

I can't be bothered with Climate Change...

Thinking about climate change I am reminded of that old theological debate about how many angels might dance on the head of a pin. No one has yet found evidence of its source but the expression still remains to describe the introverted arguments of savants as they go from the sublime to the ridiculous, moving ever further from the point of the argument as they go.

So it seems to be with climate change. Contrarians (apart from some of the religious kind) appear to accept climate change per se - the climate changes from season to season, from year to year, in cycles short and long, and from time to time human populations who have strayed too far over the edge of change - for example islands too close to sea level - get nipped off. All that they seem to decry is the suggestion that change might be driven by human activity.

So the argument restricts itself to that alone, and the question of how we cope with natural climate change is ignored to the extent that now the widely held impression in many quarters is that if there is no human agency there is no change, nothing to worry about, when quite clearly there is.

My own knowledge doesn't go much further than noting that when I left New Zealand in 1982 few magpies were found south of the Clutha river and cypress canker made *macrocarpa* a risk in the North Island (though luckily they had resistant *Cup. lusitanica* which got frosted down here). When I returned in 1994 magpies were everywhere, southern *macrocarpa* growers got the glooms talking about canker (and still do), and so far *lusitanica* hasn't been frosted here.

But I can read geology and know that there was a time when I could have walked to Stewart Island, though I might well have frozen to death on the way. I find it intriguing that no one can tell me whether we are leaving the ice ages behind us - in which case how much warmer will it get - or are we in an interregnum while the ice gathers strength to return?

So why all the fuss if everyone admits that the climate changes, and by the past record not always in our favour? A local oppositionist, lured into the open, admitted that his driver was the threat of world government, before hurrying back to the safer ground of the fatally ignored Dr Strabismus of Utrecht and 15,000 US Phds. Others argue that the whole thing is just part of a plot to deny that our farmers are the best in the world. The extremes of religion have their views.

So I am tired of climate change and all those letters which require me just to click on the proffered web site which will explain everything, why glaciers and sea ice aren't melting here as Al Gore said they should but are melting there instead, and why Inuit aren't flocking to market

gardening courses. And that reminds me that when the last Greenland summer ended the pastoral Scandinavians died off because they wouldn't eat fish whilst the Inuit (who did) are there still. Adaptation won.

And then I remember meeting a Canadian who market gardened on the tundra, benefiting from the long summer days and for three months of the year supplied a mining settlement with vegetables.

Foresters, I too, were of course overjoyed when trees were proffered as the climate change solution for New Zealand. We could all look forward to a life of ease, counting our carbon credits, and never working again.

That dream has never eventuated. While it thinks what to do the Government has put a stopper on land use change, which has upset those who wanted to cash in on the dairy/property boom, now resting (or in real estate language, poised for the next great leap forward). Befuddled by the missed dairy conversion opportunity and grieving for those ever absent carbon credits much of forestry makes its point by a catatonic silence whilst waiting for the call to plant an extra 50,000 hectares a year which will provide sufficient wood for a liquid fuels industry and absolve all our carbon sins... .

It is unlikely that the call will come. For one thing we live in a pastoral culture where the return of the tree is seen as a defeat no matter what destruction those hooves and mouths create, and for another there is very limited public support for big single species forest plantings by the State or private interests, inevitably foreign.

That might ease if foresters could produce evidence that the 1.8 million hectares of existing plantation is in fact a good investment, but our export income, static for some time now, sits neatly in the middle of rather unsavoury company - dairy debt \$2.7 billion, forest produce exports \$3 billion, failed finance companies \$3.8 billion. No, we have to do better than that if people are to believe that foresters can save the planet.

I get old and can't be bothered with climate change. I have no children. I think that if I did I would think differently. But it is too late. I suspect the pinhead dancers and hair splitters have won. Send for those US special forces desperadoes who shifted that asteroid coming our way. Perhaps they can think of something.

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