

Dedicated to Jah Son Smith, blues brother, wingman, poet warrior – gonna miss our road trips Soul-Jah, Ben

DEADLINE PRESENTS



OIL



FOOD



PLASTIC



HOMES



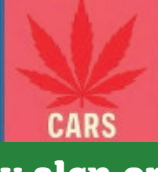
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A QUESTION OF RIGHTS

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TRANSNATIONAL CRIME
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NY vs Westminster

Now your mom threw away your best porno mag;
You gotta fight – for your right – to party.
You gotta fight!

– From the song Fight for Your Right by Beastie Boys, 1986.

A continuation of Ben's global travel insights as part of his current book project – *Gold, Guns, and Bloody Gods*.

What are human rights? Where does the rule of government end and our right to live our lives as we see fit begin? These are not small questions, specifically in relation to the multiple orchestrated and deliberate breaches of due process that have occurred in New Zealand, starting with the passing of the Constitution Act 1986.

I'm going to argue that New Zealand's Westminster democracy, He Whakaputanga (the Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand) of 1835, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the checks and balances established to jointly ensure these legislative protections are in an all-out war with those who believe New York should be deciding what you can eat, drink, or smoke, and how we exercise our personal liberties. To explain why I'm picking on New York, we need to examine how New York was founded; an event that is now having real-life legal implications today.

New York's original colonial name was New Amsterdam. The Big Apple was first established as a corporate colony of The Dutch East Indies (DEI), a company that got rich through wholesale human exploitation and narco trafficking (opium). Unsurprisingly, the DEI were not big on democracy or the concept of human rights. The closest they came to believing in human rights was the belief that a person had the rights the company's agent (ship's captain) gave or took.

New York State law is still based on its commercial origins, and these state laws are now shaping modern documents which, at their core, still carry the idea that rights are not something a person inherently has, and that an individual's rights should not impede the pursuit of commerce. In 1958, the New York Convention, upon which contemporary international laws are based – including the UN's definition of human rights – was adopted. Father Robert J. Araujo, S.J., an advisor on human rights and international law for the Vatican church, warned that the impact of the New York Convention threatens to turn back time and place power in the hands of only a few wealthy, privileged interests.

This became relevant here with the passing of the New Zealand Bill of Rights 1990, which bases the New Zealand definition of rights on that old New York definition of human rights. This took place when Parliament passed the Constitution Act 1986, which it did without first securing an overwhelming Parliamentary (not just a party) majority or holding a referendum, in breach of

the existing Bill of Rights 1688 which forbids Parliament empowering itself. The Bill of Rights 1688 is part of New Zealand legislative law known as the English Statutes. The other part is article 29 (and only article 29) of the Magna Carta, which covers habeas corpus (the right to trial by jury).

Another example of New York laws' historic origins and their impact on international law is the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), succeeded by the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The CPTPP is a highly secretive trade deal, which includes the draconian Investor-Dispute State Settlement (ISDS) clauses that permits corporations to sue governments if it is deemed that their commercial rights have been impacted. This is something to think about as Shane Jones' Fast-track legislation effectively means that once we let these firms proceed we can't shut them down, regardless of how much damage they end up causing or the impacts they have on our society's democratic institutions.

Meanwhile, the 'rights' of corporations are interpreted by corporate lawyers in New York. I consider that fact alone means the ISDS's protocols also breach the Bill of Rights 1688. The 1688 act specifically required an oath from the Crown declaring that no foreign prince, person, prelate, or potentate has "jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm". The clause is not just outdated anti-Catholic law as Tories and Neoliberals like to suggest. The Bill of Rights 1688 was cited in the 1975 court case *Fitzgerald VS Muldoon and Others*, which in turn was cited as recently as 2020 when UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson took it upon himself to try and shut down Parliament. The so-called Papist clause makes it clear that only the courts of our land are authorised to act as agents for the Crown and Parliament, and they alone – not powers beyond our shores – have the power to interpret the laws passed at Parliament.

In 2018, the highly unpopular CPTPP was established, and New Zealand became party to the agreement thanks to the collaborative efforts of senior front bench MPs in Labour, National, and coalition parties. The ISDS clauses remain, though they currently sit dormant, untested, but lurking like a shark waiting to further dismantle our checks and balances. This seems more and more likely to occur as the Beehive front bench MPs keep shifting away from our courts and

Continued on page 6

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The Chronicles of Prohibition Land

The following story is satirical but the legislation and figures noted are sadly very real.



Once upon a time in the realm of Aotearoa New Zealand – fancifully renamed Prohibition Land – the ruling lords enacted a dark enchantment called the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975. This decree did not battle a monster; instead, it declared a decades-long war on a magical, multi-pointed green leaf and the peaceful folks who enjoyed it.

To enforce this bizarre curse, the Crown deployed the Big Bad Wolves. These overzealous, uniform-wearing tracking hounds became utterly obsessed with sniffing out everyday citizens. Instead of chasing actual villains, the Wolves spent decades hiding behind bushes, tapping carrier pigeons, and setting elaborate traps just to catch anyone holding a single leaf of the forbidden herb. They even aggressively hunted the Green Fairies – the kingdom's beloved, underground healers, who used the plant to soothe the aches, pains, and ailments of over 275,000 suffering souls. The Wolves spent vast fortunes from the kingdom's treasury to justify their own snarling existence, leaving a trail of shattered lives, lost jobs, and broken families in their wake. All the while, the Wolves spent time looking up stuff on the internet they probably shouldn't be looking up, and



getting seriously intoxicated off-duty at the Wolves garrison bar. This as they protected the nation's morals and values.

