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There are two things people like to have. Some call them luxuries, but really, they're just what we've come to expect.

One is time and one is choice.

The challenge with climate change is that we have increasingly less of both.

The science is clear, by 2015 we need to have stabilised the world's carbon emissions. By 2050 we should be operating a zero carbon economy. Can we do it?

I'm Bunny McDiarmid, executive director of Greenpeace NZ. I've worked with Greenpeace off and on for 20 years. I've worked on ships, in the Pacific, for Greenpeace International, and for the last few years for Greenpeace here in New Zealand.

I am an optimist, as, I believe, is Greenpeace, but my optimism lies with action. As the head of our German action unit likes to say: '*The optimism of the action is better than the pessimism of the thought*'.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Greenpeace, we're an independent global campaigning organisation. We do not take money from governments or corporations and we are non-party political.

Among those who work for Greenpeace, are lawyers, accountants, managers, scientists, climbers, skippers and farmers.

Greenpeace NZ has been around since the early 1970s – we now have 52,000 supporters.

It's hard for an organisation that has the health of the natural environment at the heart of everything it does to avoid returning again and again to climate change.

If ever there was an issue that demonstrated that we do not understand the limits of the planet we call home this is it.

Someone once said that the entire history of the environmental movement has been a dress rehearsal for the fight against climate change. After 25 years as part of that movement I agree.

Climate change really is the trump card of a pissed off earth. It calls for a massive shift in our politics, our economies, technology and most importantly, our thinking.

Today I want to talk to you about three things. What is necessary when it comes to tackling climate change, what is fair and what is wise.

Necessary

Last year, Arctic sea ice reached its lowest extent on record.

Global average sea level has risen by 4-8 inches in the last century.

Eleven of the last 12 years are the hottest on record since 1860. The oceans have absorbed much of this increased heat, and it is starting to affect the way they function.

Many species of plants and animals are already responding moving to higher elevations or closer to the poles.

Two weeks ago in an unprecedented sighting, nine stranded polar bears were seen off Alaska trying to swim 400 miles north to the retreating icecap edge.

Humans are also on the move... there are now many more climate change refugees worldwide than there are political or war refugees.

Phil [O'Reily], you said recently that there's a lot of misunderstanding around climate change; that it has become very complicated and politicised. But if you cut to the chase, it's really very simple. We need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions urgently to prevent a change in our climate of more than 2 degrees.

Almost 20 years ago I was talking with the President of Kiribati about the first IPCC report. He said that psychologically it was very difficult to accept that in his lifetime his country could become uninhabitable, 50 years after that his language would disappear, and 50 years after that his culture would no longer exist on this planet. He of all people understood what was at stake.

In NZ, what and where we grow things like kiwifruit, apples and sheep will change dramatically in our kid's lifetimes. By 2050, you won't be able to grow Kiwifruit in Northland. By 2070 a cold year will be like a hot year now.

Some say what's New Zealand got to do fixing it? We contribute such a small slice to the pie of global emissions.

But the truth is, our emissions per capita are among the highest in the world and the rate at which our emissions are rising now exceeds that of the United States.

Yes, we signed the Kyoto Protocol, but we've done so little since that we now face an ever-increasing bill for overshooting targets. Not meeting reduction targets only increases the dangers we face and lessens the pressure we can bring to bear on other nations to act.

We do not just have an environmental imperative to turn this around; we have an economic one too. New Zealand has carved out space on the global stage on the basis of being clean, green and sustainable. But we are on thin ice. You can call agriculture our economic powerhouse if you like, but I would wager it's New Zealand's branding that gives us our true edge.

Some claim we're moving too fast, and that god forbid we could become leaders in the switch to a low-carbon economy. In truth, we haven't even made it out of the starting blocks.

If I can quote you again Phil ...from last year: *"to do nothing (about climate change) is fatal....we are advising our members to take a leadership role. It's about getting involved and making sure that you are not a passenger. It would be a mistake to say 'it's too big, we won't do anything about it.'*¹

Unfortunately, since that comment was made, we've seen most of New Zealand's business heavyweights literally leaping for the passenger seat, if not the boot.

But among the let downs, there have also been surprising examples of leadership.

At the end of last year, some of the world's top business leaders demanded that governments meeting in Bali for climate talks come up with drastic measures to cut global emissions by at least half by 2050.

Officials from more than 150 global companies – worth nearly \$5.3 trillion in market capitalisation – signed a petition urging strong, early action on climate change. Signatories included powerhouses Shell UK, Coca-Cola, Volkswagen, Nike and Nokia.

One of the problems we face in trying to get to a low carbon economy is a failure to recognise and value our ecological interdependence.

We have to stop thinking in silos, of setting the economy up against the environment, as if there is no connection between the two. The economy and its markets, and more importantly our quality of life, rest on ecological foundations (forests, oceans, and atmosphere). Undermine the productivity of these and you undermine life itself.

¹ New Zealand Herald, Friday 10 August 2007, Page 28, The Business supplement

New Zealand is unique amongst developed countries in the extent to which our economy relies on the environment.

Just look at the crippling economic impact of recent extreme weather events around the country. The latest flooding on the South Island's East Coast resulted in a multi-million dollar repair bill.

Coastal properties will fall in value because insurers are refusing to cover them for extreme weather events.

