
1080 AND THE FIGHT TO SAVE NEW ZEALAND'S WILDLIFE

Dave Hansford

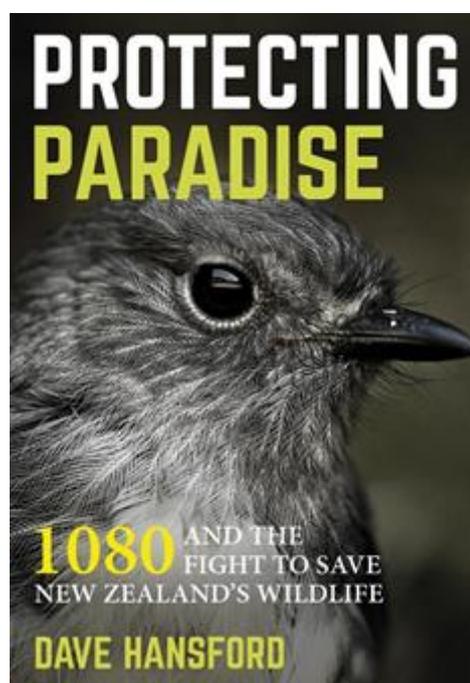
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TRANSCRIPT

Thank you for inviting me to come and speak today. I would also like to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Alastair Suren, not only for that perfect primer to my talk but also for the fact that I cut and pasted nearly all of that into my book.

I grinned when I saw the title of the symposium was 'Troublemakers'. I am here because I wrote 'Protecting Paradise' and in it I looked at the science around 1080. I explored some of the popular myths and fallacies around 1080, those intractable fallacies that do not go away. I was so intrigued that much to my editor's concern I decided to find out why they are so intractable. Believe me that is a rabbit hole and I am going to take you as far down it as I can in 20 minutes.



- *Many poisons imbibed in parts per trillion by pregnant mothers are known to have disastrous effects on the off-spring. 1080 is one of these poisons.*
- *'From Dr Scanlon's report to the ERMA review in 2010 we learn of clusters of miscarriages, stillbirths and congenital malformations to the children of pregnant women following aerial 1080 drops. I remember the Featherstone (sic) outbreak. There was no warning.'*

This was a copy of a letter I received from a newspaper editor on the Coromandel recently. There has been a rash of these. It continues:-

- *'If you live in Manaia for example, there is no way to prevent the streams being poisoned. All you can do is take your own precautions for yourself and for your growing children.'*

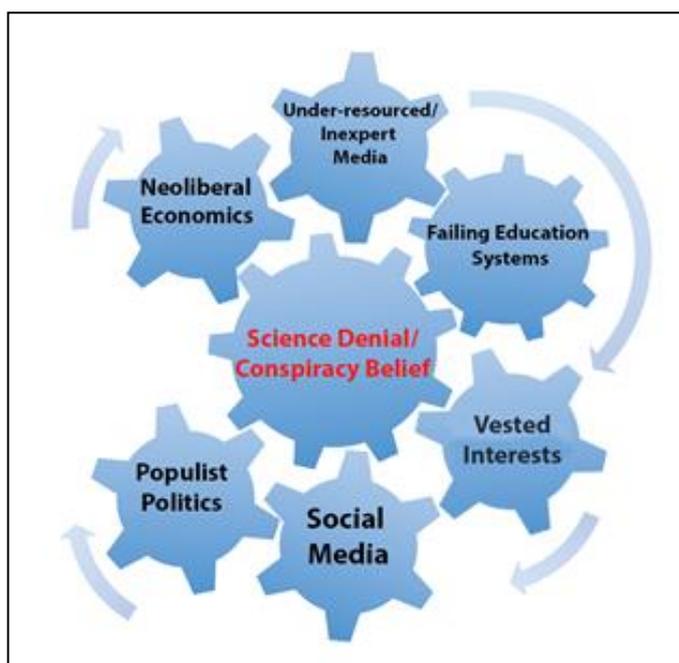
- *'To avoid dust stay many kilometers away from the area on the days baits are dropping. To avoid drinking poisoned water bring water in from outside the area for at least a year after the drop.'*

A newspaper editor sent this missive to me and said, 'Look I am trying to figure out whether I should publish this. Can you provide some comment on it?' So I duly did and I will return to that in a moment. I would like to point out, this was just written last week but it could have been written in 1980. It could have been written in 1990.