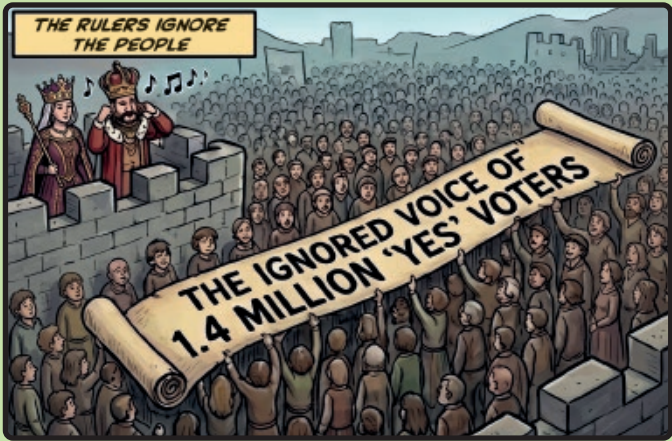
The realm's elders repeatedly tried to reason with the castle rulers. In 2011, they presented a magical scroll from the Law Commission, which explicitly stated that herb-use was a matter of health and healing, not dungeons and chains. But the rulers plugged their ears and sang over the advice. By the year 2025, the dungeons were working overtime, swallowing up 10,000 new captives each year because the Wolves and rulers stubbornly refused to wake up from their decades-long slumbering ignorance. Meanwhile, the mates of the Wolves and rulers made huge profits because all of the narco weasels and crime baron stoats were washing their dirty dollars in the capital palace's treasury year after year.

As fat cats stroked their whiskers the Crown actively locked away the kingdom's official scrolls of fairness: the Human Rights Act and the Bill of Rights.

By keeping the leaf forbidden, the rulers have effectively branded the entire herb-loving community as second-class peasants. Even worse, the Crown was pulling off a massive feat of democratic gaslighting as it huffed and it blew. They were completely ignoring and discriminating against the political opinion of 1.4 million brave citizens who stood up and voted "YES" during the great referendum of 2020.

To add financial insult to injury, the rulers are voluntarily burning a massive chest of gold. Legally unleashing this environmentally sustainable plant would create a regulated market worth a staggering \$2 to \$3 billion gold pieces annually. That is a mountain of tax revenue left on the table – wealth that could easily rebuild crumbling public housing, fund healing centres, and fix the kingdom's pothole-ridden roads.

The Grim Reality Behind the Fairy Tale
While this metaphor sounds like a dark comedy, the underlying reality is a severe and ongoing crisis of democracy and justice in



Aotearoa New Zealand. The Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party (ALCP) has spent 30 years fighting to repeal the archaic 1975 Act. What began as a widely mocked political movement is now a critical battlefield for fundamental civil liberties.

Maintaining this failed prohibition directly undermines Aotearoa New Zealand's commitment to human rights, personal autonomy, and democratic mandate. When a government deliberately ignores a massive chunk of its voting populace – specifically the 1.4 million people who demanded change – it erodes the very core of democratic representation. This is no longer just a debate about a plant; it is a serious issue that demands the immediate attention of anyone who values equality, civil rights, and state accountability. Breaking this five-decade curse requires active support at the polling booths to finally replace state-sponsored prejudice with a fair, rational, and democratic reality. If we want a happily-ever-after ending, voting for the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party will help us achieve this result.



Meet the ALCP candidates

Maki Herbert
ALCP Co-leader, Candidate for Te Taitokerau

I am standing for the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party because too many New Zealanders are punished for having/using a plant, while outdated laws continue to harm our communities. Legalisation should mean:

- health and education over stigma and convictions
- personal choice balanced with fair regulation
- understanding that adults can be trusted to be fair and responsible.

It is time for honest communication, compassion, and practical change.

LISTEN:
The Deadline Report, Episode 202 – Maki Herbert, ALCP: the Battle for Northland.

Christopher Manaia
Candidate for Auckland Central

Gained considerable attention after appearing on the television show Border Patrol wearing a cannabis suit, which received thousands of likes. Works as a consultant within the hemp industry, with a particular focus on the sustainable hemp housing and building sectors. "Hemp is a plant that can feed, house, clothe, and heal, highlighting its industrial and medicinal potential."

Jeff Lye
Candidate for Northland

I think the smaller parties need more representation and should be taken more seriously, especially when the 2020 cannabis referendum was such a botch-up. I'm here as a voice for the 1.4 million voters that voted for a regulated cannabis market and to have a sustainable future via the cannabis/hemp industries. It's an answer to the economic crisis, youth unemployment, and cancer rates. A prosperous future is possible and the cannabis pie is big enough for all to have a slice. Vote wisely.

LISTEN:
Jeff Lye interviewed on The Deadline Report, Episode 212.

Michael Appleby
ALCP Co-Leader, Candidate for Wellington North

I co-founded the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party in 1996. I hold a Master's in Constitutional and Administrative Law, and my mission is keeping the buggers honest. I have stood as the party's candidate in the Wellington Central electorate ten times. As a human rights lawyer and father of four, I see the damage draconian laws inflict on our youth. With 49% (1.4 million) voting "Yes" in the referendum, our final goals are:

- legal regulation for over-18s
- expunging past convictions
- taking a health-centred approach, aligning with the Commission's harm-minimisation framework

LISTEN:
The Deadline Report, Episodes 208 & 209 – Michael Appleby on Human Rights.

