



The New Zealand Centre for Political Debate

NZ Sadly Lacking Leadership

“We love you son...be strong”. These were the words the family of a 15 year-old young man called out as he stood in the dock accused of murdering 77 year-old Doreen Reed in Auckland this week.

How pathetic for the Judge to allow his Court to be treated with utter contempt by the family of this low-life. Imagine how the family of Doreen Reed would be feeling as they watched our criminal-friendly legal system slowly begin to grind them down and humiliate the memory of Doreen Reed, a 77 year old woman that would not harm a fly.

This is just another sad reflection on our Courts and Judges that have not only allowed, but also in my opinion, encouraged, New Zealand's sad – but speedy – decline from one of the safest countries in the western world to now being one of the most violent.

The 15 year-old man and his misguided family [a bit late to tell him they love after he has committed murder] are bi-products of a Nation that has lacked any decisive leadership for the last four decades.

While being loath to point the finger at any one political party as the cause of this country's demise I have no hesitation in laying the blame for the current lack of leadership fairly and squarely where it must belong...the buck must stop with our Prime Minister. Too many enquiries...too many reports...and not enough action!! There have been seven murders in the first two weeks of 2007. Have you seen our Prime Minister on TV condemning this lawlessness, encouraging the police, rallying the community, guiding us...giving us hope for a better future?

No!! Not a word...Helen Clark's silence is an insult and absolute kick in the guts for all who

remember a better yesterday, and those of us who want a better tomorrow.

Some may say I am a bit harsh on the PM: how could she possibly be responsible for the breakdown in Law & Order, the decay – the rot – firmly entrenched in society today?

Leaders lead from the front. When they are wrong, they admit it, and when they make a mistake, they apologise, get on with the job, and show the way.

New Zealand has drifted rudderless – leaderless - for the last forty years. We have not had a

leader who has had the courage to speak out against the liberalisation of our laws – the warm fuzzy movement that has caused the escalation in crime and violence, as marriage has been bastardized – ridiculed – and as family values have been methodically destroyed.

While I am talking leadership and apportioning blame, my generation [I'm a baby boomer] cannot escape responsibility. We have had some of the best years this country has had to offer. But as we have been wallowing in our prosperity and bathing in self gratification, we have allowed New Zealand to be marginalized – destroyed – by a minority of liberal bureaucrats and academics pushing an agenda that sowed the seeds of what we are now reaping: an increase in violence and break down of societal values.

My generation has been very quick to apportion blame, but very slow to look in the mirror. We blame Judges, we blame politicians, and we blame the kids, but if we open our eyes we will discover that you and I have been subjected to an as yet unfinished social experiment that has used good hard-working kiwi battlers as puppets. We have

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been made fools of – but we allowed it to happen.

New Zealand's crime rates started to spiral out of control in the late 1960s early 1970s. This coincides exactly with the beginning of the civil liberties/human rights movement, the introduction of Legal Aid, automatic parole at 1/3 of a sentence, the banning of corporal punishment and the end to compulsory National Service.

How do we change it...can we?

I believe we can. I'm an eternal optimist, and while governments over the last thirty years have talked about getting tough on crime and the causes of crime, they have in fact done the opposite.

Parole

Parole used to be a privilege – not a “right” but since 1984 parole has progressively become more liberal. The 2001 Parole Act means most offenders actually spend less time in jail now with most released back into the community after serving only a fraction of their Judge-given sentence – many with dire consequences. Parole is now a “right” and criminals and their criminal lawyers know it.

Parole is a Civil Liberties/Howard League driven experiment that has failed, allowing the likes of Graeme Burton, William Bell, Taffy Hotene and many others – some still before the Courts – to re-offend. Parole has destroyed the public's confidence in the Judiciary, demoralized the police and cost many innocent lives.

Realistically the whole touchy-feely criminal justice system needs a total overhaul to stop innocent citizens becoming victims of career criminals [86% of criminals re-offend within 5 years]. While parole is only a small part of this, it is where the Sensible Sentencing Trust believes we must begin.

Getting tough on crime and reintroducing

“punishment” into Prison policy will mean literally writing-off a generation of hard-core career criminals but the reduction in crime and the savings in innocent lives will be well worth the price.

Cradle to Jail

Kids love boundaries and responsibilities. They thrive on them. But various changes - both legislative and trickle-down - have gradually, but systemically, removed any concept of boundaries and responsibilities from young peoples lives. Sadly even before birth many children are now on the journey from cradle to jail.

As a Nation New Zealand has made many mistakes but if we are to have a better tomorrow we must learn from the past – pick ourselves up – and get on with the rebuild.

In my opinion the type of leadership New Zealand needs would immediately reintroduce the concept of good family values and good morals, get rid of Sue Bradford's proposal to ban smacking, introduce the strap and cane back into our schools, and compulsory National Service for ALL school leavers.

Under Helen Clark's watch violence has dramatically increased to the stage some pundits are describing it as a cultural phenomenon.

The “Buck” stops with the leader; the leader must be accountable and responsible.

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Garth McVicar is the National Spokesperson for the Sensible Sentencing Trust. To find out more about the Sensible Sentencing Trust and how to join the organisation, please visit www.sensible-sentencing.org.nz.

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Regards

Muriel Newman

(founder & director of NZCPD)

