

Mike Head of the ICFI critiques the 'No Politics' of #Unity4J

On August 9th, during a live-streamed '[Politics in the Pub](#)' event in Sydney, entitled "The Gaggling of Julian Assange", a highly significant exchange occurred between Mike Head – a senior writer for the World Socialist Website (and senior member of the Socialist Equality Party Australia) and Suzie Dawson – journalist and leading spokesperson for #Unity4J and Leader of the Internet Party of New Zealand.

The essence of the exchange was a debate over the 'no politics' perspective of #Unity4J. The exchange is so significant because it illuminates the central, political issues raised by this 'no politics' perspective, including its consequence of sanctioning the involvement of far-right figures in the Free Julian Assange campaign.

Since Julian Assange was placed in virtual and physical isolation within the Ecuadorean Embassy in London, by having his visitors and internet cut off on March 28th – a leading role within the campaign to Free Julian Assange has been played by #Unity4J. #Unity4J was founded by Suzie Dawson with the backing of multi-millionaire [Kim Dotcom](#).

#Unity4J has organised highly successful, monthly online vigils of high-profile, supporters of Julian Assange.

The [About section of the #Unity4J](#) website states "***In a world of divide and conquer, uniting people is the ultimate act of resistance. Therefore, we must bring together ALL public figures who support Julian and WikiLeaks, regardless of their political views or party affiliation.***" It has been emphasised repeatedly by figures central to #Unity4J that everyone involved must "leave their politics at the door".

What this means in practice, is that several high-profile, pro-Trump, alt-right and far-right media and political figures have been included in the line up for the #Unity4J online vigils. These include but are not limited too Lee Stranahan, Cassandra Fairbank H.A. Goodman, Jack Posibiec and Ross Cameron.

Division over this policy has emerged, with both the publishing of an article on this website – [classconscious.org](#) – entitled [The Dead End of 'Uniting' with Fascists to Defend Julian Assange](#) and with the resignation of Naomi Colvin as director of the Courage Foundation after she refused to comply with a directive of the Courage Foundation Board to remove whistleblower and journalist, Barrett Brown as a beneficiary of Courage due to his [criticism](#) of Wikileaks and Julian Assange.

In her [resignation statement](#) Naomi cited her concerns over the direction of the advocacy campaign for Julian and the involvement of the far-right. She also links to the aforementioned [classconscious.org](#) article, [The Dead End of 'Uniting' with Fascists to Defend Julian Assange](#) and states her agreement with it.

It is within this context, that the illuminating exchange between Mike Head and Suzie Dawson occurred. We believe at [classconscious.org](#) that Mike Head in his responses to Suzie Dawson – articulated clearly how the mantra of 'no politics', which as Suzie explained, was inspired by the global Occupy Movement of 2011, is a dead-end for both this campaign and the international working-class as a whole.

The central question of whether the campaign for Julian Assange should include far-right figures who support xenophobia and racism is one that must be resolved – not just for this campaign – but in order for the building of an international movement of the youth and working-class to be built against war and to defend democratic rights more

broadly.

We believe the perspective outlined by Mike Head at 'Politics in the Pub' should be shared and read widely. The following short video contains Mike Head's key critique of the #Unity4J 'no politics' perspective and a transcript can be found below.

Mike Head: "Yeah, but look, seven years on from Occupy, Wall Street is in control far more than ever before, inequality is just staggering, you know Occupy completely failed. In fact, it derailed the whole movement behind Obama and the only reason Trump and the alt-right can get a voice is because of the betrayals of Obama, Clinton and the Democrats and Bernie Sanders too, who delivered... who tried to get people to vote for Hillary Clinton. These are political questions, you can't avoid them. You can have all the 'unity' you claim to have, and at the end, you're cosyng up to extreme, right-wing forces who are pro-capitalist forces, like Kim Dotcom by the way, you know, multi-millionaires. They have no common interests with the working-class. I'm sorry, these are very basic questions."

Suzie Dawson also believed this exchange with Mike Head was illuminating – however, from her perspective it completely vindicated her position. This is her tweet in response to the classconscious.org article that criticised #Unity4J's inclusion of the far-right:



It should be noted at this stage the WSWS has yet to comment on their website on either the intervention of Mike Head at 'Politics in the Pub' or the perspective advanced by #Unity4J in particular, despite [publishing an article on a #Unity4J online vigil](#).

Classconscious.org has made an appeal to ICFI members and supporters to raise and discuss these issues within the different sections of the party internationally in the [following article – entitled](#) 'The ICFI must expose the petit-bourgeois and far-right forces who have co-opted the solidarity campaign for Julian Assange: An appeal to ICFI members and supporters'.

