



The 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre in China saw several hundred civilians killed for their part in a student-organised call for democratic reform

# Political apathy

With the elections approaching quickly, *Bradford Heap* says that kiwis need to take more of an interest in the fate of their country.

Do we care about our country's future direction? The results of a survey conducted by the Department of Marketing at Palmerston North suggest that we don't. The survey, on what makes a good New Zealand Citizen, is both sad and scary.

The survey found most New Zealanders believe that to be a good citizen you should: obey laws, vote in elections, try to understand other people's views, and keep an eye on the actions of the Government. However this last statement is undermined by only 30 per cent believing that you should be active politically.

But who can blame people for thinking

like this? The survey also concluded that only 40 per cent believe that you can trust the government. 67 per cent think

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that they don't have a say in politics and only 27 per cent of people think that the

Government cares about them.

To put it simply the results show the sad state of New Zealand politics - a system that people have no faith in. One they don't believe that they can trust, yet we call it a democracy. The survey does not stop there - only 10 per cent of New Zealanders are associated with a political organisation and only three per cent are active. Only 30 per cent of us have attended a political rally or contacted an MP. 80 per cent have signed a petition but when it comes to it only 25 per cent have the guts to take part in a demonstration.

These results about the general population could be related back to students and student unions. Nandor Tanczos's article about student culture (*Satellite* issue 4) outlines the "golden days" of student unions up till 1990 where student politics collapsed. Since

then student unions have been trying to rebuild, but this has been a slow process. When was the last time you saw hundreds of students marching down Queen Street protesting? For most students the answer would be never.

Ladies and gentlemen, students and staff of Albany - it is time that we regain our voice. For too long students have been just looked over and brushed aside by politicians. This is election year, let's make some noise and let those politicians know that we will not be quiet any longer. That we are interested in the future of this country. That we want a better New Zealand for the future.

Student debt is the biggest issue facing New Zealand students - let the politicians know this! Research is showing that student debt is having a massive affect on the lives of students even after they graduate. The burden of debt is affecting everything from fertility to home buying. The current government has an opportunity to reduce the financial burden on students by introducing a universal student allowance, but once again we were overlooked and left out. But don't go voting for National either because they are the bastards who introduced the student loan scheme in the first place.

So how can you be seen and heard? Simple. Get Involved.

The easiest way of getting involved is with the ASA. The ASA is your student voice on campus, and they are constantly after volunteers. Now you may be going "I've heard this all before" or "why should I waste my time and effort for something I don't get paid for?" Well hang on a minute - why don't you try and do something for free for once, make this world a better place. Put simply this is your community. How good it is - is up to you.

On a slightly larger level, make sure you vote in the general election this year, and make your vote count. Vote not because you have to, but because you want to. Because you want to make this country better than it currently is. Don't vote for the political party that is trying to bribe you with the best deals or whatever -

vote for the party that has the policies that you want in this country.

Want to make some noise? Get involved with Revolt. Revolt is a student protest group. A service of your students association. Over 5000 Massey students did not use their chance to protest student debt in front of Minister for Education, Trevor Mallard. As protesting students tried to get more support before the protest a student shouted back: "Protest? Why? What's the point?" This sums up what many students act like. Are you willing to act like this any longer? If you do the politicians will just continue to laugh at us and put us further in debt. For more information on revolt see the ASA office or [www.revolt.ac.nz](http://www.revolt.ac.nz)

So what if I don't get involved?

1. Read 1984 by George Orwell.
2. Take a look at the Tiananmen Square Massacre. If in 1945 the Chinese people

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had stood against communism, students would not have been murdered in cold blood for what they believed in 44 years later.

3. Take a look at the countries where there is no democracy and see what rights the people have. Take a look at China, Rwanda, Nigeria, the former USSR, Iran, Iraq before the war, South Africa during apartheid, Kosovo. If you do not stand up for what you believe in, this is what could happen to New Zealand. Take a look at the political history of the countries above. It's your choice - use your voice and have freedom. Remain silent and risk losing your freedom of speech, becoming politically imprisoned in your own country.

Finally, when you do vote, vote with wisdom. Vote for a government that you can trust in. Not for a government that ignores the wishes of the majority. Not for a government that will put students

more in debt. Vote for a government that will value you as an individual. A government that will listen to your views. A government that values your life more than money.

Look at the case of Schapelle Corby. Found guilty of smuggling drugs into Bali. The justice system is so corrupt that they discarded almost all of the defence evidence. However, John Howard and the Australian Government have been too fucking weak to stand up for her. Now she is going to spend 20 years in jail for a crime that she didn't commit. Just because John Howard values the money from Indonesian tourist dollars more than the life of one of his citizens.

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voted for doesn't give a fuck about you. Then decide who you are going to vote for.

**Check out:**

**[www.asa.ac.nz](http://www.asa.ac.nz)**

**for information on the Albany Students Association and how you can get involved politically on campus**