This Halloween…Abolish The Zombie Monarchy!

Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement

October 29 2018

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Halloween is nearly here and the ghouls are coming out to haunt us. In Rotorua they are taking the form of Harry and Meghan Windsor. These two visitors and their entourage are about to descend upon us. Who are they? They are pretty masks covering ugly political zombies. In any genuinely progressive and democratic society, these parasites would have no social influence or special place worthy of anybody's attentions because the institution of hereditary monarchy they represent, wouldn't exist.

THE BASIC PROBLEM

Hereditary monarchy is unfair and elitist. We are expected to defer to someone simply because of their birth. The people in those positions aren't the most intelligent in society, the hardest working or the most talented in any way. The order of succession in a monarchy specifies a person who will become head of state, regardless of qualifications. You are born into it and that's the only way you can get there. Hard work or real talent and abilities won't make you a Prince or Queen. As the teenage philosopher Lorde astutely put it "We will never be royals".

In some cases it isn't really clear what they do have going for them. In fact it's just that their ancestors managed to wrestle power for themselves and made others accept them in that role through control of the military and ideological tools such as religion. Then they spread their influence across the globe, robbing and plundering along the way. Only due to sustained resistance from indigenous people in the colonies (Ireland, India, Aotearoa etc) and ordinary people in the 'motherland' have we reached the stage where the monarchy is more of a figurehead than an absolute power. While appearing outwardly strong, this form of rule does not make for a society that is at ease with itself. By maintaining a privileged royal family, society is diminished because it encourages a sense of dependency in people. Instead we should have confidence in ourselves as ordinary working people.

BUT CAN'T WE SAY..?

Since it is no longer absolute in its powers, the monarchy has been scrambling to justify its continued existence and there is an entire media industry and various other apologists helping them do this. The result has been a number of arguments that don't really stack up.

For example, that the monarchy is good for tourism. The visit by Charles Windsor and his wife Camilla to Aotearoa in 2015 cost the tax payer $1.4 million (Stuff NZ 5/5/16). Not a small amount and you have to wonder… why can't they pay for it themselves, the way the rest of us have to pay for our own holidays? One justification offered for that visit and the upcoming one by Harry Windsor is that they are worthwhile for the tourism spinoffs. Though it's hard to show whether that has been the case and even if it was, is that really a good enough reason for having them? In the case of Britain itself, research from VisitBritain (the national tourist agency) indicates that people go there to see all sorts of other attractions rather than for example, Windsor Castle, which is way down the list of sites people go to. But so what if it was true anyway? Is selling itself as 'Better than Disneyland' the best the monarchy can come up with?

Oh but the Windsors do heaps for charity. Firstly, in many cases they are aligned with some charities on paper and in name only, not doing active work for them. In some cases adding their name might raise the profile of that charity but on the other hand, there are millions of normal

people whose names we don't know, who do tonnes of constructive work day after day, often on a voluntary basis. If the monarchy ceased to exist, would those charities collapse? It's unlikely.

For those with a financial bent, we sometimes hear that the royals are good value for money. In reality, it has been estimated that the cost of the monarchy is 345million pounds (https://www.republic.org.uk/sites/default/files/Royal-Expenses-Report-2017_0.pdf). In this regard 'the palace' is totally unaccountable, as they are completely exempt from The Freedom of Information Act so the public can't get detailed data on how they spend the money working people provide them via taxes. They can therefore operate with far greater secrecy than other areas of the state. Every now and then a bit of the financial reality gets revealed, as the Paradise Papers which came out a few years ago showed. These documents exposed the fact that Betty and Charles Windsor were tax dodging, with the funds ending up in Carribean tax havens (https://offshore-leaks.icij.org/stories/queen-elizabeth-ii).They can also lobby the government and actually have to give their active consent to any government bill that challenges their hereditary revenues or property.

There are other minor arguments raised from time to time, but the above seem to be the most common.

THE SOLUTION

Some may suggest a series of reforms that they would argue make this parasitic monstrosity palatable. Though this really seems pointless. Surely society can function perfectly well without humans in unmerited and unaccountable positions of wealth and influence? It would seem even these leeches themselves recognise this. Harry Windsor has been quoted as saying "Is there any one of the royal family who wants to be king or queen? I don't think so, but we will carry out our duties at the right time" (NZ Stuff 23/6/17). Well, perhaps it's about time we took this arduous burden off their hands.

The question remains, what would replace the monarchy? There are a range of answers to that, from the mildest republic to more radical arrangements. As anarchists we argue that simply changing rulers is not the remedy. Our position was summed up nicely by the activist-worker Alexander Berkman, "We understand that true liberty is not a matter of changing kings or rulers. We know that the whole system of master and slave must go, that the entire social system is wrong, that government and compulsion must be abolished, that the very foundations of authority and monopoly must be uprooted." What Is Communist Anarchism (1923)

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Retrieved on Oct 29 2026 from https://libcom.org/article/halloweenabolish-zombie-monarchy

On 31st October two members of the Windsor family will be visiting Rotorua, Aotearoa/New Zealand as part of their nationwide tour. The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) has distributed this brief leaflet in anticipation of the visit.

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