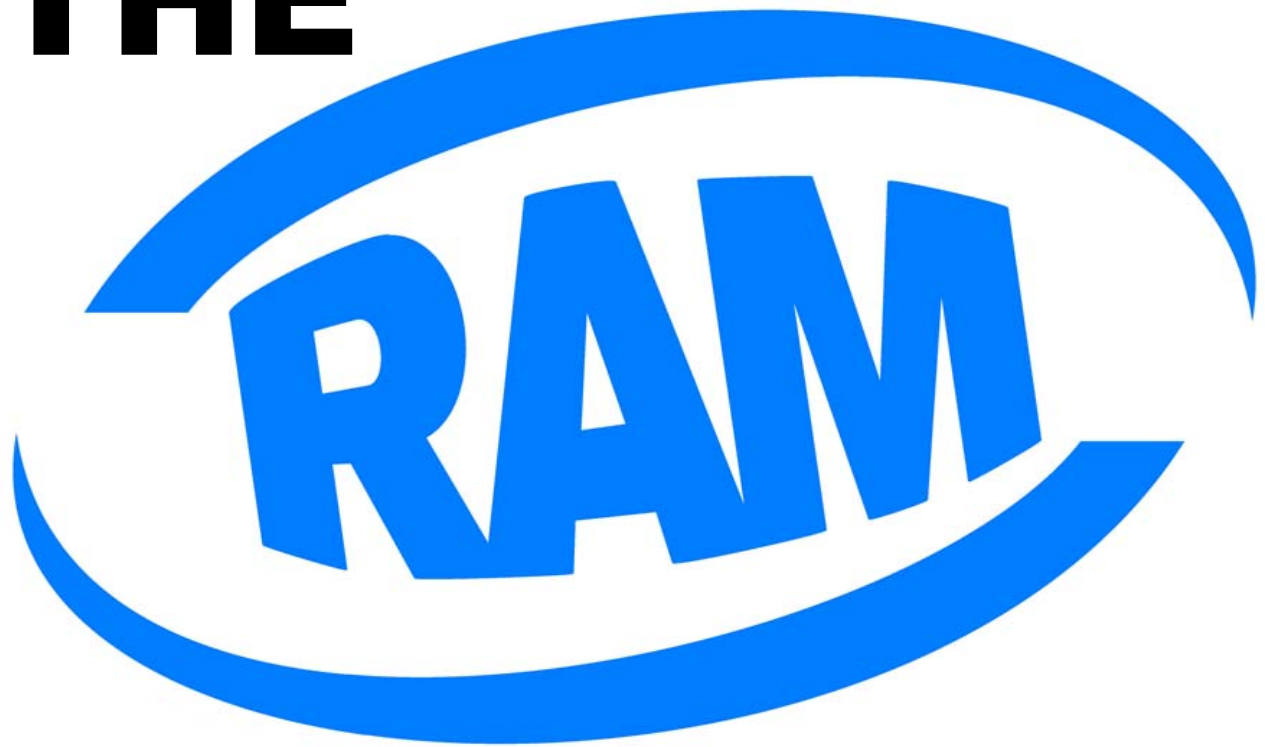


THE



PLAN

**Building a grassroots people's movement
based on the values of humanity, ecology,
co-operation, equity and democracy**

Residents Action Movement

<http://ram.org.nz>

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IDENTITY

The Residents Action Movement, better known as RAM, is a mass membership, broad left, grassroots movement of social change. We arose to empower the "invisible majority" ignored by politicians who submit to the market.

RAM formed in 2003 as an organiser of the Rates Revolt against unfair rate hikes imposed on struggling homeowners by the Auckland Regional Council. In 2007, RAM won 100,000 votes in Greater Auckland council elections.

In February 2008, RAM decided to go nationwide and run for parliament, featuring "common sense" policies that benefit modest-to-middle income people. Within months, RAM membership had soared into the thousands.

RAM organises street level campaigning, such as our popular GST-off-food petition, in tandem with contesting elections. We are a people's movement rather than just an electoral party.

RAM has a good record of working closely with others at the grassroots. We are committed to wide co-operation so we can advance further and faster on the issues that matter.

► **RAM's popular billboards take on the big corporates during the 2007 local body elections in Auckland.**



VALUES

The values that most define RAM are:

▶ HUMANITY

In the midst of a miraculous diversity of cultures around the world all people share a common humanity that is the source of mutual solidarity.

