

About Us

We need to combat any fascist organising in public, without any exceptions. When fascists feel free to organise in public their discourse becomes normalised and supporters can gain strength and confidence from this. Furthermore, fascist organising is a threat to the lives of the people they scapegoat. Don't be swayed of arguments for free speech, these people aren't interested in debate, they are already convinced of the correctness of their ideas, and they just want power.

However, it must be remembered at all times that racism cannot be fought by anti-racism alone. The fight against capitalism and the struggle against racism are two sides of the same coin. Neither can succeed without the other. The right has been good at presenting a vision of an alternative to the discontented, we need to do the same, and we need to do it better, after all our vision of an all-inclusive, egalitarian future is more rewarding.

One more thing to reflect on is the common cry since the shooting has been "this is not who we are" but we have to remember there is no "we" that encompasses the whole people of Aotearoa New Zealand. This country, like every other in the world, is a class-divided society, made up of opposing classes, with conflicting class interests, and only one of those classes rules, the capitalist class. That is the class who Jacinda Ardern represents, and amongst all the glorification of the Prime Minister, this has to be remembered. While we can look for the common values that represent us as exploited workers and the response of the New Zealand public in coming together has been heartwarming, there are no common values between the ruling class and ours. Jacinda Ardern, despite the way she has handled the tragedy, as a representative of the ruling class and their institutions that lead to the white-supremacist that carried out this attack is part of the problem, not the solution.

Aotearoa Workers' Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is an Anarchist-Communist group in Aotearoa/ so-called New Zealand.



Since 2008 we have promoted the creation of non-hierarchical grassroots democracy and classless, stateless societies here and internationally. We exist so our ideas can be more widely known, understood and adopted by working people. We see this theoretical knowledge and its application as essential in the struggle to replace the dominant economic system of capitalism. Therefore we have the ultimate aim of becoming a direct action organisation that is physically engaged in daily struggles. We encourage sympathisers to join us and help contribute to this process.

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Can Extinction Rebellion Aotearoa NZ Help Save The World?

Extinction Rebellion was established in the United Kingdom in October 2018 as a movement that aims to use tactics of nonviolent direct action in order to avert the effects of climate change. Since its formation it has rapidly spread to at least 35 other countries, including New Zealand, who have recently carried a few headline-grabbing protests, with the promise of more to come.

Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement are encouraged by the fact that the movement has managed to tap into the sense of alarm over climate change, and mobilised many people not previously involved in protest, and we do not want to undermine the important work that they are doing, but we feel that there is a conversation that needs to be had about some of their demands.

While we support the means of using direct action tactics it is their ends that needs greater examination. Extinction Rebellion is essentially a reformist movement, whose earnest activists lack a real vision of what is needed if we are serious about halting the damage to our environment. Instead, they are pinning their hopes on merely making adjustments to the present system which is destroying our world.

We argue that this isn't enough, and the only way to effectively campaign to halt climate change is to impart a true picture of a capitalism whose insatiable hunger for profit is not only undermining the working and living conditions of hundreds of millions of working people but the basis of life itself. The future of our planet depends on building a liveable environment and a movement powerful enough to displace capitalism.

Extinction Rebellion Aotearoa NZ are guilty of thinking that their demands can create an idyllic capitalism, managed by the state, that can end the destruction being caused to the Earth's environment. They see their role as just needing to make enough noise to wake up political and business leaders. Theirs is a view which sees capitalism moving towards sustainability and zero growth. It is the idea that capitalism can be reformed to become a green system. In this model of capitalist society lifestyles change and infrastructure are reformed while technical green advances are applied. It supposes that all would be well if we all bought organic food, never took a holiday anywhere which would involve flying, and put on more clothes in winter rather than turn up the heating. Green

capitalism presumes it will be enough to replace fossil fuels with renewables, whilst leaving the overall system intact.

We argue that such a scenario completely ignores the way capitalism operates, and must operate, and is therefore hopelessly utopian. The present capitalist system is driven by the struggle for profit. The present system's need for infinite growth and the finite resources of Earth stand in contradiction to each other. Successful operation of the system means growth or maximising profit, it means that nature as a resource will be exploited ruthlessly. The present destruction of the planet is rooted in the capitalist system of production and cannot be solved without a complete break with capitalism. Yet ending capitalism is something that Extinction Rebellion Aotearoa NZ does not appear to be prepared to countenance, they are only attacking the symptoms rather than the cause. They see their green capitalism as a type of capitalism worth fighting for.