This stuff will not go away, even when Alastair has so clearly demonstrated that so much of it is unfounded. I do not know about you but I am keen to know why it will not go away. I have been thinking more about the phenomenon which people increasingly refer to as the rising tide of science denial and ante intellectualism where somebody's beliefs and opinions are recorded the same value as evidence based science. Even worse they are portrayed that way in media and most certainly on Facebook.

I will take you through some of the socio-political and economic drivers that I have concluded are helping to pour petrol on this fire of science denial and conspiracy belief. There is growing evidence that the two phenomena are very strongly linked and I will hopefully provide you with some evidence for that as we go through.

There are those two drivers that I came up with and I would be very interested to hear from others if you have some more. My favourite topic is neoliberal economics. The contention is that our present systems of governance and the way that we now harness and use wealth have contributed to the growing inequity in society and that is self-evident. You see so many figures. The growing privatisation of what was formerly the province of the state; all those core government services - health, welfare, education and infrastructure - are disappearing. The regions are feeling the brunt of this dogma most painfully. It does not help when media start running stories like this.



Westpac closures reflect bigger trend affecting small town New Zealand

JOHN ANTHONY
Last updated 07:49, August 24 2016



If the Westpac branch in Fairlie closes, the town will be left without a bank.

JOHN BISSET/FARFAX NZ

I want to give you my observation. When I looked at the hotspots of resistance or anti-1080 sentiment around the country there was a very clear demarcation between the attitudes of urban dwellers and those of rural dwellers. That is indisputable. So when we look at the real hotbeds of 1080 activism, the West Coast, Golden Bay and Coromandel – those happen to be the provinces that have been worst affected by what we refer to as ‘Rogernomics,’ the increasing privatisation of formerly state-run assets, neoliberal economics.

Newshub.

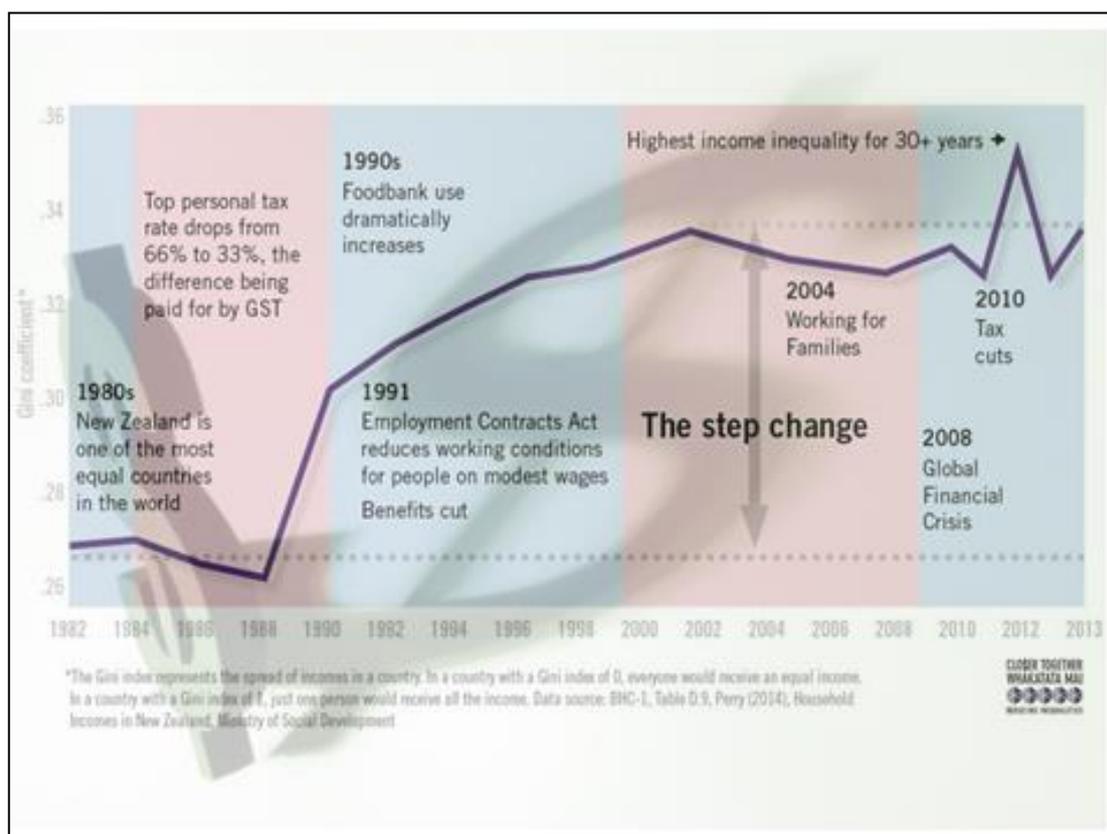
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HOME NEW ZEALAND WORLD POLITICS SPORT

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28/02/2017 | By Scott Palmer





This is that step change I was talking about, the inequality. Ask yourself, 'How could this not have a social impact? How could it not leave people feeling like the system has let them down? How is it not working for them?' Would it be unreasonable to assume that it engenders distrust in the State, in the Government and of course in all its manifestations, all its agents, people, you and me? They seem to think I am part of the conspiracy, in the media.

