



CHAIR'S REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Committee

FROM: Michael Higgins, Environment & Planning Committee Chair

REFERENCE: S611

SUBJECT: **CHAIR'S REPORT – REPORT EP09/01/06** - Report prepared for meeting of 20 January 2009

The Christmas break has been a welcome retreat from the urgency of Council business. It is a good time to enjoy living, to 'Smell the Roses' and share time with those around us. Some of that time has been in the gardens and hay paddocks, there is more summer feed and growth than I can recall over the past 40 years. A farming relative can recall similar seasons in two years through the 1950s and 1960s.

I have read of Jeffery Goldberg's experiences in the interface between Israel and Palestine, the living together and the conflict. My brother has been appointed to a UN position there, so the issue is becoming close to home. I have also read of the increasing level of pollution in the oceans of the world, driven by both discharges and the industrial fishing industry. The discharges of nutrients, plastics and acidic carbon are sufficient to demonstrate that the oceans of the world can be damaged. Furthermore, the effects of industrial fishing have damaged the seabed and the natural balance of fish species to the point that nature's means of cleaning the oceans is not keeping up. Fish have been a popular healthy food, but the safety of it cannot be taken for granted.

The issue of food quality is intriguing. Scientists have found ways to increase production through application of artificial fertilizers over many decades, but are they sustainable? Around Wakefield, we have some long standing farm businesses, going back to the time of European settlement. One of those farms is 'Wantwood' of 88 Valley. It has been highly productive with top quality livestock and crops. Some years ago, George Shuttleworth, the present owner began to lose confidence in the application of industrial fertilizers and researched the implications of long term pasture change, livestock parasite changes and product quality changes. This farm is arguably the Nelson district's finest, and the Shuttleworth family has been there long enough to become aware of these changes. George has trialed soil fertility programs based on the natural building blocks of creation. He has stood up to some good natured banter from his farming peers, but knows his subject better than most.

From my experience, the soils of the Nelson region are of modest fertility, and the clays are tough to farm. It is our climate that has made for high levels of production. It appears to me that the knowledge gained on Wantwood farm could be applied throughout the district. I have asked George Shuttleworth to address the Council and advise us of his thinking. If he is right, (and I believe that he is) then the production methods of New Zealand will change, and the quality of the Red Meat produced will become highly desirable for healthy living. George's address is one of my objectives in this term of Council, and it is good to begin the year with it.

In closing, the next six weeks include significant consideration of planning issues. It is a good thing, I believe, that we have been through an intensive budgeting process for the decade ahead and this should assist in making real time practical decisions for resource management in the Tasman District.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

Michael Higgins
Chair, Environment & Planning Committee