We, rather, see the need to create a different form of social organisation before the present system destroys us all. The entire system of production based on wage labour and capital needs to be replaced with a system which produces for human needs. All the half measures of converting aspects of capitalism to limit the damage to the environment, while the fundamentals of capitalism remain in place, are just wishful thinking, and to pretend they could solve our problems is deception on a grand scale.

The fact is that before production can be carried out in ecologically-acceptable ways capitalism has to go. Production for profit

Despite this many working class people often support racism because of the capitalist control over ideas. Capitalists do not simply rule by force, they also rule by promoting a capitalist world-view. They feed the working-class ideas of national and racial superiority and pride through the education system, the media, and literature. The impact of the drip feed of this propaganda throughout life cannot be underestimated.

Another factor is the material conditions of the working class itself. Poverty leaves people open to ideas of being able to take pride in their superiority over another when their own economic-social status is low. Working class people are also locked in competition for a limited amount of jobs, housing and other resources, and it easy to take advantage of any privilege that you may perceive.

With the increasing loss of many jobs to technology, the increasing precariousness nature of work, and stagnating and falling wages, many members of the white working class have lost the security they once took for granted. The resurgence of white-supremacy represents anxiety about a descent into conditions that capitalism and racism had earlier let most whites escape.

If, as we claim, it is capitalism that continually generates the conditions for racist oppression and ideology, then it follows that the struggle against racism can only be consistently carried out by overthrowing the capitalist system. The overthrow of capitalism, however, requires the unification of the working class internationally, across all lines of colour and nationality.

This is not to argue that the fight against racism must be deferred until after the revolution. Instead, we are arguing that only a united working class can defeat racism and capitalism and that a united working class can only be built on the basis of opposing all forms of oppression and prejudice and winning the

support of all members of the working class. It is in the interest of all workers to support the struggle against racism.

Banning assault rifles, asking internet providers to block access to certain sites, demanding the spies spy on the right will not end racism. Neither is looking to politicians for solutions when they have themselves have often been responsible for helping lay the foundations for the attack. This has to be the work of the ordinary people of New Zealand.

Anti-racism should occupy a high priority in the activities of all anarchists. This is important not simply because we always oppose all oppression, but also because such work is essential to the vital task of unifying the working class, a unity without which neither racism nor capitalism can be ended. The world we need to create is one without racial categorisation, without "whiteness", and without capitalism. One crucial way of working toward such a world is defending the marginalised in the here and now. Communities must come to the defence of people of colour.

The dangers of white identity politics must be explained to white members in their community and workplaces. Any hopes of building an anti-racist movement require white radicals educating other whites to identify that progress for other groups means that all workers benefit and that their rise does not mean another's fall. We need to challenge those that say "maybe immigration is too high" or "Muslims are different". We need to stop politicians and media commentators using their platforms to abuse Muslims and migrants for political point scoring.

Without these kinds of actions the far-right will continue to gain footholds amongst the white working-class as they present themselves as the alternative people are looking for, and the answers to the changing world around them.

will not be easy, but it is even more necessary now than ever before.

Kia Kaha!



Some Reflections on the Ōtautahi/ Christchurch Tragedy

Just over one week ago two New Zealand mosques were attacked by a white supremacist carrying four firearms. 50 people were killed, another 50 injured. The gunman lives streamed the attack on the internet and the resulting video was quickly shared. He also issued a 78-page manifesto giving a glimpse into his mindset and why he carried out the act that he did.

Since then much discussion has been held around about New Zealand's colonialist past, its own far-right groups and the existence of racism in New Zealand society at large. All important conversations that need to be had, but cannot really explain what happened in this instance and why. This was an international event that just so happened to have been in New Zealand.

To really understand the nature of the occurrence of racism and white supremacy then the present system we live under, capitalism has to be examined, and how it has used racism and continues to use it, to its own benefit for controlling and dividing workers. It also requires a careful analysis of who benefits from racial oppression. Simply labelling the recent fascist attacks as something unusual, or as the act of an 'evil' individual is not enough.

Capitalism is intertwined with racism. As an idea, it was developed and used to help justify colonisation and slavery. Its use as a form of discrimination and oppression was used to create and justify high levels of exploitation and was an important factor in the development of capitalism. The end of the more overt racist structures of slavery and empire have not buried racism.

