

## **Ideology, science and parable**

*Letter by Catherine Cheung, printed in Taranaki Daily News, 29 Nov 2018*

Mayor Neil Holdom's opinion piece (Daily News, 25/11) accused Greenpeace and the Government of raising ideological battles against the oil and gas industry. He suggested that if the Government rejected 8 Rivers' Allam Cycle technology to generate power from natural gas and produce urea, then it has chosen ideology over science and technology, and ignored its net carbon zero 2050 goal.

But the Mayor failed to consider two critical facts before making his accusations: 1) Significant fugitive emissions are released from the extraction, production, storage and transmission of natural gas. Such fugitive gases in the US in 2015 were 60% greater than government estimates. 2) Urea fertilizers, when applied on farms, release nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas that is almost 300 times as potent as carbon dioxide.

Other environmental and social harm of drilling, fracking and disposal of wastes associated with the oil and gas industry are well documented. The impacts from industrial agriculture characterised by over-stocking and excessive use of petrochemicals are far-reaching, from water and soil degradation to farmer and animal welfare, loss of economic resilience, and indeed climate change.

The Mayor's ardent, one-sided, arguments remind me of the parable of the blind men and the elephant. It seems imprudent to claim absolute truth, based on limited information and understanding.

The climate crisis requires comprehension of complex issues, of science, economics and even ideologies. Why would we hold onto the neo-liberal ideology of extractivism and endless growth when humanity is facing the existential threat of climate breakdown?