Romana Manz Manning
Candidate for Tukituki Hawke's Bay

I am standing as an ALCP candidate in the General Election 2026. I support cannabis law reform to end unfair criminalisation, improve safe medical and recreational access with age and quality controls, and recognise hemp's potential regarding sustainable building, food, health, jobs, and environmental benefits.

Authorised by I. Britnell – avoncbakpak@gmail.com

... more ALCP candidates on page 24

Meet the ALCP candidates

Irinka Britnell

List Candidate, ALCP Secretary
Our party advocates for cannabis law reform. The 2011 Law Commission Report states "... cannabis is a medical issue, not a criminal matter". Our policy promotes human rights, sustainable hemp, affordable medicine, and R18 recreational use. Multi-billion-dollar crops would create employment, bringing wealth to Aotearoa New Zealand.



Blair Anderson

Candidate for Christchurch Central
facebook.com/mildgreens
mildgreens.blogspot.com
A Christchurch local and veteran of the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party, who has championed this city for five decades. In 2026 he stands for Christchurch Central, citing issues such as regulated cannabis, rapid public transport, evidence-based climate action, and local jobs in tech and agriculture. He is practical, accountable, and ready to get to work.



Russell Haynes

List Candidate
I'll be standing for the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party on the list. I feel I can be of more help being on the ground, talking to folk in different areas, than restricted to one seat. Aotearoa is my seat. I've been a cannabis activist for over 30 years.



My father died from leukaemia and it was the chemotherapy for prostate cancer that killed his white blood cells. Since this time, I've been in NZ helping patients in palliative care access the medicine they need for a better quality of end of life. I travel all over Aotearoa New Zealand, meeting folk from industrial, medical, and personal use arenas along the way. New Zealanders should have the legal right to grow and produce our own rongoā Māori; nothing else is acceptable.

A vote for ALCP is a vote for compassion.

Anntwinette Grumball

Candidate for Invercargill
Vote ALCP. Repeal the Misuse of Drugs Act, unlocking billions for Kiwi businesses, including in tourism and health. Replace unscientific roadside THC testing and punitive revenue collecting with harm



minimisation. Allow citizens to grow their own. Let all New Zealanders profit from cannabis. See solutions, not just problems.

LISTEN:
The Deadline Report, Episode 221 – Anntwinette Grumball, ALCP Invercargill.



Adrian McDermot

List Candidate
The Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party Dunedin is a team making the effort to present constructive policies that will benefit the people of New Zealand. The promotion of hemp and the wonder-drug cannabis is the worthy fight for the planet and human rights.



Paula Lambert

Candidate for Christchurch East, ALCP Treasurer
We do not wish to see further criminalisation. If government could figure out how to tax and control cannabis, we would see a decrease in government spending on unnecessary policing.
I gave up using cannabis nine years ago when I started a driving job, which posed me no problem.



Tania Henare

Candidate for Te Tai Tonga (South Island & Wellington)
Proud to be ALCP Te Tai Tonga candidate, as a mother and grandmother. Ko Te Rarawa, Ngāti Maniapoto, me Ngāti Paoa ōku iwi. No Murihiku au, e noho ana ki Akaroa.

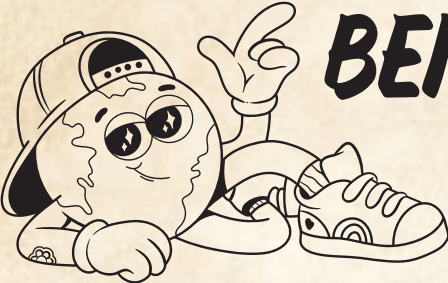


Aotearoa is ready to legalise cannabis – 48.8% voted yes in 2020. Medical and social users are not criminals. It's time for change. Ngā mihi nui.

LISTEN:
Tania Henare interviewed on The Deadline Report, Episode 229.



✓ **TICK THE LEAF**
For more information on the Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party visit their website:
www.alcp.org.nz



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'The Dyslexic Detective', investigative journalist & author Ben Vidgen chats with special guests. Check out the must-hear episodes below.

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CLINT BOWERMAN – PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR: On countering corruption in NZ, including how a Minister of Immigration was a paedophile with known links to organised crime. Ep.193

THE WAR ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: A look at the growing US military expansion in NZ – Rocket Lab, New Dawn Aerospace, and 500+ businesses all involved in making military technology. Ep.200

ALAN DICK: We talk with Alan Dick about the 1980s Dunedin sex ring, Chris Lewis shooting at the Queen in Dunedin, Tom Lewis' Cover-ups & Copouts, Jevon McSkimming's flash car collection, and Alan's incredible career. Ep.203

JOHN MINTO: The political activist discusses Rocket Lab's role in supporting Israeli-backed genocide. Ep.214

KING LEO LADELL: The blues veteran on new album King Leo & Son with lead single Gather You In. Ep.216

SMITH K STEAD: The researcher and writer on security-force manufactured threats. Ep.217

SCOTT BAINBRIDGE: One of NZ's foremost investigative and true-crime authors. Ep.219

DEAD SCIENTISTS: Who's been murdering the scientists and why? 9/11 2.0 and super-drone tech – the story that caught the attention of the Ministry of Defence. Ep.220

OCTOPUS DOWN UNDER – THE FUGITIVES: What began as a newspaper enquiry into an alleged snuff-film maker in 1980s Timaru spirals into an investigation linking serial killers, organised crime, cults, US politics and NZ water rights. Ep.233

MICHAEL WINGFIELD: The musician on Kathartipuss' new album Vossanations. Ep.236

AOTEAROA LEGALISE CANNABIS PARTY: ALCP candidates discuss how hemp and cannabis could address NZ's security, energy, employment, medicine, fuel, pollution, crime and social issues – while generating income without extra taxes. Eps. 202, 208, 209, 212, 221

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“Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.”
– David W. Augsburg

Insight mediation is an innovative conflict resolution model that treats disputes as interactive learning processes. Rather than focusing on legal rights or compromises, insight mediators facilitate dialogue to help conflicting parties understand their emotional blockages and discover less threatening, more constructive ways to interact.