Racism survives as an idea and as a practice, as it continues to serve two key functions under capitalism. Firstly, it allows the capitalists to secure sources of cheap, unorganised, and highly exploitable labour, for example, immigrants and minorities. Secondly, racism allows the capitalist ruling class to divide and rule the working class as it is used to foster divisions within the working class at home, classically in the scapegoating of immigrants and refugees for "taking away jobs and housing"; and abroad by bolstering the image of the nation-state by being used to create a sense of superiority over other workers of other nations, creating an appearance of common interest between workers and capitalists of a race or nation, with whom in reality workers have nothing in common.

It goes without saying that we need to counteract these ideas. Racism does not benefit any workers. Even workers who are not themselves directly oppressed by racism lose out from racism because it divides the working class.

interests may be compromised by green government legislation?

In the past, warlike conditions and major disasters typically were seen to justify the temporary abolition of democratic liberties, but how long will they last for this fight, what will be the endpoint, or will the special war-time powers last indefinitely? Would such a suspension of democracy be easy to reverse anyway? These are big questions, and, for those of us that value the limited freedoms we have, they need to be addressed.

Giving more power to the state is also a case of putting all your eggs in one basket as there is no one simple response to fixing climate change. Climate change will bring many issues, those that we can have a go at predicting, but also many unforeseen. Increasing the powers of the state reduces its ability to be flexible and capable of learning from policy mistakes. The fight against climate change must be associated with greater local democracy. We need more democracy, strengthening local and regional capacities to respond to climate change. For those in Extinction Rebellion who think that there can be only one pathway to addressing climate change, the erosion of democracy might seem to be "convenient." History, however, tells us that suppression of democracy undermines the capacity of societies to solve problems.

Those campaigning with Extinction Rebellion are no doubt sincere and caring people who want something different for themselves and future generations. In their own lifestyles they probably have made genuine changes which are in line with a

and the uncontrollable drive to accumulate more and more capital mean that capitalism is by its very nature incapable of taking ecological considerations into account properly, and to be honest it is futile to try to make it do so.

A sustainable society that is capable of addressing climate change can only be achieved within a world where all the Earth's resources, natural and industrial, are under the common ownership of us all, as well as being under grassroots democratic control at a local and regional level. If we are going to organise production in an ecologically sound way we can either plead with the powers that be or we can take democratic control of production ourselves, and the reality is to truly control production we have to own and control the means of production. So, a society of common ownership and democratic control is the only framework within which the aims of Extinction Rebellion can be realised. In reality, to achieve their wish of halting climate collapse, those within Extinction Rebellion should be anarchists.

One of the demands of Extinction Rebellion is a call for participatory democracy, and yet they also talk of giving governments emergency war-time powers. It's not altogether clear what they mean by this. Does it mean, for example, seizing fossil fuel industries and shutting them down? Enforcing new low-carbon, low-travel, and low-meat shifts in consumption? Or imposing sanctions against companies or countries trafficking in fossil fuels? Will it see imprisonment for those whose protest when they feel their

more ecologically sustainable way of living. So have we, but we are well aware that our individual lifestyle changes are not going to change the fundamental nature of the social system which is damaging the planet. Millions of us might give up using products which destroy the environment, but what effect do we really have in comparison with the minority who own and control the multinational corporations. Just 100 companies have been responsible for 71% of global emissions since 1988. They, and all businesses, have an interest in keeping their costs down, and profits up. If their profits come before the long-term interests of people, who can blame them for sacrificing our needs? They can act no other way.

We do not have faith that capitalists, or their parliamentary representatives, can act in time to limit climate change in a meaningful way, but when we make a call for revolution, the answer we mostly get is that the lesser evil of piecemeal reforms will take less time to achieve than our grand anarchist aims. However, we think it is an ill-advised attitude to take that small improvements are more worthy of support than realisable big ones. There is unlikely ever to be a government passing meaningful green legislation. Governments may pass a few minor reforms to appease green voters, the business owners themselves may realise that some of their brands may be harmed by a lack of environmental concern, and greenwash their product, but ultimately these acts will be a sticking plaster when what is required is major surgery.

If anyone concerned with Extinction Rebellion read this and grasps the

impossibility of what they are asking for, then we would say it's time to keep the methods of direct action that you are advocating, but change the demands. If Extinction Rebellion ever wants their arguments to carry any force, then they need to campaign to abolish capitalism and create a system of grassroots democracy.

