

New Zealand needs a new online debate platform

Real life activism is great and should never be replaced. At the same time, online activism can exist without interfering with real life activism. A downside to real life activism is that it requires a person to attend at a certain time and location, this in turn requires that a person has their own transport, should the meeting be held in the evening when it's cold and dark and raining. This isn't a problem on the internet: on a message board or group chat, a person can miss a conversation and yet still partake days later. No transport is required. It's too bad that at this time, online services are hosted by tech monopolies in the U.S.

Isn't it time that Kiwis made their own alternatives?

New Zealand currently lacks a useful and truly free platform for political debate. Posting on cancerous social media is akin to shouting into outer-space and there are horrible limitations on these platforms. Twitter for example has a character limit, and its users have poor attention spans. Nobody goes on Twitter to have a philosophical debate about foreign policy or the latest shenanigans at the United Nations! Twitter is for sharing celebrity news, viral videos and memes. It was never intended for serious discussion. Another Twitter and Facebook annoyance is the "feature" of infinity scroll – there is so much garbage on these websites that infinity-scroll is required, because you'd be dead from old age if you had to read everything on those websites, there's that much rubbish available to your senses!

Trade Me Forum is perhaps the only worthwhile place to discuss politics, but there are problems with Trade Me Forum:

- no image uploading
- no image embedding
- no document hosting
- pitiful character limit on posts (as if we needed to fit everything into 640x480!)
- no polls
- no multi-quote
- no method to track threads (no email alerts and no website notifications!)
- moderation policy means that old-time users can gang up on newbies by voting for certain threads to be deleted. The merit of the deleted post is not a factor in this – if a dozen people report a post it gets deleted. Oh how democratic. A dozen people can censor a post, even if two dozen people wanted the thread to stay!

Kiwis use Trade Me Forum because **it's there** – why has nobody replaced it yet? Simple Machines Forum has better features than Trade Me, and I suppose there will be a competitor in the near future, thanks to the completion of Hawaiki Cable, which will lead to cheaper, better web host plans. So far, Kiwis are happy to use proprietary services that profit from selling user information. I'm incredulous. When will this attitude shift?

I speculate that when there are more services, there won't be a guarantee that the new services will respect user freedom. If I were to debate foreign policy then I could be censored for having a different opinion. Everything feels like controlled opposition to me. The left accuse me of being right-wing, and the right accuse me of being left-wing. I might have a rapport with a lefty on the basis that I oppose US intervention in Syria, but then the shit-fest starts when I express support for

the Syrian Arab Army or the Russian Armed Forces: “Putin’s a dictator man, Syrians should be allowed to vote in elections”.

Questions I have for these people:

- why should Assad open up ballot boxes for armed gangs and highway bandits who refuse to lay down their weapons? The “rebels” never believed in democracy.
- say that the evil Assad was overthrown, who would replace him? I suppose ISIS would have got into power. Why would you overthrow Assad’s government and replace it with one that’s worse?
- if you’re against American imperialism, then how do you justify supporting the so-called “moderate opposition” when those groups are propped up by the CIA and the Pentagon’s Green Berets?

In regards to the Syrian war, no-one can be against America, against Russia, against Syria and also against Israel. If someone is that idealistic and lost in academic thought then **they need to be apolitical** and not discuss these issues. This would be for their own sake. To be consistent and prevent their own confusion!

It isn’t possible to desire an end to the conflict, while siding with innocent people caught in the crossfire. Civilians have no power to end the war, the war only ends when one side loses, and this truth is forever. You can’t be on everybody’s side, nor can you be against all the factions but side with “the people”. The only way to be apolitical is to become a Jehovah’s Witness and not comment on politics. Often being apolitical is a joke because **when you discuss politics, you take a side.**

For example, Amnesty International is clearly biased against Assad and Putin. Amnesty International supports freedom of expression for terrorists “the free syrian army” even though they mingled with terrorist groups like Al Nusra that are banned under United Nations agreements. What about the freedom of a sovereign nation to defend its territory from a foreign-sponsored influx of jihadists? Years before the Russian Federation weaponised information, the Pentagon had already weaponised human rights and talk of democracy. The only reason the U.S. State Dept. supports democracy is because to them, democracy is a weapon to smear (in the media) leaders like Assad and Putin, who refuse to capitulate to America’s corrupt unipolar world order. Democracy is great when America can select puppet leaders of its choice. It’s also great when it gets citizens fighting each other over small scandals, while the political class do as they please.

Everything mentioned above is well-reasoned and based on fact, but that is enough to get some people worked up. Sometimes people just can’t get their head around my very simple ideas, and they turn to petty tactics such as sarcasm and ridicule, or even banning me, just because they felt that my opinions were “invalid”. In the future when there’s a political debate forum for Kiwis I guess I’ll have to host it, because if anyone else hosts, then the forum will become an echo-chamber for Pentagon and CIA disinformation trolls, deluded peace-niks and tolerant people who’re so tolerant that they respond with emotion and hate to anyone with a different opinion.

I’d love to see a political debate and chat forum for Kiwis, but it has to be an open space. It needs good features, and nobody should be banned just because another person’s feelings were hurt. These days it has to be assumed that EVERYTHING is offensive, and if EVERYTHING is potentially offensive then there’s nothing safe to say. How can you have a debate when you’re not allowed to speak? Yet the absurd proposition continues. If the left and the right could debate without censoring each other, it’d be good for democracy and people will find common ground in some areas. **When**

nobody communicates and everybody is separated, then nobody learns anything. Personally I don't give a shit about most politics, if I want to change the world then I'll volunteer. Debating politics is just a fun thing for me, it's how I keep up with news.

Finally, it is alleged that the Russian government used memes and political cartoons to influence the 2016 election, and with that thought in mind I wonder, why don't New Zealanders influence New Zealand elections with clever memes and cartoons? It's a great way to circumvent the mainstream media's echo chamber of boring left-vs-right ideas. When we only debate social and economic issues then it leaves out the uncomfortable question of what New Zealand is doing in Iraq and Afghanistan, and why Jacinda Ardern tacitly supports bombing Syria on the basis of tall tales regarding Weapons Of Mass Destruction, which sound like the same lies used as a pre-text to invade Iraq, as recently as 15 years ago. The media and the government peddle the same lies because Kiwis are too apathetic to create their own platforms (something that would alter the narrative). The way it works now is not democracy: the politicians tell us what we should debate and what we should ignore, instead of asking us in a public poll.

There are issues that are censored because the media and politicians gang up and tell us that "nobody" wants to debate issues like foreign policy, or why we can't make the tax and welfare system both fair and efficient, at the same time, without choosing one and excluding the other. Of course, we can't use memes because on Twitter and Facebook it's impossible to have all your followers actually read your posts, and if you try posting memes on Trade Me Forums, then the boomers and the wine-sipping yuppies won't understand the humour because they are too old and crusty. It's time for a new online soapbox!