This is where a lot of the growing sentiment comes from. If you have a quiet night, hold your nose and go onto Facebook and look at some of the anti-1080 Facebook pages and this is a recurring theme throughout. More than half the time 1080 takes a back seat and everybody is complaining about the 'damn Government'. Like I say, we really should not be surprised by this.



"Fucken DOC make me so angry I could scream. I seriously hate DOC & the government so much it hurts."

1080 Eyewitness, Facebook, 9 September 2015



This was a great study. If you are interested I urge you to look up the Leaders' Report from 2013, it was a very wide reaching study and spoke to public servants all over the OECD and makes for fascinating reading.

I talked earlier on about the purported link between conspiracy belief and science denial. Out there in the science community the jury is still out but a number of very important studies have come back with a conclusive link. I will leave that one over to you and you can make up your own minds.

Going back to people, in the absence of information, if you like, people feel like they can understand or trust. They create their own explanation for the things they see surrounding them. I am old enough to have read and relished Alvin Toffler's book, 'The Future Shock'. In it he contends that the rate and extent of change in the future will be so great that it will inevitably leave large sectors of society behind. I suggest to you these are just contentions, I am not a scientist, I am just a journo, but we may well be seeing that happening. People are now coming up with their own explanations for things that they either cannot understand, will not understand or simply do not trust.



This is a very popular theme. In a great deal of cases there is the notion that a lifestyle is under attack, that birthrights are being stolen. That is a broad and pervasive sentiment and, as I say, of course particularly strong in the rural sector. This happened last week in a very small town but residents again expressed the same old concerns about their water supply, they were going to be poisoned and there would be effects on the unborn. You can tick them off on your fingers nowadays.

I put this slide in by way of throwing a wicked question out to you. Every time we provide an alternative water supply during 1080 drops, we reinforce the belief. I do not understand the sensitivities that local authorities face when they have to deal with these things, but it is quite a vexed issue.



If you want to know just how far this stuff can go I have put this in for a bit of fun. Most of you have got it already but the plot is quite a pervasive theme on anti-1080 Facebook pages. There is a belief out there that the Government owns the technology to trigger earthquakes at will. What happened to Kaikoura was the Government trying to clear it out to make way for Statoil so that they could get their hands on the oil and gas.

'A lot of streams flow from that area (Kaikoura). It is almost as though the (1080) drop was orchestrated so survivors of the pre-planned quake or those on off grid blocks could be poisoned from meat or water.

Clean out the population to make a free for all for big oil or mining companies. The scam worked well for Christchurch. The dynamic duo of Key and Brownlee have their nose in the trough again.'

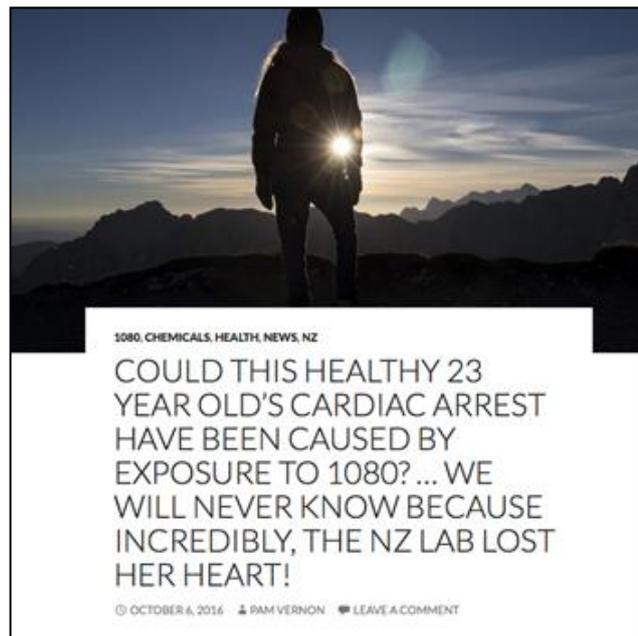
1080 Eyewitness, Facebook, 16 November 2016

Getting back to 1080, and it is quite a long bow, I could not find a 1080 drop around Kaikoura anyway, which let the theory down, but the Government is using 1080 to mop up the survivors from the earthquakes.



