

## Why I'm still on the streets and why we need you beside us

I'm an old lefty feminist, expected by my English socialist family to be a lifelong activist to "pay our rent for being in the world". So when Extinction Rebellion (XR) arrived in 2019 it was easy to join in. Gen de Spa chaired that first session. We watched the XR film about the climate crisis and what to do about it. We shared our grief & rage, and our relief at being among others willing to look it in the face.

I'm proud of what we've done in 3 years. We've been the fire alarm that pushed "climate change" to be seen as "climate crisis". We've mobilised several hundred people round the country, who didn't know one another and mostly hadn't been activist before, to block coalmines, sit on train lines, spray-paint banks... nonviolent but arrestable direct action. We totally failed to establish a formal national structure - but we've had actions happening round NZ just about monthly, using a minimal, dispersed, self-organising small group structure, based on shared values and XR's simple demands of government – Tell the Truth! Act Now! Listen to the People, not the vested interests! Respect the Mana of the Whenua!

But ... Bathurst, Fonterra, KiwiRail just factor our blockages into their costs like so much bad weather. And the Ardern government clearly won't close coalmines, force a downsizing of the dairy-herd or anything else to disrupt the GDP growth-focus of Business As Usual, however many people get arrested for however long.

We've faced up to the reality that the capitalist, colonialist system isn't going to move anytime soon – even if the earth is dying under it.

We've often said to one another "It will take a Pearl Harbour to wake people up. It will need war-time type emergency-level action to change things in time".

Maybe that Pearl Harbour moment is coming – not as collapsing ice-shelves but as economic crisis.

The latest IPCC UN climate report states the stark reality of what governments must do to avert catastrophic runaway global warming:

- Rich countries must cease their greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (to give Global South countries a chance to catch up.)
- That means stopping coal, oil, gas production & imports, and intensive dairy in NZ by 2030.

- The only way that would be done under our current system is if our government is faced with an immediate civil emergency. The most likely form this would take is serious ongoing disruption of NZ's long global supply chains, resulting in no fuel, fertiliser or food imports for a foreseeable future.
- Then government would/could re-nationalise the fossil fuel/energy sector and, as Mike Joy suggests, require/buy up dairy land to be used for regenerative farming to ensure food security.
- As in wartime, scarcity means food and energy rationing to reduce consumption – which is also the only feasible way now of ending our greenhouse gas emissions in time! We are out of time for 'green growth' or a shift to renewables at the same level of energy usage. We have to power down. This can be done – it is how Cuba dealt with the sudden ending of fuel, fertiliser and other imports after USSR collapsed in 1990. People localised many activities, cultivated urban land, innovated and survived.
- To do all this without social chaos requires radical action on inequality – basically taxing the richest to ensure income and housing security for all, so no one's left behind to join the next alt-right Freedom Camp.
- It also requires an active response to the festering injustice of colonialism experienced by tangata whenua. Aotearoa has a hugely valuable pathway for this in the Matike Mai constitutional transformation project. This is an opportunity for the whole country to create new forms of participatory democracy based on shared values and to move away from the dominance of corporate vested interests in economic decisions.

Thanks to the Ukraine war and IPCC report, the NZ public is far more aware of the fragility of NZ's long supply chains, the rocketing global price of fuel and food and the rising social and economic chaos overseas as heat, storms, drought and resource wars drive crop failure, unliveable regions and mass migrations.

New Zealanders are now talking seriously in mainstream media about national food self-sufficiency, free public transport, using less and consuming less, not re-starting tourism etc.

We're now much closer to social tipping points like rapid price-rise, food & petrol shortage and major economic depression – traditional triggers for major social change. Such big changes can and do often happen rapidly, rather than incrementally.

If/when that happens, we need to be ready with a clear programme of practical actions that have broad public support, especially from those who are hurting the most.

We urgently need a clear collective pathway through the crises that offers a clear and attractive alternative to the neofascist rabbit-holes that are all too ready to appear.

So a group of us within XR have drafted a national plan of emergency action to tackle the intersecting climate/eco/social and tiriti justice crises. We've put it in the Pathway to Survival website ([www.pathwaytosurvival.nz](http://www.pathwaytosurvival.nz)).

We're now taking it to organisations and people active in these areas to see if they're keen to build a broad collective platform to take into the 2023 election as a citizens' coalition to challenge all parties and candidates.

Will you join us? We need your knowledge and your experience. Forty years of neoliberalism means the climate movement has emerged with many activists having relatively little background in earlier struggles or knowledge of other resistance movements.

This looks like it's changing as marxist writers like [Andreas Malm](#) (Sweden, "[How to blow up a pipeline](#)") and [Jason Hickel](#) (UK, "[Less is More](#)") contribute to the thinking in XR.

But Aotearoa has its own herstory and history of resistance and struggle against the power structures. We need to know those stories, those lessons, that thinking.

We need you beside us!

Please do check out the [Pathway To Survival website](#) and tell us what you think of it and this idea.

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