

# Letters

## Drought shows we must tackle climate change threat

» In a few words

I have been saddened at news of farmers struggling to feed their stock from parched fields left in the train of the devastating drought that is spreading inexorably across our country.

The less severe drought in 2008 tipped New Zealand into recession when it cut \$2.8 billion off our gross domestic product, and I understand that the current drought has already cut \$1b from our economy, a figure that will inevitably rise.

The science is unequivocal. Climate change means extreme weather events, such as this drought, will become increasingly frequent and therefore our climate-dependent agricultural sector will suffer.

Because we depend on this now increasingly vulnerable sector for more than one-third of our export earnings, surely our very economic survival is at risk.

Surely it is now urgent to address this vulnerability before our agricultural sector is driven to its knees, bringing all of us with it.

Yet I am unaware that this has even been mentioned by our political and business leaders.

Am I wrong, or are they simply unaware of the elephant in the room?

DAVID THOMPSON  
Burwood

### Native forests help

If the current drought gripping so much of the country is a fore-taste of how our climate is changing, we need to take swift action, as such change is always exponential. The one sure thing that will save life from a miserable existence is forests and attendant wetlands.

New Zealand native forest retains and stores moisture, provides shelter from the sun, moderates the temperature, absorbs harmful gases and provides a habitat for wildlife and a protective cover for the land.

Intact ecosystems will survive in conditions where modified land will not. Agricultural systems that are highly dependent on water are not sustainable and need to be rapidly reduced.

Other activities that increase global warming, such as coal-mining, should finish and every country needs to think about capping its population.

GILLIAN POLLOCK  
Upper Moutere

### Soil being ruined

As a practising surveyor, I became concerned 40 years ago at the composition of our soils resulting from modern fertilisation techniques.

The surveyor has to place hidden marks below the level to which the plough turns over the soil because half-metre steel tubes need to be set as stable and undisturbed marks for future surveyors to use and not damage the farmer's plough.

When digging the small square hole to get down to the required level on what would, from external observation, be regarded as good farmland, one has to dig hard to break through soil that seriously lacks humus and contains few if any insects.

On reaching the interface between the topsoil and clay in what we consider badly farmed land, it is difficult to progress into the sub-clay without killing myriads of young worms.

The culprits causing both the

compaction and the dearth of insects is chemical fertiliser, mainly super phosphate and lime, and the use of insecticide poisons.

Humus built up in the soil was essential for historic methods of farming, and complex crop and animal rotation methods were needed to do this over many centuries. Insects by the millions lived in this type of soil and, as they died, they added to the humus.

Global warming is not the sole reason for our excessive drought. Farming methods must take some of the blame.

STAN LUSBY  
Moeraki

### What saved farmers

During the soul-destroying three-year drought of the early 70s, two measures really counted to us farmers – a five-year rolling average for taxation and the speedy access/transport for stockfeed.

Ours came in the form of hay from Otago, by rail, free of cartage costs, distributed at rail heads – impossible under the present privatised model.

Ten years later, we had a small irrigation scheme that drought-proofed each farm and spawned a new industry, wine, which has paid the taxpayer back hundreds of times over in overseas income, wage taxes, GST and excise.

It is the repeated government policies that are unsustainable – the featherbedding of the opportunistic rich, the result of which will see the disappearance of the Kiwi farmer insidiously set up for corporate or foreign takeover.

JOHN McCASKEY  
Waipara

### Market or climate?

What I read about hydro lakes' low levels disturbed me (March 12). How can they go from overflowing to bottoming out in 60 days? Can evaporation from a hot summer do that?

The wholesale price of electricity went from 1 cent per megawatt when lakes were full to over \$200 now that they are nearly empty. Is the price of power inversely proportional to lake levels – the law of supply and demand to the extreme?

To reach a better price for power, I just have to lower the lake levels. By simply opening the gates, I create rarity.

Drought aside, I find it very disappointing that when the lakes were full we could feel secure for power over winter, but now we find ourselves threatened with blackouts.

What is to blame? The planet's climate or the free market?

FELICIEN FORGUES  
Woodend

### Doesn't make sense

I'm trying to understand rising energy prices. Wholesale prices for electricity are falling, Orion's profit rises 85 per cent, paying its shareholders (89.3 per cent Christchurch City Council owned), yet it is raising its retail prices 10 per cent.

Usually in a business, reinvestments are offset from the running business costs. For example, a supermarket does not raise the prices on all groceries 10 per cent to reinvest in new checkout systems, new shelves, a new building or whatever is needed.

Surely electricity companies should do the same, especially after such a bumper year, but no,



Big dry: A tractor creates a storm of dust near parched Rangiora this week.

Photo: KIRK HARGREAVES/FAIRFAX NZ

Orion and all other electricity companies pay out the shareholders and raise the prices for the customers 10 per cent despite lower wholesale prices.

