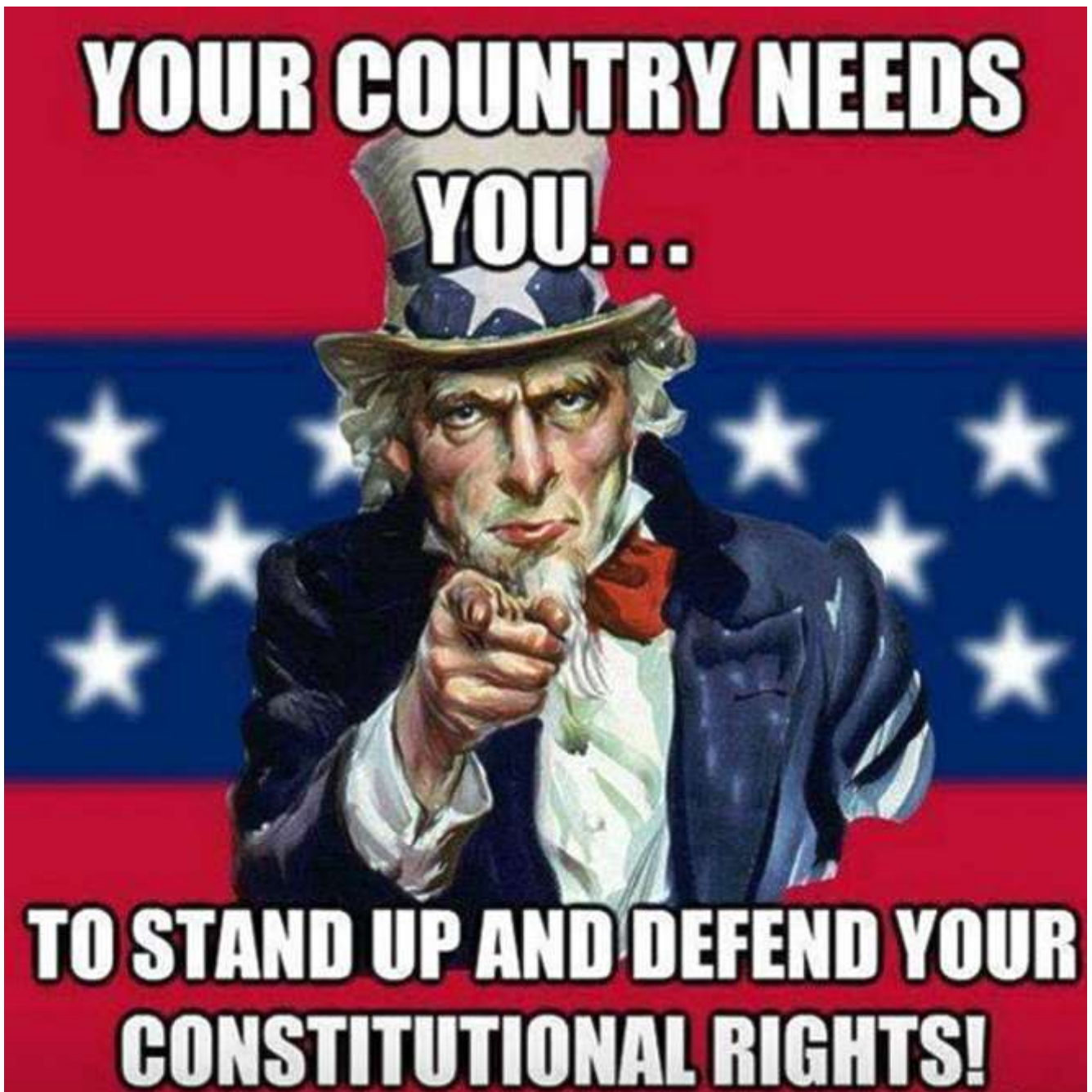


You need FOSAF

By Ian Cox



FOSAF president Ilan Lax wrote [a thought provoking article](#) on what FOSAF does and why fly anglers should join the organisation. It was duly published on [Trout Talk](#) by a number of people with a call to support the organization. And predictably it fell into the crater of indifference and apathy that drains South Africans of every ounce of decency when we are called upon to stand up for something that does not immediately gratify our personal self-interest.

So I stepped in with this provocative post:

“FOSAF is about caring. Joining FOSAF tells me you are a fly angler who cares rather than one of those c#*^s South Africa has far too many of. You know the type, always taking, always asking what is in it for me, but who never gives back.”

The post was a deliberate shock jock tactic to draw attention to the following post that was published on Trout talk the next day.