You cannot help but laugh at this but I am here to suggest that maybe we should stop laughing. The big contention is that we urgently need a programme of psychosocial research to help us understand what the hell is going on out there in certain sectors of New Zealand society, because it is very important.

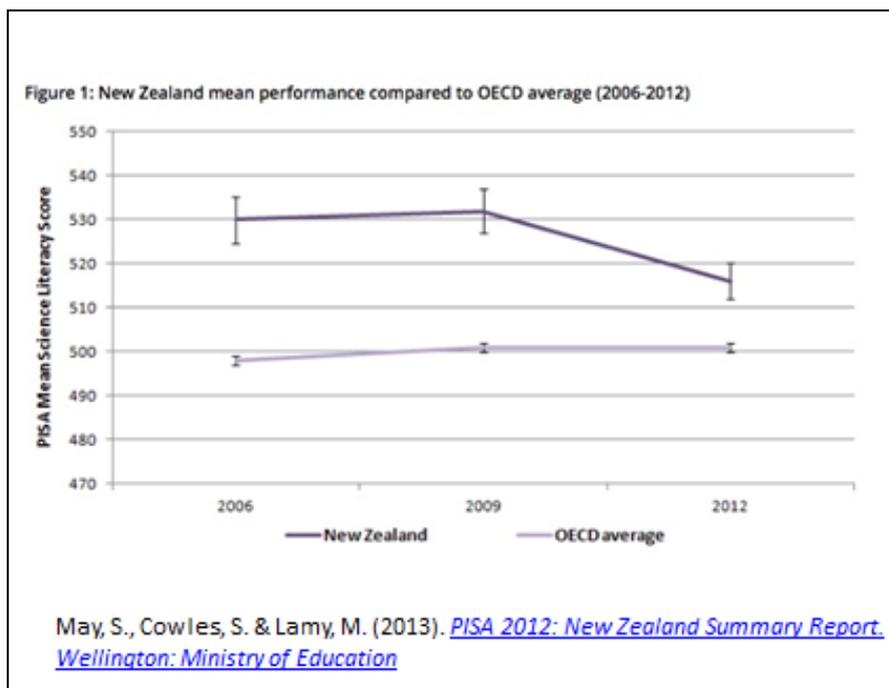
Nicki Douglas talked about collective impact and the five principles, what we need to start prosecuting broad scale public policy and respond to all major environmental challenges that face us. Lord knows there are enough of them. They have to be informed by sound evidence based science. How do we do that if a growing proportion of the populace refuses to accept that science? It behoves us to start understanding this and that is my whole point. These things are always framed as a question. I do not need to tell you that there is absolutely no basis to any of these things.



'This Government is forcing us to urbanise and be reliant on what their trade and supply offer. That's a conspiracy theory!!! But it is the only logical reason that I can come up with for what they are recklessly doing!'

1080 Eyewitness, Facebook, 16 February 2017

This leads me on to the second driver. We talked about the impact of fundamental capitalism on society and how it has left people disaffected. I want to briefly talk about our levels of scientific education. Historically we have not done too badly, hovering around the OECD average. Sir Peter Gluckman and many others have drawn the Government's attention to this inexorable slide, particularly at primary school levels. Maori and Pacifica students are struggling with Western concepts that come often couched in terms for which their own languages have no equivalent. So children are significantly disadvantaged right from the start. I wrote a story about this in 2012 and spoke to primary school teachers, many of whom had the same thing to say. They lack confidence teaching science these days and do not feel well supported. Health and Safety means they cannot do the old experiments in the lab with the Bunsen burners. It is very hard to win good practical moments with science any more.



'... In my view, school science education in New Zealand is not in terrible shape ... but unfortunately we have a long tail of underachievement and we need to be thinking now about the challenges that are emerging.'

Chief Science Advisor Sir Peter Gluckman, 2011

The media is another cog in that wheel of science denial and conspiracy belief and a subject near and dear to my heart:

'... much of the media still tend to prefer controversies. We have seen how such a situation leads to the promotion of false debate when there is in fact, largely scientific consensus.'

The Office of the Prime Minister's Science Advisory Committee, *Scientists, the Media and Society: Where Are We Now?* 26 July 2013

This is not new. We know that the media have a love affair with conflict and 1080 in particular. When I started talking about 1080 - feel free to insert 'vaccination programmes', 'fluoridation', 'contrails', 'climate change', 'folic acid' - all of these things are gifts for media. We have a responsibility to report science based issues much better than we do.

