

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

# **The (in)visibility of Hobson's Pledge: A struggle for survival in the socio- political environment of Aotearoa/New Zealand**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts in Sociology at Massey University, New  
Zealand.

**Robin Aldrich Barendze**  
**2018**

## Abstract

This study explores the emergence of Hobson's Pledge, as an alt-right group that attempts to influence government policy towards a state of 'ethnic unity'. It explores how the group manages ideological contradictions so as to prevent unanticipated (political) consequences, and what the future might hold for the groups as a consequence of those strategies. Three methods are utilised to interpret the situation of Hobson's Pledge: semi-structure face-to-face interviews; content analysis of internet text; and observations gathered from conversations with group members. Three themes emerge from the data. The first of these is: a true face of 'whiteness' - the dislocation of 'coherence'. The second is: maintaining a 'colour-blind' New Zealand for all. With this second theme, four strategies are identified by which Hobson's Pledge manages the contradictions that come to be revealed publically in its ideology. These strategies are: the promotion of an abstract subjectivity - the 'New Zealand' citizen; the issuing of a political demand for national 'unity'; the presentation of Hobson's Pledge as a broker of Māori rights against patronization; and the advocacy of a liberal democratic defence of fragility. The third theme is: moving into the future – a post-racial Aotearoa/New Zealand?. Within this latter theme, three moments are revealed in which the operation of Hobson's Pledge reinforces perceptions of a 'post-racial' New Zealand. These moments are: reducing perceived racism to a small fraction of society; a democratic right to 'free-speech'; and an intensification of covertness – a democratic right to oppose Māori wards. Public conversations are recommended as a mechanism by which the socially-divisive effects of Hobson's Pledge could be engaged with, to progressive effect.

## Preface

I was born in the Republic of South Africa. I recall the moment when Nelson Mandela was released from incarceration — I was nine years old at the time. This moment provided a sense of hope for a new South Africa; from here on in, South Africans would refer to the nation as the ‘rainbow nation’. Yet lingering sentiments from fellow white South Africans centred upon a sense of fear as to what the future might hold; for example, my parents felt ‘this is the end of us’.

An accompaniment to a sense of fear — as to what the future might hold — was a widely shared sense of unfairness amongst white South Africans associated with the implementation of affirmative action policies. These policies brought about the commonly referred to idea of ‘reverse racism’. I recall my father, most notably, referring to this term to describe the way in which he had to work to get to where he was, whereas black people appeared to be handed opportunities without putting in the work. Resulting from such sentiments, growing up, I found it hard to articulate the rationale behind the implementation of affirmative action policies.

In 1996, when I was 14 years old, my mother decided to immigrate to Aotearoa/New Zealand with my siblings and I. I recall what I perceived to be similar sentiments held by Pākehā regarding the unfairness associated with affirmative action policies that benefit Māori. For example, my step father, who my mother met and married in Aotearoa/New Zealand, explained to me that Māori are never satisfied with the money and land that they are compensated — ‘all we do is give, and all they do it take’.

I could never articulate the rationale that lay behind affirmative action policies until I undertook tertiary education. Sociology has provided me with the means though which to articulate the historical factors that shape social forces. Within these environments, certain people are thereby able to prevail while others are repressed. That is, within Aotearoa/New Zealand

society, the effects of colonisation still see Māori struggling to break out of repression. Affirmative action policies are subsequently put in place to ameliorate the historical effects of colonisation.

My life experiences have inspired me to articulate the relationship between affirmative action and the perceived unfairness thereof. I take this thesis as the first step in a research trajectory in which I hope to continue.

## Acknowledgements

Foremost, my thanks go to the participants of this study. I am grateful to Don Brash and Larry Wood for inviting me into their homes. In addition, I admire their ability in seeing the value of the research, and, most notably, for their willingness to express their own personal system of belief.