In the UK a Green Anti-Capitalist Front has been created to work alongside Extinction Rebellion but with a greater focus on the capitalist roots of climate catastrophe. We feel that such a coalition is needed here in Aotearoa / New Zealand. If anyone is interested in working with us to create such a group we can be contacted via our e-mail address awsm@riseup.net



these sorts of weapons. While largely received positively, such bans will do nothing to deal with the racism that provided the motivation for the attacks.

From an anarchist perspective the gun ban, the role of the intelligence agencies and internet censorship are all problematic. Anarchists in this country are not out and about regularly doing arms practice. At this stage, the emphasis has quite rightly gone into propagating our message and quietly working on positive projects (such as bookshops, websites, community activism and so on) demonstrating our co-operative approach in practice. That does not mean the bulk of us are pacifists. We are aware of the need for the working class to come to its own defense should the need arise in the future. As such, we should be wary of any moves by the state to restrict the ability of our class to defend itself in the long term.

As for the intelligence agencies such as the GCSB, SIS, and Police, they indeed have failed to prevent the recent attack and no doubt they will receive some mainstream criticism for this. On our part, we stand completely against the actions of fascists. Our opposition is fundamental and begins wherever and whenever they organise and regardless of their numbers. This position does not mean we should aid or encourage the actions of the official agencies though.

It is highly likely that such state organisations have been monitoring and continue to watch our own groups. They exist to uphold the current ruling system and should the revolutionary movement here ever grow in strength, any legislative, financial or material increases the agencies receive now, would swiftly be turned against us.

Anybody who thinks that scenario is a paranoid fantasy should bear in mind that this state like all states is founded on violence. The

one here is the successor of a brutal colonial regime that killed numerous Maori in pursuit of land. True, it has mostly subsequently altered the location of its violence to more distant geographical locations, as a junior partner in shifting imperialist arrangements. Sometimes this has involved actual use of troops and at other times the provision of intelligence for others to use.

This has included the war in South Africa (where concentration camps were used against women and children), World War One (with the invasion of Samoa and Turkey), World War Two (where anti-Japanese racism was a factor), to Korea, Vietnam (again, where a general racism pervaded and massacres of civilians happened), Iraq and Afghanistan (where the SAS has been active and drone strikes have been carried out against Muslim populations).

There have also been times such as the major strikes in 1913 and 1951, the treatment of conscientious objectors during the World Wars, the Anti-Apartheid struggle in 1981 and the invasion of the Tuhoe Nation in 2007 which included actions against Anarchists, in when the state has added draconian legislation to the books and/or used all sorts of force and dirty tricks to beat back progressive movements.

The implication of the above is that our class needs to undertake the very difficult one of re-doubling its own efforts locally to be eternally vigilant against the activities of fascists and other authoritarians. We need to do this in our own right as an independent social agent, rather than weaken our strength by supporting the government which has a differing agenda for dealing with the aftermath of the Christchurch attack. We also need to continue to develop links with others transnationally who are suffering from and trying to combat the same phenomena of racism, fascism, nationalism and economic exploitation. This

flag operations aimed at taking away guns from the people).

Ideas and ideologies, both good and bad, have been able to spread around the world and all of us are just a click away from being subjected to a rant peddling pseudo-history or Islamophobia.

In recent years various internet search engines have been using what search terms we look up to target advertising at us and also to determine what search results appear when we search for particular things. This is one way both Facebook and Google have become multi-billion dollar companies.

Repulsive beliefs are also great clickbait and generate billions of dollars worth of advertising for Facebook and Alphabet (Google's owners). There's nothing like a headline like "Joe Bloggs MP, calls for ni****s to be deported back to Africa!" to guarantee thousands or millions of clicks – even if an MP of that name never said anything of the sort or that the MP concerned is only a figment of my imagination. Each click generates revenue for the hate site and for Silicon Valley shareholders and owners.

That is the key reason why technology giants have not cracked down on hate speech unless they have been forced to by outside pressure: hate sells.

Another aspect of the Christchurch terrorist attack that has been picked up more by the U.S media rather than the New Zealand media is that the election of Donald Trump has emboldened white nationalists in both the United States and across the world to take more extreme actions. According to the San Francisco Chronicle of November 14th, 2018, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that in the first year of Trump's Presidency federal hate crimes based on race and ethnicity went up from 522 in 2016 to 603 in

2017, religious hate crimes went up 21% and sexual orientation hate crimes went up 19%. Anti-Semitism went up 37%.