That does not make sense.

JESSICA GROSSKREUTZ  
Redwood

### Remember Nyree Dawn?

There must be many of your readers who remember Nyree Dawn Porter, a New Zealander best remembered as Irene in *The Forsyte Saga*, the classic 26-episode BBC series that took the world by storm in the late 1960s.

Nyree was a Napier girl, and a biography of this intriguing woman is long overdue. Her stepbrother, Robert Johnston, and I are working on it now.

We would love to hear stories from any people who knew Ngaire, as she was christened, who knew her as child or young woman, worked with her or was taught by her, or who has a story to tell of an encounter or a longer relationship as friend, colleague or fan.

Please email your stories to wordwizard41@xtra.co.nz or post them to Nyree, c/- PO Box 135-33, Tauranga Central, 3141.

All will be read and acknowledged, and we will keep you informed as to when our book is published.

JENNY ARGANTE  
Gate Pa, Tauranga

### Can't see the crossing

I am appalled at the total disregard for pedestrian safety from drivers who park their vehicles in front of pedestrian crossings. It is irresponsible to obscure the view of approaching motorists and that of pedestrians, particularly children, wishing to cross the road.

I often witness this behaviour in Opawa, where the pedestrian crossing has not just one dairy but two, each on either side of the crossing. This creates the potential for negligent parking on both sides of the road, despite the existence of proper parking bays after the crossing in both directions.

It's a busy area, particularly with children attending Opawa Primary School and St Mark's, so if something isn't done, an accident of potentially tragic consequences is sure to happen.

For the convenience of saving a relatively short walk, illegal parking before pedestrian crossings is common.

As in other countries, we need compulsory no-parking zones on both sides of the road, before and after all pedestrian crossings.

NA HOPPER  
Opawa

### Too long to wait

We once again phoned Southern Response to ask where we were in having our drive, fence and paths repaired. I was appalled to be told that the assessor will be in the Burwood area in April 2014.

This seems a ridiculous time frame. Do they not have enough assessors or is this a stalling tactic since they have run out of money?

We were visited about 18 months ago by a contractor who priced the damage done by the February 22, 2011, earthquake. I presume it was then submitted to the insurance company.

Since then, we have tried to ask when we will be assessed, but to no avail. We will continue to look at the broken fence, caused by the chimney next door collapsing, for many years.

BRIAN and BONNY KING  
Burwood

### Parole is nonsense

The concept of parole is nonsense that sends out the wrong message. When a sentence is decided, it should be on the premise that good behaviour is expected, it being understood by all parties that any bad behaviour will automatically result in an extension to the original sentence.

For someone to be given a 10-year sentence that can then be shortened for good behaviour is ridiculous. The crime either deserves 10 years or it doesn't.

The scrapping of the parole system would have the added advantage of saving time and money wasted on parole hearings.

GEOFF DREWETT  
Prebbleton

### How decent

I note an increasingly popular play by retailers to offer "amazing specials – one per customer".

Imagine throngs of customers begging to hand over common old money and the retailer

apologetically shaking his head, saying he just cannot exchange it for his treasured stock.

Does the retailer need to give us this hurtfully cheap deal, pay to advertise his kindness, and then nobly limit the profit? How decent. Little wonder these are economically difficult times.

WILLIAM COTTRELL  
Itam

### Needs inspiration

This year's Ellerslie International Flower Show has taken some flak.

I would like to make suggestions that I hope will be regarded as constructive.

Make the show biennial. Participation in it is a time-consuming and expensive commitment. A two-year gap would allow for regrouping and the genesis of new ideas. It would also make payment of the entry fee more bearable.

The entrance to the show is underwhelming. Could it not be embellished in such a way as to give a taste of things to come, to welcome and to entice the public?

Change the name. Ellerslie has nothing to do with Christchurch, everything is international these days and it isn't a flower show. (If you want to see one, go to Hong Kong now.) A more apt name would be the Christchurch Garden Inspiration Show.

JOHN AITCHISON  
Leithfield Beach

### Bravo, Chalkie!

Bountiful kudos is long overdue to your business columnist Chalkie.

I must admit to being highly suspicious when the column began some years ago, but week after week he exposes complex issues fairly and insightfully in amusing, readable language and with the public interest at heart.

FRANK LAD  
Linwood

### Get over it

I'm tired of people in Christchurch complaining about roadworks and delays they are facing.

It's simple. There has been an earthquake. Roads are damaged. Roads need to be repaired. There will be roadworks. There will be delays. Get over it. And this is

from someone who has to travel over the Ferrymead Bridge in rush-hour traffic twice a day.

