

# The Stable-State Society

"What is quite clear is that a way of life which bases itself on materialism, that is on permanent limitless expansion, in a finite environment, cannot last long, and that its life expectation is the shorter the more successfully it pursues its expansionist objectives."

Dr E. F. Schumacher - Economic Advisor, British National Coal Board.

## What We Want

In a finite world, infinite growth is impossible. Every person must be cared for in a limited amount of space and with limited resources. Common sense demands that the whole world develops a sharing, cooperative, decentralised stable society which ensures the satisfaction of both the material and the non-material needs of all of us, now and in the future.

The Values Party believes that New Zealand is a very good place to start and that the time to set the example is now. We have three priorities:

**Survival** of our species, of the environment it depends on, of our planet.

**Justice** a fair sharing of resources, wealth, and decision-making power, both between and within nations.

**Community** a face-to-face society where people are precious.

We have a three-fold programme:

**Short-term** what we want the present Government to do.

**Transitional** what steps must be taken to transform New Zealand.

**Long-term** what we want for New Zealand and the world ultimately.

## How To Get What We Want

Our policies are concerned with:

**Causes** rather than symptoms.

**Prevention** rather than cure.

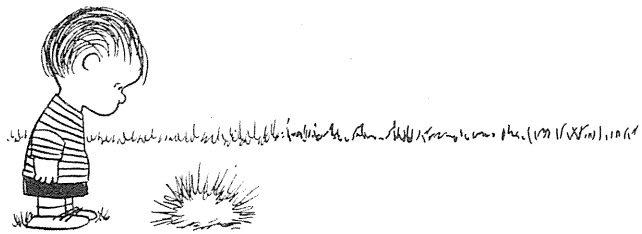
**Preparation** before the event.

We want a social order that we can expect to be sustainable. We must live within our means and use only our just share of the world's resources. In every area of our lives, there are thresholds beyond which mankind pays too high a price for growth. Society must decide which levels are best (for people and for the environment) and then stick with them until such time as there is a change in the information on which the decision was based.

The Values Party proposes that New Zealand aim to stabilise its levels of:

**Population.** We must bring into the world only as many people as society can care for justly.

**Economy.** Once the population has been stabilised we need a Stable-state economy: we must produce and consume only as much as the environment can stand.



This is what the Values Party means by stabilisation:

**Analysing the information** affecting limits in the light of social goals rather than economic goals.

**Determining what level** is the best (which is not the same thing as trying to have as much as possible!).

**Discontinuing growth** when the optimum level is reached and maintaining that level until there is good reason to alter it deliberately, in a planned orderly manner.

## Growth

What really makes the Values Party different from the other political parties is that they all believe in continuing economic growth, irrespective of what has grown and who if anyone has benefited ultimately. We say that infinite growth in a finite environment is impossible. Limited controlled growth in areas such as education and culture enrich society without endangering it.

