

National Issues — Decolonising Aotearoa: Viewing the Future as a First Generation Colonist

Sam Buchanan

Sam Buchanan comes from an anarchist political tradition and is influenced by Māori views and other indigenous struggles. He cut his teeth in the anti-apartheid movement and has supported Māori and Pākehā anti-colonisation initiatives ranging from organising demonstrations on Waitangi Day to planting trees at Parihaka.

Introduction and background

The arrests on October 15th 2007 led to the realisation that anarchists needed to further analyse colonisation. Previously anarchists had largely taken on the left social democratic analysis of colonisation with little independent thought.

1. Critiques of Power and Recuperation

The Treaty of Waitangi has become part of the colonial establishment and the 'Treaty principles' are a forced instrument to maintain colonisation.

2. Complacency in the realm of ideas

The left has become complacent. Much of the left have become involved in useful grassroots service delivery, but the public realm of ideas has been taken over by the neo-liberals. It is now more acceptable to attack Māori in public arenas and responses are often absent.

3. Treaty is more problematic than we think

As a solution to the problems of colonisation it is an unconvincing document for many people. People attending workshops which call for a Treaty-based 'partnership' come away lacking a strong feeling of enthusiasm- they don't identify with the Treaty. The rewriting of the Treaty as 'Treaty principles' makes it seem dull and rather pointless.

4. Expectation of closure — the feeling of conspiracy

Pākehā expect closure with settlements, this is raising expectations that will not be met and result in a backlash. Pākehā, and some Māori have a feeling of conspiracy – negotiations and settlements appear to be happening without their knowledge and participation.

5. Terminology — Privilege, Partnership, Tangata Tiriti

The Treaty after 1840 was nullified by the Pākehā establishment, then resurrected as a vague document of 'partnership' by the same establishment. The claim that Pākehā are 'Tangata Tiriti' doesn't hold true - whether the Treaty had been there or not they would still be here.

6. Terminology — Justice, colonisation

The term 'Treaty' is over used - we should be talking about historical injustice. We need to be addressing the crimes of colonisation rather than obsessing over the fulfilment of a legal document.

7. The benefits of success must be clearly articulated

New Zealand society has much to gain from dealing with the injustices of colonisation. We need to make this clear to Pākehā, rather than engendering a sense of guilt or telling Pākehā they must make redress for crimes most don't feel they bear responsibility for. It is not enough to fulfil the letter of the Treaty.

Notes by Jackson Vogt