

Charlie Pedersen: Missionaries who despise mankind

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*Extreme environmentalism has become a matter of faith damaging our prosperity, says **Charlie Pedersen**, president of Federated Farmers. Here is an extract from his speech to the organisation's annual conference yesterday:*

Water sustains the Earth. It makes up about two-thirds of our body's weight. It is valuable and at the same time indestructible. The exact same amount of water, to the last drop, is here on Earth as it was in the beginning.

The Government's Sustainable Water Programme of Action is under way. The details of its plans have yet to be decided.

Nevertheless, the catch-cry is that we have a water shortage. I hear people say "We are running out of water".

Such a statement is a bit like a child taking a bath and complaining about the lack of water, with both taps on full and no plug in sight.

If you want water, you have to set about to capture it - it is ridiculous to expect to have enough water, where you want it, when you want it, without planning to capture and save some.

Federated Farmers supports the commitment to help regional councils to resolve difficult water management challenges, to build on proven industry-led initiatives, and strongly supports a move to better align the taxpayer-funded science programme with national and industry priorities.

The federation also welcomes the Government's intention to work in partnership with industry.

We have had huge amounts of water falling from the sky over the past two months. And yet we are told that we don't have enough water.

Our previous generation carried out important projects to create water storage to reap nature's blessing of high rainfall. Their wisdom and hard work has brought all New Zealanders a better standard of living through agricultural irrigation and hydro-electric power generation. These great works make the cities and industries that generate our standard of living possible.

Nature has a cycle, but humanity has a constant demand. Early humans learnt to harvest food and store it for the winter. So do clever animals. But modern man is being told to ignore these lessons from nature.

Environmentalists are not interested in storage. They want to ignore the lessons from nature, and instead cap water use at summer's low rainfalls and flows.

Where would we be if our ancestors had shown such high-minded arrogance in the name of environmentalism?

Environmentalism threatens to be the new century's politics of envy - the politics that seek to reduce the brightest and hardest-working, the committed, to the level of the ordinary, the uninspired.

Environmentalists are correct. We do need to protect our country, our planet, our children's future and their children's future, but not with fear.

We must encourage innovation, science and our own good scientists to uncover the solutions to our problems. Locking in yesterday's answers from yesterday's science is no solution - it is the road to definite ruin, a road that will lead to the capping of food producers' productive capacity. If food production cannot grow, then our population cannot grow. Or, as is more likely, there will be less food for the poorest people.

I am yet to hear any environmentalist admit that rolling back agriculture's intensification would have to be matched by worldwide starvation or a matching reduction in population.

A good comparison is the minerals industry. Unlike our neighbours in Australia, the mineral bounty of our nation is largely in the DoC estate - riches locked away from contributing to the betterment of the lives of ordinary New Zealanders in the misguided belief that every square metre of flora and fauna is more valuable than the potential its mineral wealth could unleash for our children.

I say, shame on the people who elevate environmentalism to a religious status, shame on you for your arrogance, shame on all of us for allowing the environmentalists' war against the human race to begin, and take hold ...

Environmentalism does not speak about the good of man and what mankind has achieved. Like missionaries, it talks of man's work as negatives to the natural environment ... something that needs to be curbed and defeated.

Young people around the world are enlisted and travel overseas as missionaries for Greenpeace - they stop street-goers and seek to influence and convert them to their cause. Environmentalism, the cause of winding back the clock, capping and reducing is their ethos.

Environmentalism has captured the attention of a great many people. Citizens across the spectrum have bought into the environmental teachings that the world is on the road to ruin, and with it, mankind.

Many are adopting these teachings without proper scrutiny because of the momentum the movement has, supported by experts who too often owe their livelihood to the environmental business. Even in this country, thousands now owe their living and personal prosperity to continued development of environmental controls. Those controls in turn are reducing the development and productivity of the nation and its ability to raise the standard of living of the New Zealand people.

I ask all Kiwis to think more deeply before supporting environmental causes. I believe they often give support to relieve themselves of guilt about their lifestyles. Kiwis must understand that ill-thought-out environmental controls based on emotion rather than science will inevitably lead to a reduced standard of living.

Finally, I want to talk about another handbrake on economic prosperity: the Resource Management Act. In November, this council kicked off a priority project. We want to deliver benefits to members by driving changes to the RMA and the way it is implemented.

But now I want to make a public overture to the Government: Work with us to improve the RMA and its processes.

Federated Farmers is often criticised by MPs and Government officials for being too reactive, rather than proactive. We are accused of jumping on political bandwagons. We are accused of being the National Party in gumboots. The single most significant criticism of Federated Farmers is that, too often and too early, we adopt a position of opposition, rather than one of constructive engagement.

I am going to answer these unjustified criticisms by saying to the Government - both central Government and local government - that the Federation wants to work with you on finding solutions to the problems caused by the RMA.

To an extent we are already doing this. In recent months we have twice hosted the Minister for the Environment, responsible for the RMA. We have taken the minister on field trips so he and his officials can hear and

see the problems caused by the RMA. Many of these problems are caused by processes administered by councils under the RMA, which are not just the fault of the RMA itself.

But it is not just the councils which need to improve. The act itself is flawed. I stress the word flawed. We do not believe the act should be scrapped, as it is based on the ethic of sustainable management, which is what the majority of our members practise every day on their farms.

But we do believe it needs improvements in key areas. So let me say to the Government that we are willing to work with you on solutions. There have been 15 amendments to the RMA in 15 years. It is not good enough to point to the most recent amendment, and say that everything has been fixed. It hasn't.

I say to the Government, if you don't want to engage on the RMA, then let it be known on the public record we have held out our hand. We want to work proactively to find solutions.

If there is no attempt to work with us, then this federation will inevitably look at other options for getting our message across. The RMA, in its current form, is stifling innovation and investment in this country. That must change for the sake of the New Zealand people.

A recent headline in The Press newspaper said "3-nil to farmers". It referred to the federation's success in forcing the abandonment of the "fart" tax and legislated right of access over private land and, most recently, gaining an exemption so that working dogs do not need to be microchipped.

We prefer not to run these sorts of campaigns. They are expensive in time and money, they create divisions, and they use up our political capital. But, in each of these three cases, we were forced to do them as a last resort when the Government would not listen to not only us but also to the majority of New Zealanders.