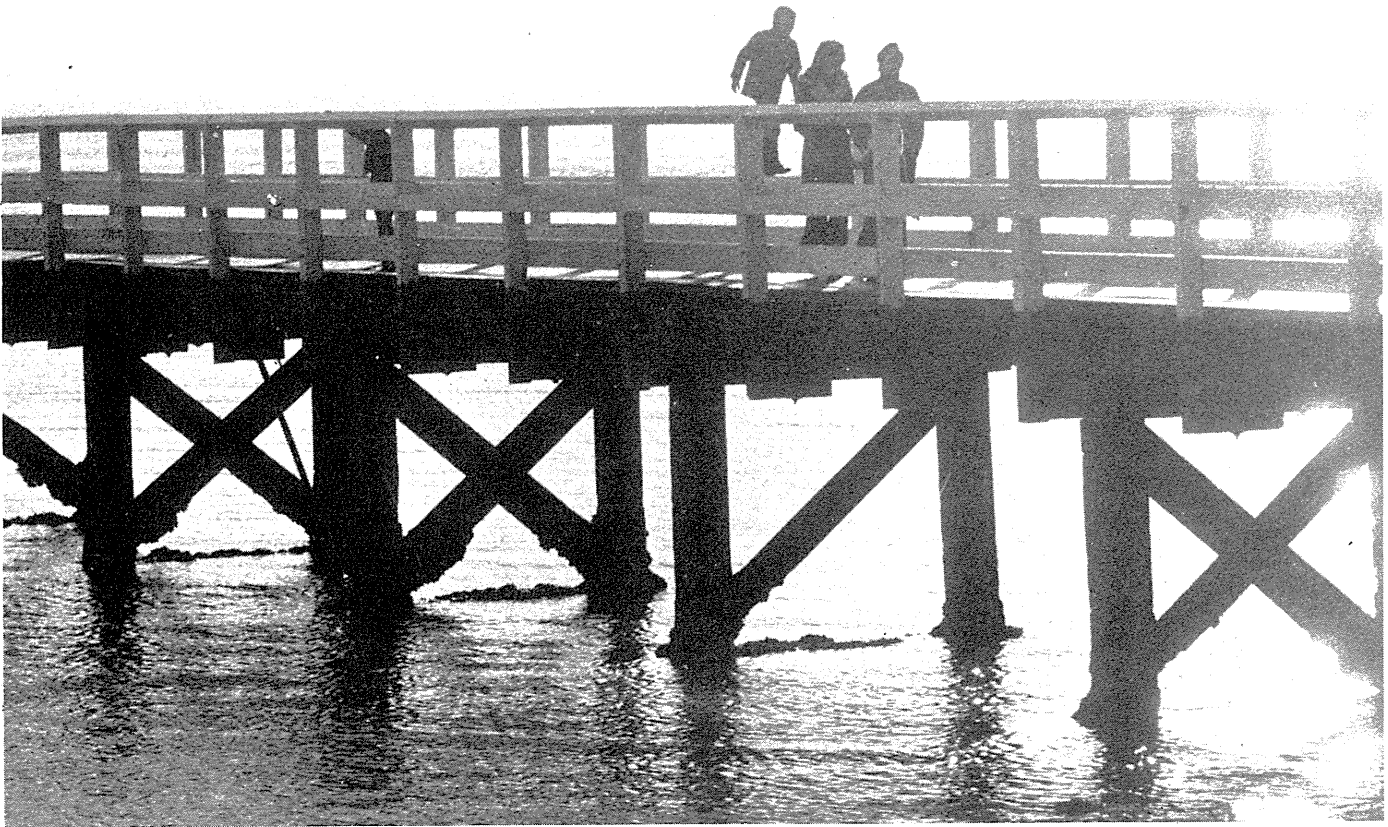
But what of pathological growth which like a cancer, renders unhealthy the living organism it feeds on? Cancer cells are defined as cells which have lost the power to control their reproduction. They divert energy from other essential parts and if not stopped or removed, they spread through the body and kill the victim.

The world today has two cancer-like problems-- population growth and industrial growth. Neither is critical yet in New Zealand, but the dimension of these problems overseas constitutes a warning we must heed.

Most population experts and ecologists give our civilisation a slim chance of reaching the end of the century intact unless world population growth is checked. The now famous computer study of the future of mankind, "The Limits to Growth" predicts the irreversible breakdown of the life-support systems on earth by the year 2100 if industrial output continues to grow exponentially.

What causes dangerous and unnecessary growth? In societies where industry is controlled only by the people who contribute the capital, the pursuit of profit overrides all considerations such as the quality of life of the workers, the length of life of the product, or the security of the environment. When demand is satisfied, the profit-oriented industry must continue to grow somehow.

And so, such industries pressure the public into demanding things they do not really desire. More and more items are manufactured to wear out quickly or to break. In addition, the obsession with regular changes of style and fashion make people throw things away while they still have a useful life. In the context of a



world which is rapidly running out of its non-renewable resources, these practices are unforgivable, and a Values government would discourage them.

Growth caused by unnecessary industrial activity can also be stimulated by the fear of unemployment. Today one man can produce what twenty years ago it would have taken ten men to produce. Some automated factories can work with hardly any workers at all. This can lead to unemployment. The traditional remedy is to stimulate economic growth and start up new industries to employ the men so displaced.

We are told that we cannot terminate the Comalco agreement because it would put 700 people out of work. We are told we must start a beech-felling industry on the West Coast in order to provide employment. We are told we must dig up and sell our Mount Davy coal resources in order to provide

employment. The space project in America is largely justified in terms of the employment it creates, in spite of the massive waste of resources. Even the Vietnam war was justified in terms of the jobs it gave people.

We are not against all growths -- only that growth which forces us against the limits of the environment or human nature.