▶ ECOLOGY

All forms of life on Earth are interdependent within an evolving ecology for which humanity has a sacred duty of care on behalf of generations to come.

▶ CO-OPERATION

At the heart of the renewal of society is human co-operation for the common good which nourishes every person in body, mind and spirit.

▶ EQUITY

Social and economic equity for all humans will create a world of justice and peace whose citizens look after each other and their planet.

▶ DEMOCRACY

The path of ethical governance leads towards a participatory democracy where all residents are guardians of the economy, society and ecology.

To everyone wanting a good life for everyone on a habitable planet, these are universal values. Yet each one is at odds with the market forces deforming our world today. Unholy terrors as diverse as economic crises, food insecurity, climate change and imperial wars have a common origin: an obsession with corporate profit that devalues both our humanity and our ecology.

Our natural human instincts of co-operation, equity and democracy are being sacrificed to the accumulation of wealth and power by a selfish few. Their God of Greed is creating immoral extremes of rich and poor, setting people against each other and excluding most of us from the running of society.

For good to triumph over bad, we must renounce the prophets of profit and become evangelists of equity.

CHARTERS FOR CHANGE

The times are calling for a people's movement of social and ecological renewal. A new synthesis of ideas is urgently needed. In the words of Albert Einstein, the most famous scientist in history: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." To that end, RAM offers five Charters for Change:

SOCIAL CHARTER

- 1.** Our planet is capable of sustaining a good life for all people if we work together, but standing in the way are selfish hierarchies of wealth and power who divide global humanity.
- 2.** The unification of Earth's human family is a majestic necessity to save people from want, alienation and conflict while we work with nature to regain ecological equilibrium.
- 3.** The pillars of human fusion are co-operation, equity and democracy, liberating values that count for little when the Almighty Dollar deforms the economy and dominates the state.
- 4.** In a fair society the economy will serve the people, and the people will control the state, rather than the reverse which is today's reality for most citizens.
- 5.** Our right to food security, free education and health care, affordable housing, honourable employment and liveable incomes is alien to the profit motive.
- 6.** The defence of life and liberty requires human-centred alternatives to the market forces which breed inequality, injustice and violence on a global scale.
- 7.** A sign of moral governance is the promotion of world peace through practical opposition to imperial wars of conquest and pacts of aggression.
- 8.** Our humanity cries out for free expression of our personal and collective identity as an antidote to the spiritual sickness of market forces and state bureaucracies.
- 9.** Social justice will arrive when the wealth created by social co-operation is no longer privatised by the few, but instead democratically turned to the common good.
- 10.** Advances in participatory democracy and human-centred economics in today's Venezuela show that we can build real-life alternatives to a corporate world.

ECOLOGY CHARTER

- 1.** Our ecology revolves around biological diversity and ecosystem integration, both under siege as the world market trashes nature for profit.
- 2.** Being loyal to the sanctity of nature, we must keep genetic engineering inside the lab so living things are protected from the virus of unexpected catastrophes.
- 3.** We can escape the ecological Armageddon of global warming by embracing our human-nature dependency, but collective action must be taken now.
- 4.** We are called upon to harmonise the economy with nature, not set up pollution markets where the rich grow richer by trading in life-threatening greenhouse gases.
- 5.** Ending motorway construction and shifting the money into free & frequent public transport will reduce harmful carbon emissions and weaken harmful market forces.
- 6.** Our society has a moral duty to replace grossly polluting sources of energy generation with solar, wave, geothermal and wind power, and to do so quickly.
- 7.** It is simple justice that workers laid off for ecological reasons should receive full pay with no loss of benefits while retraining and transitioning to green jobs.
- 8.** A vast ecological debt is owed by the industrialised countries, including New Zealand, to the rest of the world who are paying for accumulated emissions not of their making.
- 9.** Our future lies in building an international movement for climate security and social justice whose aim is the accumulation of solidarity, not the accumulation of wealth.
- 10.** Saving life on Earth will require a social conversion that dethrones the Kings of Capital in favour of democratic control over the direction of the economy.

