of activism
 - Standing outside and throwing rocks
 - Go inside and work within the system
 - Build a new system inside the rotten system