Climate scientists are reticent to put individual events down to climate change, but what they do say is that we can expect more extreme weather events.

One government after the next continues to promise economic growth across the board, despite a finite natural world and decreasing and degraded natural resources. I believe we need to redefine progress and what makes up the bottom line.

I challenge the National Party here today to truly mesh the economy and the environment in your policy-making.

As former US Vice President Al Gore said in December: *"If New Zealand followed through on its pledge to become carbon neutral and businesses in every sector searched for new approaches to accomplish that goal, they would find the world beating a path to their door"*.

Fair

It's vital that climate policies ensure a fair distribution of effort. Climate policy, like climate change, will not be painless, but our leadership should ensure that there is some equity in who shoulders the cost.

Under the emissions trading scheme as currently proposed, householders and small businesses carry much of the cost while investors, large polluters and agriculture are subsidised and protected.

Would National shift even more of that weight to the taxpayer and our climate?

Nationals' support for an intensity based ETS is unacceptable. You cannot expect anyone to believe you're serious about climate change if you propose a scheme on this basis with no overall cap.

Greenpeace wants to see agriculture enter the ETS before 2013. We also want to see faster reductions in free credits for big emitters and we want to see more spent on energy efficiency and conservation and public transport. These measures will help householders reduce their emissions and ensure a fairer distribution of effort.

Wise

Last year Greenpeace commissioned a report that found New Zealand can achieve 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2025. I have copies of that report with me today.

I know National is uncomfortable with the Renewables Preference part of New Zealand's proposed climate change legislation. But the fact is, the ETS will not be enough in itself to prevent inappropriate thermal projects, at least in the medium term, so we need the disincentive of the Renewables Preference to prevent new emitting investment from being "locked in".

There is job growth in renewables, there is job growth in energy efficiency and there is job growth in developing innovative industries and technologies to successfully meet the challenge of climate change.

A handful of countries have emerged as leaders in renewables development, thanks to strong government support. Renewable energy jobs in Germany doubled in the two years to 2007. As many as 400,000 people are estimated to be employed in the renewable energy industry in Germany by 2020. China is a leader in solar hot water heaters.

Renewables at any cost is not the solution, nor is sacrificing important conservation areas for hydro-electric schemes in the name of “net conservation benefit.” We need a strong Resource Management Act – shutting people out is not a path to good decision making.

National has signalled strong support for gas fired power stations, particularly on the basis of security of supply.

We have far more generation capacity coming on stream than we need to ensure security of supply in New Zealand. The electricity commission suggests New Zealand needs 150MW of new generation each year, National says it needs to be 220MW. Both scenarios are covered by new generation coming on stream, including an expected minimum of 1,300MW of new generation in the next four years, including baseload geothermal generation.

Additional fossil fuel generation will likely increase the price of electricity in the long term. Increasing gas prices have already pushed up generation costs, and as gas supplies dwindle further, the price of gas will further increase.

New Zealand, with its heavy dependence on agriculture for export earnings, is faced with the reality that this is also the sector creating half our greenhouse gas emissions. The intensification and rapid expansion of the dairy industry is without a doubt New Zealand’s biggest climate change challenge, not to mention the pressure on our water quality and supply.

To give you some idea of agriculture’s contribution to the problem of climate change, the emissions from on-farm fertiliser use in New Zealand now exceed all the emissions from the road transport sector.

Many New Zealand farmers have watched as intensive farming practices have led to myriad environmental and animal health problems and lower economic performance.

Accordingly, some are moving towards more sustainable farming models.

These models are all about less input, and better output. They're about cutting down on expensive, polluting chemicals, cutting back on herd numbers and looking after soil so that pasture thrives and lasts. Generations of farmers have successfully used this method in New Zealand - they knew how to work with the land and doing so is how they survived. In a way it's time to go back to basics.

New Zealand is ideally positioned to lead the world on lower-emission pastoral farming. Smarter farming offers the opportunity to clean up rivers, reduce emissions, reduce costs and ensure access to markets. It's necessary, fair and wise.

Some would argue that what's missing is real incentive. Leaving agriculture out of the ETS for such a long period removes any kind of market driver for on-farm emission reductions. Not only that, it makes all taxpayers pick up the tab for the sector's growing emissions.

But it's not just what's happening down on the farm that's ballooning our Kyoto bill.

In National's words, we're also witnessing a chainsaw massacre of our forests. So the climate is suffering a double blow – lost carbon sinks, which are then replaced with industrial, intensive agriculture - one of the most greenhouse gas intensive forms of land use.

The National Party has drawn a lot of attention to this issue – but what will it do to address it, given industrial dairying is the main driver?

Greenpeace will be engaging with whoever forms the next Government to improve New Zealand's action on climate change.

We want to see New Zealand adopt a target of 30% emission reductions by 2020 an earlier entry of agriculture into the emissions trading scheme and an earlier phase out of the free pollution credits under the scheme. These are necessary basics for a sound climate policy for New Zealand.

Climate change is also the great political issue of our time. At no other time in history will humanity's future be so determined by decisions made today. At no other time will the legacy of today's leaders be so dramatically determined by how they respond to this single issue. Make no mistake it is this generation's leaders that will be held accountable like no other, because the stakes are so high.

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