



Welcome to **ATTACK!** a two-page occasional publication. Most of **ATTACK!** will be concerned with the holistic curriculum which, if acted on, is a fundamental way to undermine the present undemocratic education system. Don't be discouraged if opportunities to teach holistically are limited, do your best, be a guardian, and act as a witness to this culturally significant and inspiring way of teaching and learning. **ATTACK!** is a partner to <https://networkonnet.wordpress.com>

Attack! 96 My call: Hekia is about to resign



The big shake-up in education will, I predict, result in an even bigger shake-up for Hekia Parata. She knows that what she is doing in school education is failing; she has lost confidence in the ideas she so jauntily promoted and ruthlessly imposed; she has even tired of the big cover-ups of NCEA and national standards; she knows results are worsening especially for Maori; she doesn't know where to go next, well aware that the changes to the Education Act are more of the same; and she has become tired of following the script provided by Bill English and Stephen Joyce – she wants out.

And there is something else, something coming up: I suspect the imminent announcement of Iona Holsted as the new education secretary was over her dead body.

In summary, I predict the imminent resignation of Hekia Parata.

We have watched each other for five years like hawks, I think with this flutter of her wings (see below) I have got it right.

And, if she does resign, whoever replaces her will be a cypher, the drivers once again Bill English, Stephen Joyce, and John Key.

Hekia, I project, can't feel it in herself to commit herself to more of the same as represented by the 2017 election manifesto.

Those in education will recognise what is happening as the neoliberal tragedy-go-round: neoliberal policies are imposed and of course fail because they are about meeting adult ideological needs, and of the most devious kind, those of neoliberal politicians – not about children's needs in all their complexity – and that failure is being blamed on schools which is then used to justify even more repressive neoliberal policies.

My prediction is she will step down over Christmas (about when Iona begins).

I give no quarter in my judgement of her because she has, indeed, been the worst minister of education ever. She deserves no sympathy for her appalling behaviour; like Anne Tolley she has been used as a cover for English's neoliberal drive and Key's deep hostility to public education – but Hekia did some even more unforgivable things and I stand by every word of my criticism of her. A top academic said surely Lockwood Smith was worse; no I said he was a bumbler more old-style conservative as against someone with an unrelenting anti-teacher, power-hungry obsession.

Hekia knows, except for some academic and principal cronies, she won't be missed, and that she will go down in education as the worst minister of education ever, unparalleled in never allowing a fact go by without seriously interfering with it.

Deep down she knows history will condemn her: the most telling condemnation being her betrayal of Maori children with her pernicious 18% rhetoric; and the mayhem created by her leadership style, locked as she was into an inability, because of her personality, to introduce education change, even in the rare circumstance where it had the potential to do good, without revelling in the power of imposition and thereby extinguishing any possibility of it.

With all this, I said 'Hah!' things are getting beyond her, get ready for the profile spin; she will be contemplative of leaving her job and thinking of how she will be remembered.

And on 27 September there it was in the *NZ Herald*; what a strange founding of an article it was by Nicholas Jones. He had obviously been called in by Hekia's media team and handed the bundle.

I immediately knew she was a finished. In some ways it was pathetic, trying as she was to resurrect her liberal persona for her long-term reputation.

There was a potted history of the girl from Ruatoria being marvellous, along with bits and pieces of the so-called shake-up, and some comment from education spokespeople.

It had the structure of a squashed jellyfish

So there it was, ostensibly about the big shake-up but really about Parata trying to come across as the Ruatoria girl next door: we get family references, for instance, crossing the Waiapu on horseback to go to the rugby, her secondary school principal father, and a lot of attention to All Blacks (even an actual tweet sending best wishes to the World Cup squad), then a reference to her Waikato university days and 'helping to get the Hamilton game called off' (sorry Hekia I was there, and all the other weeks before, noticed Donna but not you). Also how she resigned from the Party over Don Brash.

The article in its formlessness and idiosyncrasy unprecedented surely in newspaper history.

Something was up and that indicates Hekia was in danger of coming down.

For Hekia to use this populist, down-home stuff to distract from the way she ripped the heart out of New Zealand schools, especially primary schools, to somehow redeem her reputation and maintain her self-esteem has a creepy element.

With her million dollar smile and oleaginous demeanour what a cold-hearted minister of education she has been. She betrayed Maori children and now, in the changes to the Education Act, is making victims of children with special needs in the archetypical neoliberal guise of pretending to help them. She once notoriously hinted that special needs children are a result of poor teaching and teachers should just get on with it; and here we have the dismal concept of targeted provision, and even worse bulk funding, with special needs children set to suffer the most, along with other children requiring individual attention, many of them Maori. And let's not forget Christchurch – she was at her worst, and that is saying something,

But I am drawing a line now, with her going her best moment.

What are we to expect from National in the future? bulk funding and clusters to be imposed; clusters to be an immediate, local, and stifling way to impose conformity; principals to be state servants; opening up of principal positions to businesspeople; appointments and salaries by results (based on bulk funding); teaching and principal positions on contract; a downgrading (in effect) of boards of trustees (subject to increased direction from the centre); new types of schools – a combination of charter schools and academies; a huge emphasis on computer use; larger classes based on that computer use; schools to be vocationally organised; an even more rigidly laid out curriculum; an even more rigorous testing regime and an immediate relaying of results to centre; the use of overseas privatised companies to advise and develop programmes of work.

All this has deep implications for the teacher organisations: it frees teacher organisations of previous assurances and commitments, providing them with an opportunity to strike out on a more independent course – they should rethink their position, role, and philosophy. NZEI, in particular, needs to become a more democratic organisation and concentrate its work on keeping members in schools fully informed and involved. The guiding policy for both organisations should be to maintain communication with the government but to act on the understanding that the issue is one of winning hearts and minds; as part of this they need to develop internal think tanks and carefully constructed procedures for relating to the media and generating publicity.

We await to see if my reading of the newspaper tea leaves and Hekia is correct.

The birds are tweeting – I'm off to at least get an hour.