CAROLYN MCKENZIE  
Redcliffs

### Not democracy

I am a husband and have been for over 30 years. I am dismayed that a group of self-promoting, self-serving individuals in Parliament are to acquiesce to a vocal and determined minority of New Zealanders to ensure the term "husband and wife" are removed from our laws.

How is this democracy, which the people of New Zealand claim to want? Could not our gay community start a petition for a referendum to test the democratic process, and would they accept the will of the majority?

DAVID WEUSTEN  
Upper Riccarton

### Marriage has changed

Ken Orr has bought into the myth that marriage is an invention of the church (March 2). This is not the case. Marriage has been around a lot longer than that.

Marriage hasn't always been between a man and a woman, but more often between one man and several women, between two men, between siblings and even between a woman and a corpse (some might consider this a good option).

For over 1000 years, the Christian Church attempted to ban marriage, seeing it as only marginally less wicked than prostitution. One was supposed to be celibate and dedicate one's energies to God.

Repressive regimes through history have tried to eradicate marriage to keep control, but faced with people's obstinate insistence on uniting, they have followed a particular pattern of surrender.

Having failed to eliminate marriage, they attempt to control it, imposing rules. Marriage becomes, for example, an inviolable holy sacrament, has to be performed by a designated person in a designated place, the woman becomes a legal non-entity, one is never to be seen naked by one's partner, one is not to make oneself attractive (even by washing, in medieval Christianity), and sex is only for procreation.

In Christian culture, marriage became a life sentence only when the church endorsed it in 1215 and prohibited divorce, the commitment being "death do us part". Unable to control marriage, the authorities then pretend they created it in the first place. They start talking about the importance of marriage and family values.

Seen in this light, marriage looks less like a sacred tradition and more like a desperate concession to the unmanageable behaviour of individuals.

AXEL WILKE and JULIE DOWNARD  
Central Christchurch

### How bizarre

On Thursday morning, I watched one of the strangest examples of work that I can recall.

A City Care truck, with a bin of hot mix, approached cones protecting a section of surface awaiting repair in Martindales Rd. The driver made no attempt to move the cones. Rather, to get to the repair site, he drove slowly and carefully over the cones to get to the work area.

IAN McLEOD  
Heathcote Valley

Can I remind those visitors to the Ellerslie Flower Show who are complaining about the ticket prices that there is an opportunity for Christchurch residents to purchase tickets at a much reduced rate. Notification of this special offer comes out with the rates demand in the last quarter of the year. For the last three times I have been to the show I have only ever paid \$22 for an any-day ticket.

JENNY RESIDE

Perhaps next time Jane could walk to the Ellerslie show, thus avoiding the parking fee (March 12). She also takes umbrage at having to pay for a map, but she could have done without it and saved another \$5. Perhaps the journalists of *The Press* might in 2014 create a writers' garden and we could come and have our say.

TOM REECE

Thanks to *The Press* for recognising the role of volunteers involved in the Ellerslie show (March 9). However, the number quoted applies only to those recruited by Volunteering Canterbury. When you add in the Rotarians, Lions Clubs, and the Christian World Service, St John and Canterbury Horticultural Society volunteers the number is more like 250. All have been vital to the smooth operation of the show, and true ambassadors for the city. Though it's not what they volunteered for, they all deserve recognition. A big thank you to them all.

JAN HARRISON

It's OK, we got it in the first column of Joe Bennett's article on Wednesday. Gilding the hyperbole won't penetrate the palisades of the dietary police. Shame the message has to be so cloaked, but naked it would create an editorial uproar. Still, Joe can light up at my place anytime.

MICHAEL BACON

I work in Peterborough St. The rubbish truck has just been and emptied our bin. As the bin was lifted towards the truck, some rubbish fell out onto the footpath. The truck driver got out of the truck, put on gloves, put the rubbish in the bin, then emptied it again into the truck. I wasn't quick enough to get outside to thank the driver, so I'm doing it publicly.

JOHN PATTERSON

Those who've been there won't be outraged at the inclusion of Rosselli on a best beaches list (March 11). There may be a few cheesed-off that no Anglesey beaches were included, however. I commend the BBC TV series *Coast* to Welsh beach naysayers. They may be surprised.

DAVID B MOORE

I wonder if anyone has suggested a tram link from the city centre and running out to Sumner? The congestion on that route is daily exacerbated by road projects and beach traffic. A tram would provide an elegant, sustainable and attractive commuter and leisure travel alternative.

ANDREW McWILLIAN

Because EQC has a vested interest in getting through house repairs as quickly and cheaply as possible, the CCC is going to inherit the earthquake equivalent of the leaky home syndrome.

HARVEY DANIEL

I find the articles about the class action against banks for unreasonable charges strange. Adhering to the rules of my bank, Westpac, and keeping and investing money with it incurs no fees. That includes transaction fees. Perhaps Westpac is as happy with me as I am with it.

TONY RONDEL



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