Indeed the fascist terrorist who carried out the Christchurch attack specifically named Trump as a person who inspired him as a white nationalist leader. This is one aspect of the attack that should make people aware that it took place in a wider context than that of a single country at the bottom of the world. Despite the fact such attacks are not common here, there is no value in the kind of smug national exceptionalism evident in media and government commentary that sees this country as fundamentally different to the rest of the planet.

Aotearoa has not been immune to Islamophobia. Many, if not most, Muslims have encountered discrimination or hostility at some point: a point raised by news sites in various articles(see for example Stuff, 3/22/19) in which Muslims spoke about being victims of discrimination. There have also been elements among the political parties that have spouted such views at times, for example Richard Prosser wrote while an MP for the populist NZ First Party "If you are a young male, aged between say about 19 and about 35, and you're a Muslim, or you come from a Muslim country, then you are not welcome to travel on any of the West's airlines" (NZ Herald, 12/2/13).

The aim of the terrorist was to provoke an over-reaction from Muslim immigrants so that whites would rise up and drive these so-called Muslim "invaders" out of the country. It didn't happen.

Vigils have been held and more are scheduled for the following weeks. The government announced tighter gun control laws on non-state actors on March 22nd which resulted in a ban on semi-automatic and automatic rifles and parts that can convert other weapons into

Mutual Aid Fund

AWSM has established a **Mutual Aid Fund (MAF)**. This is intended as political and financial support for projects and campaigns organised by other organisations with which we sympathize. We do so with the following considerations:

1) We will use a 'scale of priority' around requests for funds from the MAF. This is based primarily on who the organisation is and secondly on the timeliness or urgency attached to the need for the funds. The priority in order of relevance is:

- a) Work by other Anarcho-communist groups in NZ/A
- b) Work by other Anarchist groups in A/NZ
- c) Work by non-Anarchist groups in NZ/A that benefits the working class
- d) Work by other Anarcho-communist groups overseas
- e) Work by other Anarchist groups overseas
- f) Work by non-Anarchist groups overseas that benefits the working class

So this doesn't mean "First come, first served" but "Most relevant based on our criteria, served."

We expect some acknowledgement or recognition of AWSM's contribution to the particular project. The specifics of this will

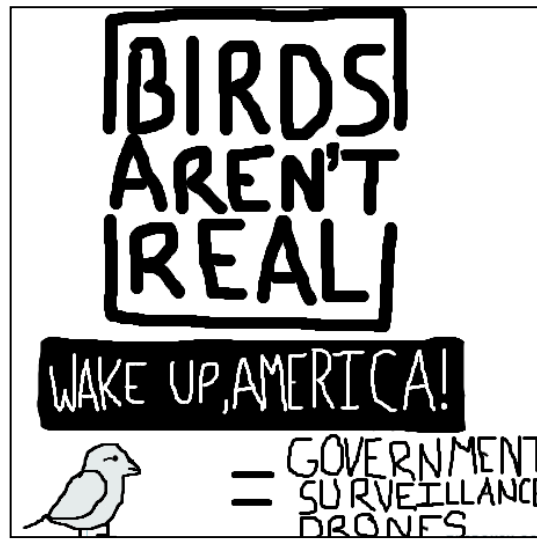
be discussed with the organisation requesting access to the MAF.

While we definitely wish to assist the good work of other organisations, we will not be able to exceed our internally allocated financial resources for the MAF, which will be determined on an annual basis. When its gone, its gone. Like all political organisations, our primary function remains pursuing and promoting our own efforts.

We will endeavour to process requests for MAF access as fast as we can, allowing for the urgency of the project or campaign in question. To help us do this, we would appreciate applicants supply as much detailed information as possible. We will notify people as soon as we can, following internal debate on the request.

We look forward to hearing from interested organisations that share our desire for a world without hierarchy and exploitation.





10 Step Guide to Detecting

Conspiracy Theories & Bullshit

When the Internet made its appearance there was a lot of talk about the information super highway in which people would be able to click on a few buttons and get whatever information they were looking for.

Cue forward to 2019 and the information super highway is looking a lot more like the information rubbish tip. While its undeniable there is some good solid stuff out there, it's also true that not only is some of the information irrelevant to what we're looking for (as anyone who has used Google Search can attest to) but it is also unreliable. One of the reasons is the number of charlatans such as conspiracy theorists who have made the Internet their home.