Growth in the education or health services, growth in the arts and in the sciences, and growth in music and culture are all wholly good. It is only growth in the rates at which we consume raw materials, pour pollutants into our water and atmosphere, and increase the pace of life and the size of cities which threaten our humanity.

By diverting energy away from dangerous growth, we will be able to encourage beneficial development. In our efforts to provide material security for ourselves and our children, we have gone astray; for happiness

does not come through having more, it comes through having enough.

### **Stable-State Advantages**

To ensure that resources are conserved, pollution minimised and life expectancy maximised, we must have as small a turnover of people and products as can be feasibly obtained. In other words to achieve an effective stable-state economy we must not only stabilise our population and production of goods, but also ensure the average life expectancy of both people and products is maximised.

This means low levels of births and deaths (for example, families averaging no more than two children) and lower levels of production and consumption (cutting back on 'luxuries'). The cutback in production and consumption levels will mean an increase in leisure time and it is not difficult to imagine how sharing of jobs and fairer sharing of wealth can ensure that this increased leisure time will be an enjoyable asset rather than a hardship.

Because the total stock of goods and services is maintained constant, a stable-state economy calls loudly for fairness of distribution of that wealth. An expansion economy drowns out any call for fair shares in the clamour for a bigger cake.

A stable-state economy embodies a call for co-operation in its global application while an expansion economy is very much an "everyone for himself" situation.

A stable-state economy also differs from an expansion economy in that, to ensure the conservation of natural resources which are utilised, it emphasises the re-use and recycling of materials.

Finally, the stable-state has the advantage of being much easier to control and manage in a decentralised manner, while the problems of the expansion economy support the calls of the bureaucrats for even more centralised power to attempt to manage and control the economy. The centralising of economic power into the hands of even smaller numbers of government and commercial bureaucrats is no guarantee of improvement in the life of the average person. Common sense tells us that the things we need can be more easily achieved if we work together.

### **Your Choice**

Politics is concerned both with ends and with means. Unfortunately, means often become ends in themselves. Economic performance was originally a means but it has tended to become an end in itself for the other three parties in New Zealand. These parties disagree about what is the more efficient means of producing goods and providing services. One thinks it's "public ownership", another prefers "private enterprise", the last puts its faith in "monetary reform". But they all agree that material wealth is the object of the exercise.

The Values Party believes it has its priorities straight. We reject "econo-think" which is what Alvin Toffler (in his book "Future Shock") calls the assumption that even non-economic problems can be solved with economic remedies. We are more interested in the health of our society than in the health of our economy. To us, the latter is only a means whereas the former is a worthwhile end to be concerned about.

We don't want a society operated according to the values of the market place. We don't measure progress in terms of material and monetary profit. We are concerned with social and spiritual profit. Our goal is a new age in which community is more important than materialism and man learns to live in harmony with the rest of Nature rather than against it.

A party which warns of threats to survival and the need to limit and control affluence is unlikely to have instant appeal to the "man in the street". If this country is like a driverless train rushing headlong for a cliff, he might as well shrug his shoulders, sit back and enjoy the ride. After all, there are already three political parties in New Zealand vying with each other for the chance to make his seat as comfortable as possible.

The Values Party doesn't offer short-term bribes and distractions, but it offers hope. We can show you where the country is heading, how to take control of its development, and how to change direction. We have hope in the ability of mankind to clean up the mess it has been making of the planet and start building a better society. We're starting in our own backyard.

Politics is all about satisfying human needs. Unlike the old politicians people are used to, we are concerned about the needs of future generations as well as those of the present. Unlike the other three parties we put as much emphasis on non-material as on material needs.

The Values Party presents all New Zealanders with a challenge. Can we adjust our values, refashion our economy, and create sharing, caring local communities where each person feels useful and wanted? Dr E. F. Schumacher in his book "Small is Beautiful" (1975) believes we can:

"I have no doubt that it is possible to give a new direction to technological development, a direction that shall lead it back to the real needs of man, and that also means to the actual size of man. Man is small and therefore, small is beautiful. To go for giantism is to go for self-destruction.

"And what is the cost of reorientation? We might remind ourselves that to calculate the cost of survival is perverse. No doubt a price has to be paid for anything worth-while. To redirect technology so that it serves man instead of destroying him requires primarily an effort of the imagination and an abandonment of fear."