I wish to express my gratitude to my main supervisor, Dr Warwick Tie, for the goodwill and the theoretical knowledge that he extended to me prior to, and throughout, the research process. My thanks also go to my second supervisor, Assoc Prof Jeff Sluka, for providing me with the impetus to pursue a Nationalist-type exploratory research area. Dr Vicky Walters provided constructive feedback prior to undertaking this thesis, and showed an ongoing interest to its progression, for which I am grateful. Their assistance ultimately gave me the skills to achieve the outcome of this study.

My thanks also go to the PhD students that provided me with support. Stella Pennell provided me with words of wisdom during the research process, and read a number of draft chapters during the initial stages of the write-up. Kalym Lipsey showed interest and enthusiasm in the numerous times that I turned to him to read draft chapters throughout the write-up.

Lastly, I extend a deep gratitude to my family. I thank my mother, Mignon Stevenson, and my stepfather, Murray Stevenson. They both showed great support for my interest in post-graduate studies. My fiancé, Sheradyn Hart, provided me the stability that I needed through the hard times, and for this, I am truly grateful.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Preface .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	v
List of figures.....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
The fundamentals of Hobson’s Pledge.....	1
Hobson’s Pledge as an alt-right group .....	1
Bio-politics: A definition.....	2
Thesis outline .....	3
Chapter 2: Background.....	8
Introduction.....	8
Extreme right-wing traditions here and abroad .....	9
The New Right .....	11
The New Right in Aotearoa/New Zealand .....	14
Alt-right .....	15
Context .....	17
Conclusion .....	22
Chapter 3: Right-wing extremism and Western liberal democracies: A moral justification for racism?.....	24
Introduction.....	24
The racism inherent to Western Liberal democracies .....	25
University and Hysteria: the justifications and effects of racism .....	30
Conclusion .....	39
Chapter 4: Methodology.....	40
Introduction.....	40
Qualitative multi-methods .....	40
Data organisation and analysis.....	45
Conclusion .....	46
Chapter 5: A true face of ‘whiteness’: the dislocation of ‘coherence’ .....	47
Introduction.....	47
The Orewa Speech: towards nationalist unity .....	48
Applying an identity of their own: from Orewa to Hobson’s Pledge .....	55
A case in point: Te Reo Māori.....	61

Conclusion .....	65
Chapter 6: Maintaining a ‘colour-blind’ New Zealand for all.....	67
Introduction.....	67
An abstract subjectivity: the ‘New Zealand’ citizen .....	67
A political demand for ‘unity’: casting affirmative action as racist .....	72
Defending Māori against patronization .....	77
A liberal democratic defence of fragility.....	80
Conclusion .....	83
Chapter 7: Moving into the future: a post-racial Aotearoa/New Zealand? .....	85
Introduction.....	85
Reducing perceived racists to a small fraction of society .....	86
A democratic right to ‘free speech’ .....	91
An intensification of covertness: a democratic right to oppose Māori wards .....	97
Conclusion .....	100
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....	102
Introduction.....	102
Summary of research discussions .....	102
Implications of removing the ability to express ‘free speech’ .....	105
Contributions of the research.....	105
Limitations.....	106
Future research.....	106
Conclusion .....	107
Reference List.....	108
Appendices .....	116
Appendix A: Information sheet .....	116
Appendix B: Participant consent forms.....	118
Appendix C: Interview schedule.....	120



## List of figures

Figure 2. 1. Employment rates by ethnicity.....	18
Figure 2. 2. Prison population by ethnicity in 2017.....	19
Figure 2. 3. Population of major ethnic groups from 2006 and 2013 censuses.....	19
Figure 2. 4. Total prison population (including forecast), July 2013 — May 2015.....	20
Figure 2. 5. Total prison population (including forecast), July 2016 — April 2018.....	21
Figure 2. 6. Provisional Suicide rates by ethnicity per 100,000 population between July 2007 and June 2017 (n=5536).....	21
Figure 3. 1. Four discourses.....	31
Figure 7. 1. Front of Māori wards petition.....	97
Figure 7. 2. Back of Māori wards petition.....	98