

## **Why the Climate First Party needs to exist and why it has the policies it does.**

The world continues to fail to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at all. Everyone knows that we are heading for disaster, if not extinction, but the solution seems impossible for politicians to conceive. One reads a litany of environmental disasters, described by scientists, yet still nothing happens. People say if only we took the same emergency measures with the climate crisis that we are taking with Covid-19, we could solve it. By that I mean dramatic economic and social measures. Of course, some political leaders do not believe science and the devastation that their countries are suffering is the same devastation we will suffer under climate change if we do not listen to the science and act now.

With Covid-19 we are seeing Government actions which we wouldn't have dreamed of six months ago and some of us are beginning to think that if we can do it for Covid-19 because the disaster is upon us, why can't we do it for the climate crisis which science tells us we are rushing towards.

For more than ten years I have been searching for the recipe which would enable the world to avoid the climate crisis, and the Climate First Party and its policies are what I have come up with. I have tried to get involved with Extinction Rebellion, who at least recognise the problem, but have found them very disorganised and what organisation there is to be undemocratic. I believe their goal, in rebelling physically so that the Government notices and has to do something is wrong. They believe that the current democratic capitalism has failed and that it needs to be replaced. My solution, however, depends on Government intervention in the market and forming a political party whose policies if implemented would actually stop the climate crisis. At the moment in New Zealand, there is no party like that which people can vote for. I also address the problem of low voter turnout, a sign that, like XR, citizens have lost faith in democracy.

In searching for a solution, I have read many books, some which have profoundly influenced my thinking. Top among these have been Naomi Klein on Neo-liberal Capitalism, Thomas Picketty on Inequality, Herman Daly on steady state or no growth economics, Mariana Mazzucato on the place of non-productive wealth in modern Capitalism and Mark Anielski on wellbeing, happiness, and the Genuine Progress Indicator.

The winnowing process has reduced my solutions to three basic principles:

1. New Zealand as a tiny country can do little in direct terms to reduce ghg emissions worldwide, however, some of our achievements as a nation have been a shining example to the world, notably with votes for women, ranking as the second least corrupt country in the world, and lately with the near defeat of the Covid-19 virus. As our only way of influencing the world, I envision New Zealand as a model post-carbon country and to be this requires two things: shouldering our fair share of the world's emissions reduction burden, and delineating a pathway to zero net emissions, with annual targets which we consistently meet. The trouble is that since 1990 NZ has had nearly the worst rise in net emissions of any OECD country. This has been because we have used deceptive accounting over and over, giving the impression that we are up there with other like countries when we are in fact far behind. This deception continues with the Zero Carbon Act, touted as a progressive, cross-party achievement, when it falls far short of NZ doing its fair share in the world. However, with our low population density, corruption-free political system, and large forest cover, New Zealand has the potential to be the first OECD country to have negative net emissions. Its not commonly known but there are already a few countries with negative net emissions, (Bhutan, Gabon, Romania, Seychelles, Fiji) but none of them are OECD countries. It would be much harder with wealthier, high GDP-per-capita countries, but someone has to do it.

2. Solving the climate crisis will take sacrifice and the only way people will do it is if they perceive it is fair. Once again the comparison to Covid-19 is illuminating. Everybody has changed their lives over the lockdown, but they did it willingly as part of national solidarity. That is why I am proposing that New Zealanders share the burden fairly so that both urban and rural, rich and poor feel that everyone is contributing equally. As a fundamental principle I believe that every citizen has the right to emit the same amount of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. This applies between countries and within countries. Thus, a New Zealander who emits 11,85 Tonnes per person must reduce to the world average of 6.6, otherwise why would countries with lower emissions than us bother to make the effort. Within New Zealand, why should the average couple who emit 22.7 Tonnes per year bother to make the sacrifice to reduce when a couple with a livestock farm emits 1500 Tonnes per year?

3. Stopping the climate crisis is the most important objective. Because this is difficult and somewhat abstract, environmental parties focus instead on more concrete issues such as clean water and air, endangered wildlife species, plastic bags, etc. We need to focus fair and square on emissions reduction.

### **Now to the policies.**

These, while they are not all about the climate at all, but mostly economic, are essential practical steps which will reduce emissions. They boil down to three ideas: reduce inequality, slow growth in consumption and honestly calculate an emissions reduction pathway which would do the job, whether it is feasible or not.

The first involves taxing property properly, because real estate is an unproductive asset and owners extract value from it and that value truly is derived from and belongs to the community. Property wealth is the main manifestation of inequality, and the current extreme unaffordability of housing a major source of hardship in New Zealand. Now, many left-wing politicians want to reduce inequality because it does not seem fair that some are rich, and others suffer poverty. Climate First does not want to reduce inequality for that reason, but for the reason that poor people struggle to survive from day to day and do not have the luxury of looking ten years ahead. Looking that far ahead of what we have to do to tackle climate crisis. As well, when they see rich people's emissions from travel and consumption, they have no incentive to reduce their own lesser emissions. Secondly, those with excess wealth spend it on high-emitting activities. So, Climate First is clearly for wealth redistribution through a property tax and a Universal citizens' Income.

The second issue is consumption. This would be reduced by stopping the use of GDP as the measure of economic success. Instead the welfare of society would be measured directly by the wellbeing Index, the Genuine Progress Indicator This is explained in detail elsewhere. But basically, since GDP measures the throughput of the economy, the more goods that are produced and consumed, the higher it is. The problem is that more production and consumption emit more greenhouse gases. The trick is to have people happier with less consumption.

The one policy directly bearing on emissions reduction is the carbon tax. This is transparent compared to the complexity of the ETS. Its value would be permanently set at \$100 a tonne, but where Climate First's proposal is transformative, is that it applies immediately to all emissions, and if an emitter was reducing their emissions in line with the national reduction pathway, they would not

need to pay it. On the other hand, an emitter who reduced more than the pathway would receive a pay-out.

Thirdly, there is the emissions reduction pathway. Two international bodies, the UNEP and IPCC clearly state where world emissions need to be by 2050 to stay under 1.5° C. We simply need to adjust these to New Zealand's population as a percentage of the worlds to get a target for us. It is made more complicated by the IPCC differentiating between Methane and other gases, but in brief, the Zero Carbon Act, falls far short of what NZ needs to do to make its fair contribution. The shortfall is explained on the website.