Traditional conflict resolution frameworks often approach disputes as zero-sum equations where the goal is to compromise on fixed positions or interests. Insight mediation – a model pioneered at Canada’s Carleton University – breaks away from this paradigm. Rooted in the premise that conflict escalation is driven by a perception of threat, this approach seeks to transform difficult conversations into mutual learning opportunities.

Mediators and clients alike can embrace the opportunity to learn something new when they work with one another.



It’s not something people normally think about when they look for someone to help them resolve a conflict or difficult situation. The mediation approach practiced by Anja Klinkert and her team, encourages and supports learning and growth.

The Philosophy of the Insight Approach

At the core of insight mediation is a profound shift in how we understand conflict. While standard mediation theories suggest conflicts arise from scarcity of resources or incompatible positions, the insight approach proposes that conflict is fundamentally cognitive and emotional. Conflict erupts when a person feels their core values, safety, or identity are under threat, triggering reactive, defensive behaviours.

Because of this, an insight mediator does not view themselves as an evaluator, a judge, or a deal-maker. Instead, they act as a facilitator of insight. They help parties understand why they are reacting the way they are. They help people to discover and expose the emotional narratives driving the dispute, and to recognise the triggers affecting both themselves and the other party.

The Role of the Mediator

In an insight mediation session, the professional focuses on deepening the conversation rather than pushing for a rapid settlement. The process relies heavily on the mediator’s ability to help participants transition from a state of “threat” to a state of “learning.”

– If you would like to know more, please contact Anja Klinkert at anja@bluedoormediation.co.nz

The mediator guides participants through specific conversational strategies. Firstly, they encourage individuals to explore their “expected futures.” This technique allows participants to voice their deepest fears or anticipated negative outcomes, removing the abstract terror of the unknown and grounding the conversation in reality.

Next, the mediator helps parties unpack their underlying cares – the deep-seated values or needs they are trying to protect. By articulating what they genuinely care about rather than just demanding a specific outcome, participants become more capable of understanding the other party’s perspective. This realisation shifts the interaction from a defensive battle to a cooperative problem-solving endeavour.

How Parties Change

Insight mediation fundamentally relies on self-awareness and awareness of the other. When people are locked in a dispute, they often suffer from cognitive tunnel vision, viewing their opponents as malicious or unreasonable. The insight model encourages individuals to recognise that their adversary’s behaviour is also driven by fear and a sense of threat, not just a desire to cause harm.

As participants begin to understand the mechanics of their own defensive reactions, they reclaim a sense of agency. They realise that they have the power to change the dynamics of the conversation. When parties learn more about themselves and one another, they naturally discover less threatening ways to interact. By reducing the threat level in the room, collaboration and durable resolutions become possible.

Real-World Applications

Because the insight model is focused on the underlying dynamics of interpersonal relationships rather than strict legal technicalities, it is highly versatile. At Blue Door Mediation and Klinkert Law, it is extensively used in family disputes, such as relationship property/divorce, care of children and pets negotiations. By prioritising emotional safety and mutual understanding, insight mediation helps preserve relational ties and minimises the long-term psychological damage of prolonged conflict.

Beyond family law, this model is effectively utilised by the team in workplace and partnership disputes, organisational conflicts, and community disagreements. Wherever there is an ongoing relationship that needs to be preserved or a complex emotional blockage preventing resolution, insight mediation offers a robust framework for transformation.

The Power of Insight

Ultimately, the insight approach to conflict resolution recognises that while we cannot always control the external circumstances that lead to a dispute, we can control how we respond to them. By transforming conflict from an adversarial standoff into an interactive learning process, insight mediation empowers individuals to navigate their differences with curiosity, empathy, and clarity. It proves that lasting resolution does not always come from forcing a compromise, but rather from gaining the necessary insight to change the nature of the conflict itself.

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placing unbridled power firmly in the hands of those far away who are creating policy based on the far-reaching ideas of the New York Convention.

Helen Clark gets very hot and bothered these days by mining companies and Fast-track legislation, which is a bit rich considering her Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004 primed New Zealand nicely for upcoming anti-democratic, pro-mining schemes such as Fast-track legislature and Special Economic Zones that override all existing New Zealand laws (thinks Andor from *Star Wars*). And this as she courted the role of the United Nations Development Programme Secretary in New York. Knowing the Foreshore and Seabed Act itself was contestable and might be challenged at the Privy Council (then New Zealand's highest court), Clark took it upon herself to pass the Supreme Court Act of 2008 to rid us of the pesky Privy Council, even though it has given New Zealand stable, reliable justice for over 200 years. This 2008 Act was yet another act of legal fiction (meaning it's not worth the paper it's printed on) where again the due process required for legislation that has constitutional implications was simply ignored. To highlight this point, let's take a look at who now sits on the mothballed Privy Council (they could not actually get rid of it completely without fully breaking the rule book of how laws should and should not be passed). Each time a judge on the Privy Council gets retired they quietly get replaced by a senior MP with questionable constitutional and ethical knowledge; there is a glaring conflict of interest here. To clarify; the courts are judicial, and Parliament is legislative. In a proper democracy the two should always be separate, with no agent wearing both hats at the same time.