FULL VIDEO OF EXCHANGE BETWEEN SUZIE DAWSON AND MIKE HEAD (TRANSCRIPT BELOW)

TRANSCRIPT OF DEBATE BETWEEN MIKE HEAD AND SUZIE DAWSON OVER 'NO POLITICS' PERSPECTIVE OF #UNITY4J

Mike Head: Well, I guess my question is, you say "no politics", but this is a political struggle surely? And I don't think it's cultural arrogance by the way, its imperialist power, U.S. hegemony being defended. We had two world wars to establish that and now we are back on the same warpath again. I mean Assange's plight cannot be understood outside this whole political context. In my opinion we are fighting against the capitalist state. Huge profits and plans to maintain American global domination. How can we free him without taking up that fight?

Suzie Dawson: Well I completely agree with you that it is imperialism and you can see this tracked back through history,

time and time again. Julian is not the first person to be in this situation but he is the first person within this current generation and within this current paradigm to be in this situation.

Now, why we need to divorce it from politics, is because the second I say to people, if you believe you want Julian free you can be a part of my movement, I have a mass movement. But the second I say to people, if you believe that Julian Assange should be freed and you believe this and you believe that and you believe the other thing and you believe the other thing, well I don't have a mass movement anymore, now I have me and my mates. So we have to decide, do we want to have a mass movement or do we want to be ideological puritans quite frankly and say no you can't be with me unless you believe everything I believe. I think they can be with us if they say they believe in this one achievable goal because it is overdue, its past time for the people to have a win like this. It is way past time for us to tackle Empire directly and to be victorious and we have a much better chance of that with the 99% than we do with the 25%. So that's my answer there. I have my own personal politics and my own things I believe and I set them aside in terms of just this movement. I might not set them aside in terms of my other activities, the rest of my activism and journalism, but in terms of this movement our best chance of victory is to get as many people on board as possible which means we need to have as few ideological borders as possible. It needs to be as open and approachable as possible and I think we have seen that with the numbers achieved in such a short time even without any mainstream audience hearing about it to bolster those numbers so I feel the proof is in the pudding and here is the pudding.

(Audience clapping)

Mike Head: How can you free Julian Assange unless you clarify why he is being persecuted and who is persecuting him?

Suzie Dawson : *I think everyone inherently understands why he is being persecuted. He tells the truth to the people and the people are thirsty for that truth which is why I discussed with Chris Hedges last month.. we were talking about all these algorithms which have been imposed on social media and what-not, to try and silence alternate voices and yet if you go to the CNN channel you see maybe 20,000 views on a video, if you go to the comedian Jimmy Dore's channel you see 250,000 or 300,000 views on a video, so even these methods of censorship which have been applied aren't working and the reason they aren't working is because the people are so thirsty for the truth that they will go to the source, they will go to Jimmy's channel looking for Jimmy's show because they know Jimmy tells the truth and so we still have an open window of time at the moment. I don't think people need to be told why Julian is being persecuted. I think it is abundantly obvious and clear to them why he is. What I think people need to be told is how to free him. That yes we can do it. Yes we can build a united force and yes we can storm that digital barricade and we can force these governments to adhere to the will of the people and to international law but it require numbers and it will require persistence.*

(Audience claps)

Professor Stuart Rees (Australian academic, human rights activist and author): *For what it is worth Suzie, you could be a life member of Politics in the Pub because you have given us a sense of campaign coherence through unity. I do understand what you mean by leaving politics at the door even though paradoxically it is a political campaign. Once you include all sorts of ism's, in a way that has been the Achilles heel of the campaign to free asylum seekers. So many ism's so that the campaign, that the coherence of the campaign is lost but you have given us an inspiring address and a sense of coherence about this campaign.*

Cathy Vogan (MC and Sydney Artist): *I think we can all come*

together on this because it's all about human rights and the rule of law and that applies to everybody – it doesn't matter what your politics are, you all have your basic human rights.

Suzie Dawson: I think tribalism serves imperialism and that is something we might not realise. I mean we know they run a divide-and-conquer but to what degree do we feed into that by participating in it. So, I am not at all meaning to demean anyone's beliefs because I believe everyone has the right to their own beliefs. In my role as, I started as a journalist in the Occupy Auckland media team in New Zealand and we would support, we made a blanket rule that we would support and amplify every activism effort no matter which sphere it was coming from. So we would go and cover the labour union marches that were heavily backed by the Labor Party. We would go and cover the GreenPeace events. We would cover any event at all from whatever party – we wouldn't discriminate because at the end of the day, all of them were fighting the state, all of them are fighting power. When we look at what we have seen occur in the U.S. in the last two years, we don't see protests versus police anymore like we did in 2011 and 2012, 2013. There was a protest group, a frontline. On the other side of that frontline were armed police-officers, riot police. It was very clear we were confronting the mechanisms of state power and it was very clear who the enemy was. In the last two years what we have seen as a result of political factionalism, tribalism and divide-and-conquer tactics which are driven on both the left and right by the intelligence agencies – make no qualms about it, they love this left-versus-right, divide-and-conquer. What we see now is a group of protestors against another group of protestors and the agents of the state are standing on the sideline and eating popcorn – they think it's hilarious, it's classic. They don't even need to fight or worry anymore, they just sit there and watch the show of citizen-versus-citizen, protester-versus-protester and that is why we have got to knock that on the head. It should never be the citizenry versus the citizenry, it has got to be the

