

Climate Justice !

Climate change is the greatest challenge that humanity has ever faced. We must take it seriously. We cannot run away to the hills. We cannot continue as usual with the hope that politicians or businesses will find an easy way out. If anything, the past three decades has proven that they have only made the situation worse, not better, with grossly increased greenhouse gas emissions worldwide.

Climate change concerns the very existence of all of our grandchildren and of all other species on this planet. It is not too late to act.

Where do we start?

First we need to understand that climate change is not a cause; it's a symptom. A symptom of living under an ideology of unlimited growth called capitalism. The idea that it is okay to be rich without the understanding that excessive wealth can only come if we continuously rip-off the planet or rip-off other people. That ideology has now become the global norm just as many resources such as oil and coal are starting to run out. Just as the waste from those resources are starting to bite us back.

Climate change is already creating sea-level rise and environmental refugees from low-lying towns and nations. It is causing changes to natural habitat for many species which is leading to mass

extinctions. Extreme weather events and chaotic weather is increasing along with food shortages and a rising spread of disease and climate-related health problems.

Climate change is not and will not affect everyone in the same way just as it has not been equally caused by everyone. The wealthiest 14% of the world's population are responsible for 80% of the greenhouse gases, so *climate change is actually a social justice issue as well as an environmental issue*. This understanding is what led to the global climate justice movement which now calls communities together to try and solve the problems ourselves.

So how do we do that?

Reducing the impacts of climate change requires a two-fold approach: resilience and resistance. We must find durable, affordable ways of living sustainably for our communities and we must drastically reduce the production of greenhouse gases.

Resilience

The next couple of decades is going to see a major increase in the cost of oil and gas products as the supply dwindles. This will have a major impact on imports and exports and the production of goods eg. petrochemical dependent farming.

Therefore we need to be using less energy; setting up alternative, low-impact, renewable energy systems; decentralising our communities and changing our methods of production.

Indigenous (and many poor) communities have a lot of knowledge about living sustainably, within the natural constraints of their environment and communities, from having to do so for many, many generations. Unfairly, they are also the most threatened by climate change and the greed of the rich and powerful. However we can learn from them while helping them defend their livelihoods and rebuild their communities. Sustainability is an economic, social, mental and spiritual shift not just a technology shift.

Resistance

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions means not just reducing our own energy use one by one but taking on the entire way our society operates. This is because individually we don't have the unified political, economic, legal or physical strength to stop major problems such as Fonterra suddenly refusing organic milk suppliers overnight or the government

giving out oil exploration permits to multi-billion dollar companies who pollute our environment and export to markets overseas. It also won't stop the false solutions we are offered by those in power such as emissions trading schemes and market solutions which are increasing greenhouse gas emissions and causing further land alienation from the poor, more deforestation and privatisation of food!

We can only stop this whole mess if we organise and move together. There are loads of community groups out there who have skills, knowledge and experience and are already engaged in working for a more just society. They are environmental groups, workers rights groups, hapu, residents groups and more. They need our support just as we need them.

So, if we are to tackle climate change effectively, we must stand shoulder to shoulder with sustainably living communities on the front lines of climate change and organised community justice groups, learning from their tried and tested ways of operating so that we can all eventually live safely and sustainably once more.

For more info go to:

www.ClimateJusticeTaranaki.wordpress.com