Despite what you might think, lots of different kinds of people can be sucked in by conspiracy theories. Unfortunately, it is becoming all too common for people who

should know better, to fall victim to this nonsense. This matters because we can only fight back against the very real material and political problems of the world as it is, by understanding reality. Once we know what is really going on, we will have a sound basis for organising resistance to it. So how can we detect if what we are reading is nonsense or a conspiracy theory? The ten step guide below is what I use to sift fact from fiction or half-truths. When that fails I turn to sites like www.skeptoid.com and www.snopes.com which are both non-partisan debunkers of bullshit, no matter what side of the political spectrum it comes from.

I. Use of Vague Statistics.

Any claim that uses a statistic like "One in three people are..." should always be treated with great scepticism because they're meaningless. Without knowing anything like the number of people who were studied or surveyed, the terms of reference for the study or research undertaken or the people or organisation who conducted the research, we cannot determine if the statistic is real or made up. More often than not studies which use such vague references are made up or conducted by highly partisan groups trying to convince people that "research" backs what they say.

II. Awe with Percentages.

How many times have you read a poll that claims that "40% of Americans support Trump" or something similar? Most polls conducted by a polling company tend to interview between 1000 and 1500 people over a given time period and are chosen

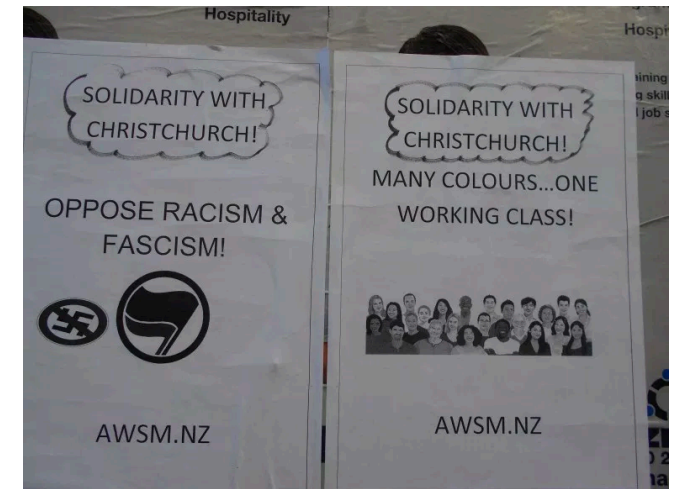


Post...er?

As AWSM enters its 10th year as a political organisation we are keen to continue a focus on getting our message out there to the public at large. A lot of people don't know what we are about, so we want to raise the profile of our brand of politics and of course our group in particular.

One way of doing this we have used recently is the 'old school' one of postering. Most people we've encountered have just been curious about it, some indifferent, a few sympathetic and some in need of spelling and political lessons have been hostile. That's to be expected, though we naturally hope to increase the number of those who are sympathetic over time.

If you are keen to help us spread our message either by offering services such as graphic design skills or by doing some postering yourself, please get in touch. We'd be happy to hear from you.



Christchurch: Some Causes, Official Reactions & An Anarchist Response

Many have been shocked that a fascist walked into the two mosques in Christchurch, and gunned down 50 worshippers. In a world where terrorist attacks have become so common, they are losing the ability to shock, this one did. In part, it was because it happened in a place not noted for such attacks. In part, it was because it was live streamed on Facebook.

Since social media became very popular it is now possible to block out all contrary opinions and to surround yourself with people who not only reinforce your world view but who radicalise somebody in the process. In the media, the term most commonly used to describe this insulated world is "echo chamber".

The greatest strength of the Internet is also its greatest weakness: the fact anyone can say and do almost anything they want on it. There are few checks or balances on the Internet. This has allowed every misanthropic element from radical Islamic terrorist groups to white power hate groups to flourish, along with conspiracy theories which range from the merely bizarre (e.g the Earth is flat) to the downright vile (e.g mass shootings are false

Business” and “Big Government”. Everything they say and write ends up being about how something prefixed with the word “Big” is behind everything they dislike. Accusing people of belonging to Big Something-or-other is a sure-fire way to try and discredit anyone who challenges the claims made by a conspiracy theorist.

That leads us to the single biggest indicator that something is wrong or a conspiracy theory.

X. Using supposedly “Anti-Establishment” sources because they provide “alternative sources of news”.

A British conservative may be happier reading The Times while a liberal counterpart may be more contented with reading The Guardian but both newspapers contain the same basic content. What separates the two newspapers is their bias. The former is biased towards its conservative readership and the latter is biased towards its liberal readership. Bias doesn't make a news story fake or the news organisation a fake news peddler or a bunch of conspiracy theorists.

