

# NZCPR Weekly

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NEW ZEALAND CENTRE FOR POLITICAL RESEARCH

## A CITIZEN REVOLT

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In the recent local body elections, Britain's Labour Government was delivered its worst election defeat in 40 years. Commentators called the rout a "citizen revolt" against the carbon taxes and nanny state regulations that have been driving up living costs to unsustainable levels.

With the New Zealand general election only months away, and Labour trailing in the polls, Helen Clark is taking decisive steps to avert a similar "citizen revolt" here.

Mindful of the escalating costs of petrol and rising prices across the board, she has announced a delay in the implementation of key aspects of the proposed Emissions Trading Scheme. In particular, this means that the transport sector, which was due to face an estimated 'tax' increase of at least 8 cents a litre from 2009, has been granted a two-year "holiday" before being forced into the scheme in 2011.

It has been predicted that over time, the human cost of emissions trading will be the loss of around 22,000 jobs and an increase in household costs of some \$3,000 a year. Is that a price we as a society are prepared to pay? Are those 22,000 families an acceptable "sacrifice" in what "caring" green activists would claim is an environmental world war?

<http://www.nzier.org.nz/includes/download.aspx?ID=79601>

While fear of a UK-style election-year voter backlash over New Zealand's soaring petrol prices has caused our government to put the brake on their unworkable emissions trading scheme, they appear intent on pushing ahead with their misguided energy strategy. This is in spite of warnings that doing so will threaten the security of our electricity supplies. Labour's strategy places a 10-year moratorium on the building of new thermal energy 'base load' power stations. It also commits the country to an increasing dependence on less reliable and more expensive wind power, in order to achieve the government's goal of 90 percent renewable energy by 2030. The effect will not only result in a substantial increase in power prices, but will leave the country exposed to blackouts and power cuts.

Wind energy is not the panacea that many environmentalists like to claim it is. Among the many environmental concerns are the fact that wind turbines stand up to 140 metres tall on massive concrete foundations, are connected by overhead power lines and

roading, and require vast tracts of land that destroy wildlife habitats and disrupt farming. Furthermore, each year many thousands of birds including protected species - are caught in the turbines and killed. And that's not to mention the irony that many activist groups who support the building of these noisy and ugly "War of the World" monstrosities on pristine landscapes, are vociferous opponents against those who wish to build a dwelling on their own property.

With the government predicting a 20 percent rise in power prices as a result of this move towards greater reliance on renewable energy, and some commentators estimating that prices will double, the Prime Minister has been quick to reassure *beneficiaries* that they will be protected from such price rises. No such assurance has, however, been given to pensioners, to struggling working families or to struggling businesses. It appears that they will have to carry the full cost of this radical green policy.

It is a major problem for all New Zealanders that while so many of policies introduced by governments in the name of 'environmentalism' sound good and caring, in reality they are extremely punitive on those who do not enjoy the government's favour. Not only that, but all too often, there are very serious unintended consequences.

That is certainly the case with biofuels, which environmentalists have been promoting as the clean, green alternative to oil-based fuels for years. But now that the craze has taken hold politically - as a result of widespread fearmongering over global warming - the disastrous consequences are starting to show.

Mass deforestation is occurring around the world as forests (even rainforests) and wilderness areas are cleared for the cultivation of grain. But with the amount of grain needed to fill the tank of a medium sized vehicle being enough to feed a person for a year - and 1,700 gallons of water needed to create just one gallon of ethanol - the biofuel "solution" is literally taking food and water from the mouths of those who need it the most. See *Time*, *The Clean Energy Scam*,

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1725975,00.html>

As a result, the price of grain has skyrocketed triggering food riots in Mexico, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Africa and the Philippines. The World Bank has estimated that more than 30 countries around the world face social unrest because of food shortages and 100

million people are now at risk. (See Telegraph, Global Warming Rage Lets Global Hunger Grow, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?xml=/money/2008/04/14/ccview114.xml>)

In spite of the massive environmental, social and political threats being posed by biofuel production, neither Labour nor the Green Party is prepared to delay the passing of the New Zealand Biofuel Bill. It is set to come into effect later this year even though all around the world governments are postponing and abandoning similar types of legislation in order to reduce the global threat.

By embracing extreme environmental ideology, under the guise of global warming, the New Zealand Government will not only contribute to world starvation, but also to deteriorating health and well-being in this country as families under financial pressure cut back on home heating this winter to unhealthy levels.

Unfortunately the history of environmental alarmism is littered with false prophecies and negative consequences. For example, in their drive to prevent humans from 'destroying the planet', the Green movement has been responsible for demonising "urban sprawl". The result is that stringent restrictions on the availability of land for housing around city and township boundaries in many parts of the country have contributed to New Zealand's house prices being amongst the most unaffordable in the western world.

Bob Day, the former President of the Australian Housing Industry Association and this week's NZCPR Guest Commentator, puts it like this:

*"The regulatory seeds of the current housing affordability crisis were sown back in the 1970s. Up until then land was abundant, affordable and the development of new suburbs was largely left to the private sector. Our pre-1970s leafy suburbs of large allotments and wide streets are an enduring testimony to the private sector's ability and the traditional laissez-faire approach to*

*urban development. It was into this environment of clearly successful urban growth that governments started to get involved by introducing 'urban growth boundaries' and 'urban consolidation' policies. These policies have been responsible for astronomical rises in land prices".*

He explains that urban planners, by promoting urban consolidation and at the same time demonizing urban spread, have inflicted enormous damage on the economy and society:

*"The case for urban consolidation has been advanced on the back of a number of arguments namely, that it is good for the environment; that it stems the loss of agricultural land; that it encourages people on to public transport; that it saves water and energy; that it leads to a reduction in motor vehicle use, and that it saves on infrastructure costs for government. All of these claims, I repeat, all of these claims are false. The facts and evidence from around the world refute each and every one of them".* (To read Bob's article, see [www.nzcpr.com](http://www.nzcpr.com).)

As long as politicians believe there are votes in the environmental bandwagon, they will press ahead with their radical agenda. But given the disastrous outcomes that are now emerging, it is surely time for the New Zealand public to regain their voice and express their view on whether or not they are prepared to bear the personal cost - just as the British public has done with their "citizen revolt". Those who don't want to pay for the ideological beliefs of others must now let the politicians who support these schemes know that their role is to represent the public, not manage them. (The email addresses of all MPs can be found on the NZCPR website.)

**This week's poll asks** whether you are willing to pay higher taxes in order to fund projects to combat climate change.

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