

SECOND SUBMISSION TO THE LEADERS OF ALL PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES IN NEW ZEALAND

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On 4 April last year I made a submission to the leaders of all the parliamentary parties pointing out as Richard Heinberg put it in his 2004 book *The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the End of Industrial Societies* that:

Since the early 1900s, the world's population has multiplied by four and its economy – a rough measure of the human load on nature – by more than forty. We have reached a stage where we must bring the experiment under control, and guard against present and potential dangers. It's entirely up to us. If we fail – if we blow up or degrade the biosphere so it can no longer sustain us – nature will merely shrug and conclude that letting apes run the laboratory was fun for a while but in the end a bad idea.

The overall response to my submission was pitiful. Since then the global situations have markedly deteriorated. Thus I am compelled to write again in the sincere hope that officialdom – politicians, economists, the business world and the media – has perhaps realised that the experiment of our civilisation – surely one worth continuing – has become increasingly precarious.

People are beginning to be aware that our one and only home, Earth, is showing signs of being in serious trouble, all of which has been brought about by the insane and unsustainable policies of the developed countries, something a lunatic fringe would still deny. Increasingly, what little trust people may have in officialdom, is disappearing, and with good reason. With the passage of time I've come to realise more fully the absolute truth of Lord Acton's 1887 statement: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The larger that power, the more devastating that corruption, the prime example today being George W Bush's presidency. The list of our growing ills – too long for me to repeat – has been copiously dealt with by numerous authoritative international writers going back a century or more, but in particular in the last few decades. From when at least M King Hubbert, "probably the world's most famous and influential geologist", publicly announced in 1956 his 'peak oil' theory, they have been largely treated as nutters. Their work is still very often vilified or classified. Take the February 2005 Hirsch Report titled "Peaking of the World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation, and Risk Management". Robert Hirsch is a rational, respected American senior citizen. The report played out three scenarios:

- Start preparing – really preparing – for the future 20 years in advance of possible breakdowns – the Precautionary Principle. There is then a reasonable chance of preventing chaos.
- Start preparing 10 years ahead when there are already signs of dislocation, when the collapse won't be so severe.
- Do nothing concrete until danger strikes when there will be unpreventable chaos and catastrophic disruption. Now known as 'last man standing', i.e., business as usual.

Most international authorities suggest that we should now be building lifeboats as it is too late to apply stage one or two of the Hirsch report. But there is a fourth element – denial, which sadly is still widely prevalent.

The Hirsch report was buried by Bush and his neocons who initiated it. Six months later this was followed by a report from the US Army Engineer Research and Development Center, "Energy Trends and Their Implications for US Army Installations". Likewise this report was buried. Why were these reports not made public? For the same reason that the American people are most carefully screened from what is really happening in the Middle East (and elsewhere). Lose the peoples' support and you've lost the war and the New World Order which Bush's coterie has been quietly working on for some 25 years. One has to ask why several States have cut their umbilical cords to Washington?

In 2004 Peter Lloyd, chief anaesthetist to the Hawkes Bay District Hospital Board, heard Ronald Wright's five Canadian Massey talks (later published by Penguin as *A Short History of Progress*). It changed his way of life. He sold his large car, put solar panels on his house and started a vegetable garden. It's his DVD, *Dynamic Limits*, that some of you may have seen. I strongly suggest all of you view it. And while on the subject of viewing, would it be possible for our Prime Minister to arrange a showing of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (I know she's seen it) to all parliamentarians?

Let's take the fast approaching energy crisis. Why do Michael Cullen, Pete Hodgson and David Parker persist in telling us that peak oil may possible occur after 2030 when even the Prime Minister had the good sense to publicly state on the 18 April this year:

I'm sure it [the rise in oil prices] is causing concern in every country. Because everyone is on the receiving end of the same phenomenon. Which is oil prices very high, because we're probably not too far short of peak production if we're not already there. And that concentrates the mind.

Not so in far too many cases.

Now climate change. Listen to Sir David King, chief scientific adviser to the UK government and head of the Office of Science and Technology, speaking at the 2005 British Council ZeroCarbonCity campaign:

Beyond any reasonable doubt, climate change is happening. Humankind is driving the process mostly through our use of fossil fuels. And it is serious – in my view the most serious and potentially catastrophic problem that we face today.

King is supported by nearly all the prestigious bodies in this field. And one more item – transport. One of the most stupid government acts of relatively recent times was to move bulk transport from rail to road. Now the Overlander passenger train is to be removed. What will happen when the energy crisis hits home? Instead of allocating \$1.3 billion to roading and \$46 million to improving public transport services, surely the rational allocation would be the reverse of these figures.

I see very little understanding on the part of officialdom of our worsening global problems. As James Howard Kunstler states in his excellent 2005 book, *The Long Emergence: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-First Century*:

The Long Emergency will cause unprecedented social and economic dislocation, and the outcome may be a world we would barely recognize. The relative egalitarian society we knew in the late twentieth century may become drastically more hierarchical as large numbers of desperate people place themselves in the service of those who control land, especially following a period of anarchy. Under such harsh conditions, the weaker individuals will sell their allegiance in return for security. You can't feed yourself or your family if you are dead.

As I've said, we have failed to exercise the Precautionary Principle. Where is the evidence of appropriate actions such as, for example, heavily subsidised solar panel water heating in all new housing, something which should have been done long ago? Presumably the reason for the public not being told the full truth to start with is because officialdom itself really doesn't understand it, or, assuming it does, because it is scared witless by the electoral consequences of doing so. I should have thought that taking the public into its full confidence was a sound move. There is an urgency about these global matters which should cut right through all party differences and the insaneness of "business as usual". **And remember, that in spite of all the hype, there is no combination of alternative energy systems anywhere on the horizon which is going to substitute for our present and constantly building energy demands.**

Past civilisations have collapsed, some quickly, some slowly. For a deep insight into these disasters see William Rees – *Our Final Hour* (2003); Ronald Wright – *A Short History of Progress* (2005); and Jared Diamond – *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive* (2005). We are going the same way – off the cliff – because, in spite of being much better placed than any previous civilisation to learn from the past, we have failed to learn from it. But it's not too late to act positively.

It is essential that without any further delay we adopt Einstein's 'new way of thinking', for as he put it you cannot expect to solve a problem within the mind-frame that created it.

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