While both The Guardian and The Times are Establishment publications they employ editors, sub-editors, fact checkers, reporters and journalists who actually go out and find out if what is being told to them is true. They usually come back with different interpretations of what has happened but they don't differ when it comes to the basic facts. They also distinguish between opinion pieces where a writer peddles their viewpoint and the news. Most supposedly “Anti-Establishment” or alternative news

sources have none of these things. They don't distinguish between facts and opinions. They don't bother to find out if what is being written or broadcast is true or false. They only care that what they produce fits in with their world view. That usually means they cite from sources of like-minded groups and individuals.

‘All’ that most multi-billion dollar media companies want us to do (which is bad enough in itself!) is read stories while they harass us with endless advertising and marketing campaigns that keep the money rolling in for these companies. Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation is the multi-billion media empire it is because it encompasses newspapers, magazines and websites that have at least some diversity of opinions. That correspondingly brings in at least some diversity of readers and viewers whom Murdoch's advertisers can harrange with advertising. They have a vested interest to tell us the truth most of the time, even if it's usually biased in favour of Capitalists and Capitalism.

Don't be fooled by the news charlatans and conspiracy theorists. They aren't providing you with ‘alternative facts’ from alternative news sources. They make up what they say and they're playing you for suckers as they laugh all the way to the bank with the money they got from hacking your personal data when you clicked on their site. You might find it temporarily comforting to believe you've been handed the mysteries of the universe via a website run by somebody living in his Mum's garage. Spending hours listening to podcasts about chem-trails, our alien lizard overlords, the flat earth or the moon-landing ‘hoax’ etc. will perhaps provide

from electoral or other voting rolls. It's not hard to realise that it is impossible to determine what millions of people think about anything on the basis of what 1000 or so people say. You also have to consider that such a sample excludes people who aren't on electoral rolls for various reasons. Despite the claims that such polls are scientific no one has been able to explain just what part of the polling process actually involves science. Percentages without context are another problem. Informing us that the average house price has increased by 35% in a particular area doesn't tell us anything. Telling us that the average house price in that area was \$250,000 back in 2012 then telling us that house prices in that area have increased by 35% gives us information that is useful.

III. Emotive Manipulation.

In some news networks there is a lot of pressure to try and get as many people to support a certain viewpoint or to galvanise support for a particular cause. One way this is done is to get a hysterical parent wailing about how her child is a victim of a certain social or other evil in order to rally support for that cause. The problem with such news stories is little, or no, attempt is made to find out if anything the said parent has claimed is true, false or an combination of both. Also, no attempt is made to put things in context.

The problem with anecdotal, human interest and other stories of this nature is they exaggerate the extent of a social evil in the minds of the public. An example of this is when a child is snatched off the streets and murdered.

Parents stop letting their children walk to school out of fear the same thing will happen to their own children. This is despite the fact that crime statistics from the United States and other countries repeatedly show that the chances of anyone, let alone a child, being snatched from the streets and killed by strangers is very rare. For example, according to the New York Times (August 17th, 2016), the FBI reported that only 1,381 of the 11,961 homicides reported within the United States in 2014 involved people who were unknown to the victims. Emotionally manipulative news items can also have serious consequences. U.S President Donald Trump's crack down on undocumented immigrants and his so-called “Muslim ban” was largely the result of emotive hysteria whipped up by Fox News about crimes committed by undocumented migrants and terrorist acts by Islamic State in Europe.

IV. The Defying of Reality.

Let's be blunt. Most conspiracy theories and incorrect news stories are exposed as such because they fail to pass the most basic test of “Is it practical or realistic that such a thing could happen?” The 9/11 Truthers often come unstuck on this one. They would have us believe that multiple American government agencies conspired to murder thousands of their fellow Americans so that George W Bush could justify invading Afghanistan for its oil and gas reserves. There's at least four major problems with that:

1. A plot to kill thousands of people would've required a degree of co-operation between various government agencies

that did not exist at the time – and still doesn't. U.S government agencies are notorious for jealously guarding their jurisdictions and tend to avoid co-operating unless circumstances or the law requires them to do so. It was the lack of co-operation between government and intelligence agencies that enabled the 9/11 hijackers to enter the United States despite the terrorists involved in the hijackings being on known or suspected terrorist watch lists. It was to ensure better information gathering and sharing between these agencies that the Department of Homeland Security was created. Yet, despite this, co-operation between various government agencies is the exception rather than the rule.

