

# Newman Weekly

By Dr. Muriel Newman  
18 February 2006



The New Zealand Centre for Political Debate

## The virtue of self-interest

Most New Zealanders believe that we live in one of the most wonderful places on earth remote from the world's trouble spots and, with our stunning landscapes and natural beauty, many claim that we, not Australia, are the "lucky" country.

Having been brought up with a do-it-yourself number-eight fencing wire attitude, a pioneering spirit, and in a climate of relative peace and prosperity, we have over the years produced more than our share of world-beaters. Ernest Rutherford splitting the atom, Sir Edmund Hillary climbing Everest, Kate Shepherd winning the vote for women, Katherine Mansfield revolutionising the short story, Richard Pearce flying before the Wright brothers, the list of Kiwi innovators and entrepreneurs who have succeeded where others haven't, goes on and on.

So what is it that has fuelled our entrepreneurial spirit, and is it still alive and well today?

If we are honest about it, the fundamental driving force of human initiative is self-interest. It is self-interest that dictates our every action as we strive for success and fulfillment.

Yet many of the architects of the environment in which today's entrepreneurs operate - especially those politicians who promote social caring - are still not willing to admit their own self-interest. The irony is that it is invariably they who are first in the queue for a free lunch, the first to put their hand up and vote for their own pay increases, and the first to put their hand out for any perk on offer. None of these promoting we give up our rights for the greater social good appear to accept cuddles and kisses as fair remuneration for their week's work. Somehow that irony appears to be lost on them!

At least those who believe in the free market are open and honest about their motivations. Unlike socialists they do not conceal their motives as being for anything else but profit and success.

We should not forget that it is free market forces that are the catalyst for innovation in our society. It is the

wants, needs and desires of individuals that drive the demand for more and better. The opportunity for the businessperson is to recognise and satisfy those needs because there are financial rewards in doing so.

This is in stark contrast to socialists who, more often than not, have to resort to compulsion to bring about change. Socialists believe that they know best what society needs, but when society doesn't respond with their own free will, then they resort to coercion.

Of those who believe in the free market of individual choice, it is entrepreneurs who deserve the most respect. They provide society with what it wants, often before it really knows that it wants it! Doing that requires not only tremendous imagination and foresight, but also an uncommon sense of courage.

Entrepreneurs know that their chances of major success are slim, yet they pursue their endeavours with Herculean courage. And it is this courage and imagination that we as a society need to embrace and encourage if New Zealand is to be at the forefront of world innovation and international prosperity.

Regrettably, achievement values are not being promoted by our current political regime. That is because they believe that these qualities have no virtue. Instead they see virtue in normalising the abnormal, in equalising all members of society, and in socialising land ownership.

Yet, as history shows, taking from those with enterprise to give to those lacking enterprise is not the way to build a prosperous society.

Each of us is motivated by the desire to create a better future for ourselves, and for our children. We do not aspire to being average. The great personal motivator is the hope that tomorrow will be better than today, and that our efforts will be rewarded. That is why we, the majority, shun the socialists' decree that competition should have no winners and losers.

Wellington's coroner, Garry Evans, in raising concerns about New Zealand's high rate of youth suicide,

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spoke out publicly about this issue last week when he suggested that the current drive to cocoon children from failure by removing competition from their everyday lives, is having a counter-productive effect. He said, *“If children are never allowed to fail, how will they learn to pick themselves up and walk on when they do fall?”*

Maybe our socialist leaders do in fact understand this only too well maybe their advocacy of a 'caring' and 'fair' society is nothing more than a cloak behind which they pursue their personal agendas of power, and personal enrichment. This, of course was the reality of communism while hungry citizens queued for bread, their rulers drank from gold faucets.

In the mid sixties a book called *“The Lucky Country”* by Donald Horne was published. He wrote: *In a hot summer's night in December 1964 I was about to write the last chapter of a book on Australia. The opening sentence of this last chapter was: 'Australia is a lucky country, run by second-rate people who share its luck'.*

That phrase gave rise to the title of his book and while it has subsequently been used to describe everything that is good about Australia, the point that he wanted to make was that Australia was doing well by luck, rather than by being clever. Unfortunately luck won't save New Zealand.

The socialist agenda that has been pushed by Labour over the last six years is causing the iconic Kiwi entrepreneurship that built this country, to become as endangered as the kiwi itself. Through overbearing political correctness and excessive regulation, good

Kiwis are packing up and leaving in search of countries that value freedom and reward innovation and drive.

One such Kiwi is Douglas Myers, who, four years ago moved to the UK. Back here for the summer, he penned an extremely interesting speech for the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the New Zealand Business Roundtable. Douglas has kindly agreed to be our guest commentator this week with his thought-provoking speech (see [www.nzcpd.com](http://www.nzcpd.com)).

Over the years, the NZBRT has steadfastly focused on promoting policies to create a healthy and dynamic business sector as the foundation of a prosperous economy and a fair society.

Promoting sound policy frameworks is, in fact, a key objective of think tanks. That is also one of the key goals of the New Zealand Center for Political Debate. The NZCPD believes that New Zealand should be a free and prosperous society, where success is celebrated, enterprise flourishes and hard work is rewarded. If you agree with these goals and would like to support the ongoing efforts of the NZCPD to promote these values, then please click here it is only through the generosity of readers of this column that I can operate.

Dr Muriel Newman is a director and founder of the NZCPD.

*This weeks poll. Do you think entrepreneurs are being driven out of New Zealand, and if so, why? To take part in our online poll go to [www.nzcpd.com](http://www.nzcpd.com).*

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