- Privy Councillors currently include:
- Helen Clark
 - Winston Peters – a sitting cabinet minister who says he is against globalism but helped pass the TPPA
 - Sir Geoffrey Palmer – author of *Unbridled Power*, a book warning that New Zealand MPs have too much power. He remains conspicuously quiet on the legality of the CPTPP ISDS clauses, the passing of the Constitution Act 1986, and the 2008 Supreme Court Act)
 - Sir Don McKinnon – past National MP who sat on the Global Panel Foundation, which promotes global governance based on international binding legislation
 - Sir Douglas Graham – former National MP, convicted of making false statements in a company prospectus
 - Dame Jenny Shipley – had to pay a million dollars for deliberately misleading her creditors in Mainzeal
 - Wyatt Creech – former National MP

It's amazing to see just how many of these Councillors, appointed to oversee and protect New Zealand sovereignty and its constitutional checks and balances, are also heavily involved in globalist institutes that literally seek to take the power away from Kiwi citizens and hand it to offshore organisations that dance to the tune of corrupt merchant banking. Again I argue that belonging to such an organisation is a breach of the Bill of Rights 1688.

Sir Geoffrey Palmer, Helen Clark, and Wyatt Creech have all been members of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), a body that lobbies for global governance and a global currency, which is to be based in New York where it will literally be overseen by private banking interests that loom up around the UN, as it looks up onto the hill where Dutch merchants used to rule. Today more than 100 New Zealand MPs, former and current, belong to the PGA. To illustrate just how bipartisan this 'Hoorah for a world run by sociopathic corporate kleptocrats' fan club is, PGA New Zealand members have included members of every party sitting in parliament currently. Known current or past members include; Kennedy Graham (Green MP, brother of Privy Councillor and ex-National MP Sir Doug Graham), Lousia Wall (National), Goliz Ghahraman (former Green MP and prolific shoplifter), the ever-charming Nanaia Mahuta (Maori Party MP), Trevor Mallard (Labour), and Phil Goff (ex-Labour).

But back to the TPPA. Goff, Jacinda Ardern's mentor, was given permission by Jacinda Ardern (rumoured to be in the running for the top job at the UN in 2031) to cross the floor, giving National the numbers needed to pass the TPPA. This was a cause which Labour had publicly campaigned aggressively against. Dunedin party affiliates got quite tetchy when I reminded 3,000 protesters at an anti-TPPA protest that they were being gaslit, because the TPPA had first been first tabled in 2008 by Clark on her way to New York, a few years after she had mothballed the Privy Council as part of making sure New Zealand's legs were spread nice and wide for the mining companies.

The Supreme Court Act 2003, just like the Constitution Act 1986, would be passed with a party majority not a house majority or referendum. In doing so, was a blatant breach of existing New Zealand legislation.

The PGA is not a lefty organisation and neither is the New Zealand Initiative (the New Zealand arm of the Atlas Mining network), as both fund parties on both sides of the house. The PGA included Nelson Mayor Dr Nick Smith (ex-National MP) who is big on water privatisation. And it included ex-Labour MP Mike Moore, the neo-liberal zealot who, as chairman of the World Trade Organization (WTO), failed to pass the Codex Alimentarius. Codex, a fore-runner to the TPPA, sought to



give corporations excessive powers and control over food, water, and drugs. The attempt to ratify Codex led to a full-scale riot in the USA during the 1999 Seattle WTO meeting, which inspired the movie *Battle in Seattle*, starring Woody Harrelson. Moore's book, *A World Without Walls* (or as I like to call it *Greedy Bastards Without Barriers*), depicts his life-size papier-mâché effigy being hung by anti-free trade activists.

In 2017, New Zealand Prime Minister John Key, the former New York banker, held a referendum on the flag (because like courts and constitutional legislation, Key deemed it necessary as it was "a constitutional issue"). Boyl, you should have seen all the politicians and their party flunkies get hot and bothered when again I popped up to be "a nuisance" and I suggested the flag change was a *symbolic* attempt to usurp the *due authority* within the Westminster system and once more undermine the Bill of Rights 1688. MediaWorks TV3's *Story* promptly marched out an 'expurt' (aka a drip under pressure), Otago University Law professor Andrew Geddis, to claim *due authority* was "probably a made up word" to the tune of the *X Files* theme music. National's Attorney General Christopher Finlayson would join in, calling me "moderately nuts". But when the dust settled TV3 promptly pulled the Geddis interview off their website after numerous lawyers, including my own, contacted TV3's *Story* to explain Geddis was wrong and yes, *due authority* is most certainly not a made up term.

Meanwhile, someone in Parliament quietly deleted the sentence off their website that had explained that the Union Jack was on our flag as a symbolic "reminder of our democratic traditions". TV3 and Geddis could have simply gone to Canberra where the Magna Carta Memorial stands to illustrate that the Union Jack and Southern Cross are symbolic reminders that power lies in the public's hands, as safeguarded by our English Statutes via the Palace of Westminster (not to be confused with Buckingham Palace, home of the mates of Epstein and Jimmy Saville). You know, what with New Zealand being a Westminster democracy and all.

Despite over three decades of these ninja-style attacks on our constitutional mechanics, the system is still working, for the better part. Even if it is a bit scarred and bruised.