2. American civil servants are required to take an oath to uphold the U.S Constitution. As the U.S Constitution forbids extra-judicial killings (of which plotting to kill thousands of Americans would be an obvious breach of said Constitution) public servants would've had the legal requirement to come out and denounce such behaviour.

3. Afghanistan was not invaded for either gas or oil because Afghanistan has neither. It was invaded because George W Bush believed that the Taliban were harbouring the man they believed was responsible for orchestrating the 9/11 attacks.

4. Genuine whistle-blowers go to credible news organisations like CNN, ABC or NBC or newspapers like the L.A Times,

Washington Post or New York Times. They don't go to websites like InfoWars or tabloids like National Inquirer.

V. Ignorance of basic facts.

Conspiracy theorists often lack a basic understanding of the relevant fields they are lecturing about. None of the 9/11 Truthers or so-called "Scholars for 9/11 Truth" have relevant qualifications or expertise in the fields that would be most relevant in any investigation into the 9/11 terrorist attacks such as building demolition, structural engineering, air crash investigation, architecture, disaster management, building and construction or even chemistry. Instead, the 9/11 Truthers are made up of people like celebrities, religious scholars, former intelligence officers, ex-military officers and sports stars. In other words, people who simply don't have the expertise or knowledge to answer if a building can collapse pancake-style from causes other than an explosion or if molten steel would contain thermite independent of any explosives. That's why air crash investigators, arson investigators and police detectives don't just look for one or two things when they suspect damage might've been caused by a bomb. They look for many things because sometimes explosive residue can be found at the site of a disaster that has been caused by something else.

For example, explosive residue was found on Partnair Flight 394 which crashed off the coast of Denmark on September 8th, 1989. Many people, particularly in Norway, initially believed it was a bomb because of reports of a loud explosion and because the Prime Minister of Norway had recently

flown on the same aircraft. The reason why explosive residue was found on the wreckage was the result of contamination resulting from military ordinance littering the sea floor from various naval battles fought in the area. The cause of the crash was the failure of counterfeit aircraft parts used during aircraft maintenance.

VI. Confusing Authority with Expertise.

Yes, there is a difference between authority and expertise. Authority is gained from one's position or title within a group or organisation. Expertise is gained from learning, working in and mastering a particular skill, trade or area of knowledge.

Among conspiracy theorists there is a tendency to ignore the experts in their chosen fields in favour of authority figures. The more common authority figures they listen to are celebrities, ex-wrestlers like the former Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura, former military officers and former police officers. Few conspiracy theorists see the absurdity of debunking authority figures who have the expertise to back up what they are saying by claiming they're all in cahoots with the evil, omnipresent government or Big Something-or-other but not the authority figures who go along with their conspiracies.

VII. Playing on prejudices.

They play on people's prejudices to advance their nonsense. Despite what the moral relativists may claim it's not necessary to be a white heterosexual male to indulge in stereotyping. Stereotyping is attributing to all persons within a certain group attributes – both negative and

positive – that may or may not be held by many people within that group. Some of the more obvious stereotypes are the hard working and well educated Asians who are all work and no fun, the Muslim terrorists who want to impose Sharia law upon us, the lazy drug addicted welfare queen... I'm sure there's many other stereotypes that one can think of. Stereotyping often comes about as the direct result of selective reporting about certain groups within both traditional and social media that is picked up and used to vilify anyone who belong to those groups. All arguments presented by anyone from those groups will be greeted with comments like "Oh you would say that because you are one of them!" and people who defend those being stereotyped will be attacked with comments like "That's what we expect from an apologist for these people."

VIII. Treating the masses with contempt.

For people who claim to speak for the ordinary person in the street or who desire to "educate" them the conspiracy theorists regularly abuse and vilify the masses by labelling them "sheeple", "muppets", "ignorant" or "liars". Rarely, if ever, do they assume the masses might have enough intelligence to work out the facts for themselves. A search on YouTube for anything to do with debunking anti-vaccination campaigns, 9/11 Truthers or Pizzagate will provide ample examples of this contempt in the Comments section.

IX. The Obsession with the word "Big".

An obsession is prefixing any sector of society they dislike with the word "Big" as in "Big Pharma", "Big Agriculture", "Big