I deliberately say 'We'. This is my favourite example. These two characters, Clyde and Steve Graf, are both committed anti-1080 activists. This story went to print in the Christchurch Press saying that Steve claimed that DOC had killed 12,000 native birds in one single 1080 drop.

I interviewed him and said, 'What was the basis for this?'
He said, 'Oh well, we found 9 birds there in the snow, and then we extrapolated.'



That was a question that the Press journalist did not ask, and failed to point out that it was an unbelievably hard winter storm and birds tend to die in storms. By the way, 5 of those are blackbirds, so they do not count. The 4 natives were sent away and none of them

was found with so much as a trace of 1080 in them but the damage was done. The story was out and people read it and they thought, 'My God, 12,000 birds!' It is easy to see how bad reporting only helps to feed science denial. **Beware fake news.**



Populist politicians are another cog in the wheel, although this one may have fallen off already. Not very long ago the prospect of banning 1080 was a promise that New Zealand First made. They now deny that and I keep sending them screen shots of their own press releases to remind them that they did.

A New Zealand First politician Richard Prosser toured with Clyde Graf and Kathy White and a number of others around those very regions that we talked about with some appalling anti-science. I sat in on one in Takaka. Fortunately only 13 people showed up but he said some truly egregious things about 1080 and ecology in general. Nothing is challenged so I include this political aspect because it is another coercive force in helping to legitimise bad junk science as an opportunistic motive force.

It gets quite militant at times and this is why it matters and another reason why we should stop laughing and take things seriously because anything that can happen already has.





What are the ramifications of science denial and conspiracy belief for blue sky projects? The immediate example that springs to mind is Predator Free 2050. I come from Nelson where we witnessed the most appalling spectacle of a small group of committed anti-1080 activists being able to capture a community group in Nelson by legally challenging the Brook Waimarama

Fence Sanctuary proposed aerial drop of poison. They have done an excellent job of doing real harm to that community project. The bill for the Sanctuary is now close to \$100,000 and it has gone to the High Court, having already been to the Appeal Court. They lodged an injunction, which was finally thrown out yesterday, but there is still an appeal and they talk of going to the Supreme Court.

There is a very real cost in practical terms to science denial, and particularly organised science denial. In my view, if we are going to achieve Predator Free 2050, we need a couple of game changes. One of them is almost certainly gene editing, a massive opportunity. It also carries some risks, but we must be able to make decisions on those 5 platforms and one of them must be evidence based science. We need to know what we are up against.

This is another cost and we see more of this now. I outlined a chronology of measles outbreaks in Auckland in my book. They were all in very recent history and none should have happened.



'We are at the most dangerous moment in the development of humanity ... Right now we only have one planet, and we need to work together to protect it.

'To do that, we need to break down, not build up, barriers within and between nations. If we are to stand a chance of doing that, the world's leaders need to acknowledge that they have failed and are failing the many.

'With resources increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, we are going to have to learn to share far more than at present.'

Stephen Hawking, The Guardian, December 2016

I will leave you with Steven Hawking. At this point somebody usually puts a hand up and says, 'What do we do about it?' That is where I struggle because this science denial has been putting down hard roots for more than 60 years. We need an epic socio-political game changer to start turning it around.

If we start attending to those cogs around that central wheel we need a system of governance that re-empowers people, makes people feel like they count, and their decisions and choices will have an outcome. They need a grand vision. We made the mistake with climate change of getting bogged down on articles of science and facts. Facts on their own do not win arguments. Narratives do. Trump proved that. He had no facts going into that electoral campaign and look where he is now. We have got to learn from that.

When we talk about Predator Free 2050 we must not start off by saying, 'Listen, gene editing will be perfectly safe.' We talk about flocks of kaka. We talk about the fact that tieke are already nesting in people's backyards now in Te Aro in Wellington. People must feel they want to subscribe because every study that has been done only reinforces the suspicion that if you try to counteract somebody's belief with facts, all they do is double down. You attack them, because their beliefs are their identity and you are also attacking their tribe and affiliation, which, it turns out, is way more important than evidence or facts or reality. We need to get a better handle on these social dynamics and understand what motivates people, what frightens people, why they choose to invest all of this in belief rather than critical thought. We need to find a way to turn it around and I suggest to you we could start making society a little bit fairer.

Recently Maggie Barry gave a speech and said, 'In terms of the anti-1080 naysayers, we are just going to have to leave them behind.' I would suggest to you that a lot of those people are naysayers because they have already been left behind.

Thank you.