

'One or two local farmers, for whom this decision [the go-ahead for Project Hayes] equated with an annual lottery win are jubilant, few others share their joy'. So says Grahame Sydney (ODT 7/11/07) exhibiting two of the worst features of the Upland Preservation Society's propaganda: 1) their fondness for posing as representatives of the people and 2) their tendency to blackguard their opponents as motivated by greed. In fact we don't know how the people of Otago feel about the wind farms since (to the best of my knowledge) no scientific poll has been conducted. Such evidence as there is suggests that there are just as many for as against. And those who were 'for' were presumably pleased.

Unlike Mr Sydney, however, I do not presume to speak for others. So let me just say that I, for one, was delighted by the news. For what it means is that we locally are beginning - just beginning - to do our tiny bit to avert the threatened catastrophe of high-end Global Warming. If we are to avoid an ecological doomsday involving the mass extinction of species and the death of millions, perhaps billions of people, then the world must cut its greenhouse gas emissions by something like 80% over the next forty years. That means that we must give up burning coal for power. And it means a long goodbye to the internal combustion engine, at least as currently configured. A lot of transport currently powered by the internal combustion engine, will have to be powered by electricity, either directly (as with electric trains or trams or cars) or indirectly (as with hydrogen-powered vehicles where the hydrogen is derived from electrolysis). Even with a vigorous program of energy conservation, we will need to generate more electricity in a carbon-neutral manner, a) to phase out the coal or gas-fired plants and b) to power the transport technologies of the future. Tidal power is in its infancy and nuclear power generates a massive waste-disposal problem. For New Zealand that leaves hydro-power and wind-power. Of the two, wind-power does far less damage to the environment.

But the wind farms are only the beginning. If we are to play our part in preserving a viable planet for our children and grandchildren we will have to do much more. It's going to be a rough ride.

When my children were little I seem to remember a cartoon series in which improbably leggy girls did battle with the forces of pollution. The villains used to glory in pollution for its own sake. But real-life polluters are not like that. When Grahame Sydney drives out to film or paint, when Brian Turner takes his little jaunts to Australia or when Anton Oliver flies to Europe to experience the Passchendaele of an All-black defeat, they don't do it because they want to pump out CO₂ and help bring about a climate catastrophe. They do it because they want to get to their destinations and know no other way. When people pollute with greenhouse gases, they don't do it because they want a hotter world but because the polluting option is fun, convenient, cheap or profitable, or because they can't get what they want in any other way. Thus *not* polluting involves doing things which (for some people at any rate) are disagreeable, expensive, inconvenient or unprofitable. It involves giving up some of the things we want. But the loss of profits is perhaps most important. For when profits fail, people tend to lose their jobs.

Here's an example. We could cut greenhouse gases by walking, busing or bicycling to work. Not everyone can do this of course, but a lot of us can, especially in Dunedin.. This is less fun and less convenient than going in by car (sometimes it is cold and wet and when it is warm there is no time for my morning swim). And if most of us did it (as we certainly should) it would be bad news for car-dealers and mechanics. There would be fewer cars on the road and those that remained would last a lot longer before they had to be repaired. People would lose their jobs.

Here's another: we should cut back drastically on airline travel. According to George Monbiot, a Briton of 2050, on 10% of current emissions would blow his annual carbon allowance with *one trip* to New York. Imagine the carbon costs of a trip to Europe from New Zealand! I am cutting back my overseas trips to about five over the next twenty years and even that is rather more than a really principled person would permit himself. Still, there's a lot I'm giving up. To begin with there are the sights that I shall never see. Then there is the damage to my career, since an ambitious academic needs to be a presence on the international scene. Finally with five trips in twenty years I won't be seeing much more of my mother back in England (she's 74). But if

we are serious about reducing emissions such sacrifices will become commonplace. And it won't just be the prospective travelers who suffer. Cutting back on jet travel will spell disaster for tourism and the world's airlines. Many thousands will lose their livelihoods. Doing the right thing by future generations (not to mention the planet) is going to be a painful process.

Which brings me back to Mr. Sydney. For keen as he no doubt is to save the planet, there are some pains he is not prepared to put up with. There is only one serious objection to the wind farms, which is that they will spoil the view. The flora and fauna will be largely unaffected, ditto the ecosystems. But Mr Sydney thinks it is more important to preserve the upland prospects than to do our modest bit to prevent an ecological catastrophe, a catastrophe that would not only destroy many views the world over, but also species, animals and ecosystems as well as millions, perhaps billions of human beings. It's a free country and he has a right to his opinions. He has a right, too, to solicit cash to fund his appeal. So if you love the upland views, feel free to give. But please don't kid yourself that you are a friend to the earth. What you are a friend to is the way a tiny portion of the earth *looks*. If you were a true friend to the planet, you would be doing something different.