—Ben Vidgen

A SHORT HIST CRIME DOWN

Now market movements call the shots Business deals in parking lots
— from *U.S. Forces* by Midnight Oil, released on their 1982 album **10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.**

In 1999 I published my book *State Secrets*, an exposé on how neoliberal politics was leading to a blurring of lines between Crown business and private business. This process enabled corruption and the regional growth of transnational crime. It was financed by white collar crime and the narco profits that still abounded due to the failed global war on drugs. My book was published in a time (not that long ago) when New Zealand's media experts routinely claimed there was no such thing as organised crime or corruption in New Zealand. We take a short look at the trends of transnational crime since the rose-coloured-spectacled days of the 1980s and 1990s.

Corporate Colonisation & Resource Exploitation (1979–2000)

- **Failed Micro-states:** Ideological libertarian groups like the Phoenix Foundation staged attempted coups in Tonga and Vanuatu in the 1980s, with the goal of establishing corporate tax-free zones.
- **Geopolitical Meddling Throughout the Pacific:** Shadowy actors destabilised regional and indigenous sovereignty, as demonstrated by the Government of Papua New Guinea's secret hiring of Sandline International mercenaries in 1997 to reclaim the lucrative Bougainville copper mine. Mining and timber industries were further linked to political instability in Fiji and the Solomon Islands in 2000. Ethnic conflicts and tension were systematically exacerbated by foreign mining and timber milling interests and state actors, who all sought unfettered access to the Pacific's valuable timber and mineral resources. Profits from transnational crime (the trafficking of narco, weapons, and humans) and tax avoidance were used to take control of strategic national infrastructure and national resources.

Exploitation of the Financial System (1987–2019)

- **Institutional Laundering:** Global narco and crime syndicates weaponised the Pacific's lenient financial systems. In the mid 1990s The Bank of New Zealand (via the Winebox Papers), the National Bank of Fiji, and several Pacific states were exposed for aiding corporate tax avoidance and enabling organised crime interests.
- **Shell Company Infrastructure:** New Zealand shell companies – often linked to single management

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ORY OF TRANSNATIONAL UNDER

Why the failed war on drugs still matters...

addresses like 112 Parnell Road or 412 Lake Road in Auckland – became vital pipelines for international corruption. Examples include \$150 million run through NZ banks for the \$2.9 billion Azerbaijani Laundromat, \$140 million laundered for Russian Crypto banker Alex Vinik, and \$70 million for Canadian money launder Xiao Hua. 412 Lake Road was also linked to Aussie Malcolm, former Minister of Immigration and America's Cup promoter, and Louis Patrick McElwee, honorary Columbia consultant to New Zealand. Both were affiliates of American Harvey Misbin, a known South American cartel trafficker living in New Zealand. The network channelled millions in illicit funds for Mexican drug cartels, Russian oligarchs, and state-backed Israeli arms manufacturers in the mid 2000s, using NZ nominee firms like Jetfield Network Ltd (\$155 million) and SP Trading Ltd (several billion dollars). That money then helped fund the economic takeover of its home nation.

State Sanitisation, Elites, and Censorship (1991–2020)

- Prominent public and media figures routinely acted as damage-control managers, fixers, and influencers. Examples include executives like TVNZ general manager Neil Roberts, who avoided jail after being busted with a kilogram of cocaine in 1995. Roberts resigned from TVNZ and set up Comunicado Productions with Sir Paul Holmes and Karen Soich, a lawyer briefly disbarred for her relationship with Terry Clark – alias Mr Asia, the leader of New Zealand's largest drug ring of the time.
- High-ranking political figures like ex-banker New Zealand Prime Minister John Key protected foreign trust regimes and dismissed public concerns of corruption as "conspiracy theories". Right until offshore media leaks like the Panama and Paradise Papers confirmed in 2016 and 2017 that yes, New Zealand is indeed a major money laundering hot spot, and no, New Zealand is not corruption-free. Law changes made by Key in the face of such publicity failed to actually close the loopholes which are still being used by organised crime and rogue banks.
- Power brokers used public fear of gangs, "extremist" violence, and online hate speech to pass laws undermining civil liberties and free speech with aggressive internet censorship policies, such as the Christchurch Call. In reality, these measures served to obscure complex, high-level white-collar crimes and state-sanctioned corruption, while advancing the dismantling of genuinely independent journalism.

Militarised Pre-planning and the Modern Crisis (1987–2026)

- Prophetic Simulations:** Military planners have long anticipated this economic instability, so planned defence exercises like 1987's *Exercise Golden Fleece*, which used members of the Mongrel Mob gang during the counter-insurgency training exercise (*Te Iwi O Aotearoa*, Feb 1989, *NZ Geographic*, Apr/Jun 1989). The gang members assisted soldiers playing the role of insurgent forces designated as ROGUES (Racially-Oriented Groups of Unemployed). The terminology used in *Golden Fleece* originated from a private threat assessment produced by the Australian mining and management consultancy firm Frost & Sullivan, which identified disaffected and racially-oriented unemployed groups as prospective future security risks to the state. While the 2013 *Exercise Southern Katipo 13* simulated societal unrest in response to the proposed Special Economic Zone for mining interest, it occurred at the same time as documents leaks of future plans to mine the Kahurangi National Forest. They also detailed how Special Economic Zones would help fast-track mining applications and run rough-shod over employment laws and environmental protections.
- A Breaking Point:** The continuum concludes with a severe escalation in threats. By 2025, the Ministerial Advisory Group's landmark report *Lead Boldly, Act Decisively* officially named Transnational Serious and Organised Crime (TSOC) as New Zealand's number one national security threat. The report lists international cartels as having pushed regional infrastructure in the Pacific to a critical tipping point, directly prompting large-scale multi-agency stabilisation drills like Fiji's *Exercise Bougainville* in 2026.