citizenry against the state and the mechanisms of power. So we need to remember and we go back to 2011 to the Occupy movement – nobody said when you went to an Occupy, ‘Did you vote for Democrat or did you vote for Republican?’. Nobody cared because we knew the whole democratic system was a farce, a puppet show, a joke – so we didn’t care who you voted for. We had conservatives at Occupy, we had libertarians at Occupy, we had socialists at Occupy, environmentalists at Occupy, we had anarchists at Occupy, we had classic liberals at Occupy. All of them had equal social standing, all of them had equal rights to participation and all of them were on that protest line against the police, against the state and against the power and that’s what in a way we are trying to return to here, to bring back that memory that we are the 99%, all of us and that all of us are required in this fight against the powers that are persecuting Julian Assange.

Mike Head: *Yeah, but look, seven years on from Occupy, Wall Street is in control far more than ever before, inequality is just staggering, you know Occupy completely failed. In fact, it derailed the whole movement behind Obama and the only reason Trump and the alt-right can get a voice is because of the betrayals of Obama, Clinton and the Democrats and Bernie Sanders too, who delivered..who tried to get people to vote for Hillary Clinton. These are political questions, you can’t avoid them. You can have all the ‘unity’ you claim to have, and at the end, you’re cosyng up to extreme, right-wing forces who are pro-capitalist forces, like Kim Dotcom by the way, you know, multi-millionaires. They have no common interests with the working-class, I’m sorry. These are very basic questions.*

Kathy Vogan: *I am sorry, you are the guest speaker and we need to move on to the Q and A because these good people..*

Suzie Dawson: *I would like to answer, Kathy if I could, I dont want to destroy your schedule but I would love to answer those two points if I could briefly.*

So one is, I think you are getting confused, we are not trying to take the Free Julian Assange movement and make it a political paradigm that everyone has to live under. We are trying to take the Free Julian Assange movement to Free Julian Assange. So you can still have all your political spaces, all your political conversations, your political groups independently outside this one issue of freeing Julian Assange. This is where we are looking for that unity, this is where we are looking for a single achievable goal.

Now in regards to Kim Dotcom, I think you know if you took yourselves back thirty years, certainly I know it's true, if I go back twenty or thirty years because I am not as much as a spring chicken as I might actually appear, that I was a very different person with a different belief system and a different situation and this is the same thing with Kim. Ok, so the Kim we saw in 2014 meeting with Maori up and down New Zealand, with indigenous leaders, listening to the issues, seeing what the situation is like on the ground, backing social initiatives. He has done a whole lot of things, that if you go back fifteen years that Kim Dotcom would never even have conceived of spending his time doing. And Kim is the first person to tell you that when he was targeted by the FBI, when he lost every cent that he had and almost every friend that he had and all the capitalist power he had obtained was down the toilet overnight – that it was a wakeup moment for him and that he has not been able to view the world the same way since then as he did before then and his actions are pretty obvious you know since then that he did have that paradigm shift... that's why he spent the money that he did setting up the Internet Party, that's why he still backs the Internet Party now even though it can not serve him in anyway or in any manner. It is not a political force significant enough to change any political election and yet Kim still supports it.

Now Kim is one of three people who are being prosecuted in the

Eastern District Court of Virginia. 1. Kim Dotcom 2. Julian Assange and 3. Edward Snowden. They are being prosecuted by the same prosecutor in the same court. The same tactics of oppression and the same risk to life and same threat to life and it applies to all three of them. All of them live everyday not knowing what will happen to them in five years, ten years, twenty years time, whether they will be in a supermax, whether they will be assassinated. So do not assume that just because Kim came from a capitalist background and was a multi-millionaire that the Kim, that's the same Kim who lost everything and has been engaged with quite frankly, very leftist.., despite that he does have some conservative rhetoric, at the end of the day you go to internet.org.nz, you look at our policies – our policies are social housing, our policies are free education, our policies are strong leftist, I am a child of the left, they are strong leftist policies and that's the party that is backed by Kim. So that's all I want to say on that front is that people evolve and Kim is one of them and I'm another one of them.

Full video of the entire two hour broadcast of Politics in the Pub from August 9th including the presentations of Mike Head and Christine Assange can be [found here](#).