“It costs 300 rand a year to be a member of FOSAF. No one disputes the good work FOSAF does or that every fly fisher benefits from FOSAF’s efforts. Yet it only has about 500 members.

Trout talk has about 5000 members which coincidentally are about the number of fanatically keen trout anglers in South Africa. The total number of fly fishers in the country is around 100 000.

Based upon these numbers you would expect FOSAF’s membership to be in the thousands. But the sad truth is that most fly anglers do not care enough to contribute R300 rand a year to the future of fly angling by joining FOSAF.

This lack of care is not confined to fly fishing. It is a national trait that religious leaders have been railing against for decades. This “bugger you, I am all right Jack attitude” made apartheid possible and it is making the current corruption and general decay of our nation possible.

There are of course exceptions to this. Special people who do care, who do give back but in a functioning and decent country they should not be special. They should be the norm. Democracies work and decency prevails because people care. It is that simple.

Our lack of care is why we have a government that can stay in power while its members enrich themselves at the expense of the nation and its future. It succeeds in this because people have given up hope. Hope and care walk hand in hand.

So you have to be a new kind of stupid not to care. It’s against your self-interest not to care. But here we are a supposedly decent community of anglers not caring on an industrial scale.

I deliberately used shock jock tactics in my previous post. The outrage was predictable though quite frankly I was hoping for more. The overall response was muted proving my thesis that fly fishers and I suggest South Africans by and large only care about themselves.

This is a huge problem that goes way beyond fly fishing.

And if you do not care what are you really?”

The response was muted. Most of Trout Talk’s 5000 or so members did not react at all, just like they did not react to any other calls to join FOSAF. The general reaction was larger than earlier less confrontational posts. There were some negative posts but from the gang who would rather complain about what you are doing than do anything themselves but these were outnumbered by the positive responses.

Wolf Avni’s delightful article “Don’t Call Me A C&%, you C&%!”, published in his delightful book Bitch Creek Nymphing speaks better than I can to this phenomenon. It is republished [here](#) courtesy of Wolf. Thank you Wolf.

It is early days but it seems that membership of FOSAF will grow but not by much.

This is because the demographic that fly anglers does not care enough to fight for their rights. It seems that they are so secure and arrogant in their privilege that they cannot believe that their rights may be taken away from them or what it will be like when this happens. It is simply beyond their ken.

White English speaking South Africans have no institutional memory at all of what it is like to be oppressed. They are still blind to the pain that oppression causes despite having lived through Afrikaner Nationalism and the increasing reality of Black Nationalism. There is an assumption that the privileged position of being white will somehow be guaranteed. Afrikaners have bought into this.

This belief in innate privilege is not only morally indefensible, it is also completely wrong. The era of white global domination is drawing to a close. The global rule that white is right that was inviolable 20 years ago is now weakening. It won't exist in 20 years' time. Indeed it is far more likely that those who cling to its memory are more likely than not to be punished for doing so. The Coffin case and what has happened to Penny Sparrow and others is a portent of what is to come.

South Africa is a country of some 56 million. That will grow to 80 million in a couple of decades or so. These are not numbers that can be sustained off the land so to speak wither by the application of pre-colonial or colonial or so called neo colonial modes of resource use. South Africans need to learn to pull together if the country is to sustainably manage the realities of a population of this size.

Warren Prior was in Las Vegas about a kilometer down the strip when the shooting started. He spoke to me briefly of his experience of a people who immediately swung into action to help the wounded and protect the city's tourists. He said tourists were back having a good time very quickly, despite the tragedy. This is because the citizens of Las Vegas took it upon themselves to make things right. Ordinary people drove into danger to save the wounded and escort others to safety. They lined up by the thousand to donate blood without being asked to. They moved instinctively to save their city.

We do not show that level of care. We look the other way when we are needed. We look for excuses for why we should not get involved even in the face of crisis. We worry that by getting involved we may need to confront our privilege so we prefer to do nothing, to complain from the sidelines and to make hay while the sun is still shining.

Yes Zuma and the ANC have a lot to answer for but the truth be told they are only getting away with it because South Africans who have the means and the skills to stand up and say no, to shine a light on evil are doing nothing. We deride Zuma and the ANC for their corruption, but truth is we are complicit in that corruption. We are complicit because by doing nothing we hope we will be left alone. This is foolish.

Now joining FOSAF is not a magic bullet, it offers no solution, but it is a step in the right direction towards a solution. Not joining FOSAF on the other hand, is a vote in favour of all that is going wrong in this country. It is a declaration of complicity.

It is a little thing but big things start with little steps and joining FOSAF is a little step in the right direction.

So I controversially ask the question; what are you?