–Ben Vidgen

Financial amounts stated are in USD.



ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST – DEAN RAYBOULD

The artwork on the cover of this issue of Ben's NZ was created by Dean Raybould. Dean is an ex-Ozzy, long-term pop artist who lives in Oamaru, having long lived in Tākaka, Golden Bay. His art – featuring native birds and comic relief – can be found in many galleries and stores around the motu. Check out more of Dean's art and creations online @deanraybould_art

Channelling the Big Apple

I've seen all the movie stars
In their fancy cars and their limousines
Been high in the Rockies
Under the evergreens
But I know what I'm needing
And I don't want to waste more time
I'm in a New York state of mind

– From the song *New York State of Mind* by Billy Joel, 1976.

I had planned to spend just one day in New York. I hate big cities. Losing my passport at the Pentagon makes my stay longer than I planned.

DAY ONE: I do nothing but rest and pray that my new passport will arrive on time.

DAY TWO: I visit downtown Manhattan's diamond district to wheel and deal. Smartly-dressed merchants with names like Arti or Levi explain, without malice, "No deal. It is what it is, chum". I have New York-famous hot dogs for breakfast. I buy an NY baseball cap. The label says "Made in China". I buy some weed in the pot-smelling Times Square, enjoying the fact the Big Green is legal in the Big Apple. It turns out to be a lot stronger than I'm used to. There will be consequences. I watch a fireman next to a big red fire engine – complete with Dalmatian – raise donations outside Madison Hall. At Lexington and 52nd I pass by the spot where, in *The Seven Year Itch*, the skirt of Marilyn Monroe's dress billows up as she stands over a grate. Then I hit my intended target; the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, which is dedicated to the 3,000 people who were killed in 2001 by the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.

BACK TO 2001: I am running an Italian restaurant in Wellington called Pasta Al Dente, with larger-than-life chef, Norm Pirie, who is formerly of the New Zealand Special Air Service (NZ SAS). Over our morning coffee, pre-service, Norm hints that his mates who are still in the squadron are preparing for deployment. They think a big terrorist attack is imminent. He thinks it will be carried out by Osama Bin Laden. He is later interviewed by TVNZ's Mark Sainsbury on this very topic. *The Dominion Post* that day was running a full-page syndicated article, 'Masked Games on Islam Border' (*The UK Observer*). On the opposite page of the morning paper it is reported that for no apparent reason, Syria has just pulled 30,000 troops out of Lebanon near Baalbek, a known terrorist hot-spot. Initially sceptical, I now think Norm might be right. I remark as I fold up the paper, 'If it happens it will be a US target in the Middle East. And if it happens in the US it will be so big that neither of us will ever forget this conversation'.

A year earlier I had penned an article titled 'Pacific Jihad' with former TVNZ journalist Ian Wishart. We name Osama Bin Laden 15 times. The third paragraph cites the pre-9/11 knowledge (see Operation Bojinka) that Osama Bin Laden plans to



Ben Vidgen in NYC



Above: FDNY Ladder Company 8 – notable for appearing in *Ghostbusters*. Above Right: A 9/11 memorial t-shirt at O'Hara's in NYC.

use civilian aircraft to attack the mainland USA.

I now can confirm, nearly 25 years later, the New Zealand SAS were on the Iraq border in Oman by September 10 2001 as part of Commonwealth nations Operation Swift Harvest, which coincided with the US-led Operation Bright Star in Egypt. In total, 110,000 troops were situated in the Middle East, plus several US carrier strike groups who arrived, give or take, just a day before the 9/11 attack occurred. *The Wall Street Journal* noted bluntly of the impact that the repercussions of 9/11 had upon US weapons sales and the US economy, which had been suffering a severe recession; "If Osama hadn't attacked America we would have had to have invented him".

Today, specialist academics are re-examining 9/11 and the USA's complex relationship with Saudi Arabia and the fossil fuels industry. To quote the late, Chivas-drinking John O'Connor, former head of NY FBI Counter-terrorism, and head of Twin Towers security when the towers fell, "Oil politics prevented us from being able to do our job".

My going to the 9/11 Memorial is not a random tourist visit. It's my apology to all those who died that day. I recall watching the attack live at 2am, NZ time. I had believed I could never again feel so angry and frustrated – until I experienced March 15 2019, New Zealand's own 9/11. My emotions stemmed from knowing civil liberties were about to be kicked to the curb. I knew the coming military counter-response would be as pointless as the war Trump is currently waging in Iran and elsewhere. It wouldn't make the world any safer. And here we sit, 25 years after the war on terror began. We are now closer to the kind of global nuclear holocaust that would suck New York (and the rest of the world) into the 13th level of hell. Who are you gonna call?

Continued on page 8

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Channelling the Big Apple

Continued from page 7



DAY TWO CONTINUED: I enter the memorial. The elevator rockets me up with noticeable g-force. A rapid-frame animation unfolds on all the walls of the elevator, painting a New York story from its origins as a corporate colony to being the skyscraper-dominated financial heart of the 21st century world's economy. The elevator doors open. I'm looking at the Chrysler building at night. Not a sight I am going to forget any time soon. I walk around the building, cautious not to get too close to the bomb-proof glass. My waitress poured a California pinot into an elegant Riedel crystal wine glass. The neon from the city lights reflects back onto the surface of my pinot as the restaurant mirrors and walls bounce those lights onto the interior walls of my wine glass. It conjures up fireflies dancing over a blood red pond under a full moon. In the distance, Yankee Stadium has a night game going on. Even further away in the distance is Lady Liberty. At this distance she is just a little green doll the colour of absinthe, illuminated by the spotlights around her base and in her seven-pointed crown of luminescence. I do a lot of thinking as I sit, falling in love with this city.

It's time to leave. I don't want to, but there are other places at which I have to pay homage. My wake is not quite over. Back at Ground Zero I walk inside O'Hara's Restaurant and Pub, at 120 Cedar Street, near the corner of Greenwich Street. This is just not a bar you want to rob. The place is wall to wall, floor to ceiling, covered in first responder mission patches and army, fire, police, and ambulance IDs from around the world. I don't stay long. I order a Chivas and leave the bartender a tip wrapped around my worn old Army Reserves ID (D771791) card. He pockets the tip and puts my card up on the wall where it will rest until it falls off or falls apart, I imagine. In the days after the attack, O'Hara's somehow remained unscathed by the lung-eating debris – full of microscopic bits of concrete, metals, toxic chemicals, and human flesh and bone – that filled Ground Zero. Many of the 9/11 first responders have died from cancer, thought to have developed in them after breathing this hideous flotsam soaked in the evil spirits of hate. On the last day of the clean-up, a firefighter tore off his unit insignia and nailed it to the wall. Since then, others have come to give a toast as they say, 'Thank you for your service', to all the ghosts of 9/11, not just the ones who died on the day of the attack.

DAY THREE: Friday. I'm waiting on the curb for my passport. I watch on my screen as it works its way from Guardia Airport NJ and I pray it gets to me by 5:00. It arrives at 4:45. I thank the traveling gods and I relax.

DAY FOUR: Saturday. It's bright and blue. I walk across town thinking I have the stamina to cover these giant city blocks. I don't. New York is big. I mean really big! I get as far as the Museum of Spies and realise I'm not going to make it to Central Park before it gets dark,

although I can see the tree line in the distance. I can't get a tour of 33 Thomas Street, New York's worst-kept secret (where the NSA spies on Manhattan's 4 million day-time citizens and, more importantly, most of the world's corporate headquarters and UN delegates), so I go in, as it is the next best thing. The museum exhibits include James Bond's Aston Martin DB9 and the Enigma code machine. You can test your field spycraft by dodging laser-beam alarm trip-wires and cracking codes. I collect nerd souvenirs and head home the long, winding, staggering way. I light up my joint and channel the essence of past Saturday Night Live stars in the bars of Soho. To be honest, it's all a bit of a blur after that. Although I do recall walking around a corner and coming face-to-face with the logoed *Ghostbusters*' headquarters which still stands at 14 N Moore St, New York. Who ya gonna call?

Dan Aykroyd, who co-wrote the movie *Ghostbusters*, loved real-life occult stories. The movie's Manhattan Adventurers Society headquarters in New York is based on the real-life NY Explorers Club, which is located in the Lowell Thomas Building. Lowell Thomas was a famed writer, broadcaster, and Explorers Club member best known for making Lawrence of Arabia famous and somehow making super power imperialism in the Middle East romantic.

DAY FIVE: Sunday. I am embarrassed. I have no phone. I use my laptop to trace its signal to a bar in Soho. The waitress, who is busy hustling for tips, rings my number. "Sorry, honey. There's no answer", she tells me with a strong Brooklyn accent. She is on the clock, and while it's only brunch time, the punters are already quickly filling up the bar. So I'm left as a digitally disconnected alien in New York. Time is running out. I have to make a decision. Central Park or UN headquarters? The UN wins, simply because it's closer to JFK Airport. I wander the boardwalk, facing the sea, and I watch people. Manhattan is enjoying its Sunday.

I photograph the ornate Dutch-style mansions that sit on the hill above the UN headquarters. The spinning globe of the Daily News Building's lobby looks across the road to Pfizer headquarters and other corporate headquarters, such as Black Rock, a new Dutch East Indies-style company keen to shape the world in its own image. No time for a real New York pizza. I settle for a Yellow Cab to the subway, and an authentic-style Etruscan pizza and a leisurely-drunk glass of chianti. The waiter and I trade waiter war stories. I go to pay my bill for the wine. It's not the Central Perk, but this is pure New York. I empty out all of my cash, making sure to leave a tip that is not an insult. There are first responders and then there are the end-of-day responders who hand you your 'I survived the daily war on life, at least for another day' medicine. Both, in my view, are equally important and need to be thanked and appreciated for their service.

The subway on the way to JFK rides above the rails. Each stop is another nation. I'm enveloped by the smells of ethnic cuisine, the sights of traditional dress, and the sounds of a multitude of accents. It makes me homesick for this city I'm about to leave. New York, I conclude, is the new Rome. Its legal and economic foundations suck. This doesn't change the fact that New York is a city full of big-hearted and generous spirits, alive and otherwise. Who ya gonna call?

—Ben Vidgen

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Ben Vidgen holds a degree in Political Science and History from University of Canterbury. He is the producer of the award-winning show *The Deadline Report*. Broadcast on Fresh FM Sundays at 1pm, replaying Fridays at 7pm – available online anytime.

Ben is the best selling author of *State Secrets I & II*, and published *DEADLINE* magazine for over 25 years. He has acted as a consultant and freelance investigator – on such topics as transnational crime, money laundering, parapolitics and constitutional issues – for media, banks, universities and NGOs in the USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand. He is a former NZDF reservist.



"No stone left unturned" – Chris Parvin, sub-editor, The Mt Scene.
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