INDIGENOUS CHARTER

- 1.** Indigenous peoples in all lands deserve an honoured place, yet everywhere their self-administered communities have been violated by market forces and state forces.
- 2.** The 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the New Zealand government voted against, is a measure of justice towards first peoples.
- 3.** Aotearoa is the one homeland of the unique peoples collectively called Maori, who to this day suffer from the confiscation of their tino rangatiratanga (self-determination).
- 4.** In the Treaty of Waitangi the British Crown guaranteed tino rangatiratanga, a promise broken after the colonial state gathered the strength for war against Maori.
- 5.** Generations of Maori struggles against land thefts and other injustices have pulled governments into treaty settlements, yet real sovereignty still rests with market forces who set the state's agenda.
- 6.** The indigenous tradition of mahi ngatahi (co-operation) remains strong among Maori, empowering everyone who puts human co-operation before corporate greed.
- 7.** Since all common people have a stake in fostering mahi ngatahi, our futures are tied up together, and in that sense Te Tiriti o Waitangi belongs to us all.
- 8.** Enshrining the treaty in a new constitution will codify the mutual rights of tangata whenua (Maori) and tauwiwi (non-Maori) as Aotearoa outgrows the constitutional fiction of the Crown.
- 9.** The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be endorsed by parliament, with its key elements also written into a new constitution.
- 10.** The Maori seats in parliament, an important avenue for indigenous voices to be heard in their homeland, should be defended by all believers in social justice.

WOMEN'S CHARTER

- 1.** The half of humanity who are female have a sacred right to be treated on their own merits first and foremost, not merely as the wives and partners and employees of others.
- 2.** The indigenous tradition of strong Maori women who promote collectivism is a source of strength for us today in Aotearoa, whatever our culture of origin.
- 3.** The path towards equal rights, duties and opportunities for women has been charted by brave pioneers who often met with malice and scorn in their own times.
- 4.** Over the last century women have come a long way, but there will be more collective struggles ahead to create a world where a woman's place is wherever she wants to be.
- 5.** The foundation for gender equality is a co-operative economy, yet today women workers are on average paid less than men within a profit-first system which underpays both.
- 6.** The co-operation of women and men is the glue for bonding a global human community, demanding that we overcome sexist divisions which hold females back.
- 7.** It takes a village to raise a child, says an indigenous proverb, indicating the need for the community as well as the mother to take responsibility in child-rearing.
- 8.** Zero tolerance towards all forms of abuse calls for zero tolerance towards the dollar-driven breakdown of community out of which abusers are born.
- 9.** Human and ecological salvation calls for the rescue of society from the Almighty Dollar, source of harm to both women and men as well as our planet.
- 10.** In the renewal of society, women have a place at the front of a people's movement that solidifies the values of co-operation, equity and democracy.

WORKERS CHARTER

- 1.** All workers are human beings with their own unique value, despite being treated as merely disposable units of production at the service of others.
- 2.** The quest for the emancipation of labour has been spurred by generations of courageous trailblazers who faced hostility from employers and the state.
- 3.** The economic base of a good life is a living wage for 40 hours work, backed up by free public services, all badly eroded over recent decades by unfair laws and corporate greed.
- 4.** The dignity of labour demands permanent employment, yet the use of contractors, casuals and other vulnerable workers is spreading like a cancer across the land.
- 5.** Defending wages, jobs and rights may require workers to go on strike, despite harsh parliamentary restrictions on the right to strike in New Zealand.
- 6.** Since unity is strength, the protection of NZ workers calls for an accelerated return to unions, whose coverage is still way below a generation ago.
- 7.** The unity of workers in New Zealand and overseas is an antidote to corporate globalisation which sacrifices people and planet to the God of Greed.
- 8.** Aotearoa's indigenous tradition of mahi ngatahi (co-operation) is an inspiration for everyone who wants to move towards a co-operative world.
- 9.** In a fair economy, all workers would be participants in democratic business management which is geared towards social justice and ecological sanity.
- 10.** As the powerhouse of the economy, workers are the backbone of a people's movement to rebuild society on the foundations of co-operation, equity and democracy.

TEN COMMANDMENTS

In our Ten Commandments, RAM pledges that we shall prioritise these ten policies:

1

Remove GST tax from all our food

Funded by a progressive switch towards a financial transactions tax.

2

\$2,000 'baby bonus' to every mum

Funded by savings in state expenditure on health and welfare as a result of this up-front assistance to new mums.

3

Lift the minimum wage to \$15 an hour

Funded by private employers who have enjoyed a profits bonanza over recent years.

4

Offer first-home buyers a 3% interest state loan

Funded by tax rises on very high incomes and on profits over \$1 million.
May need to be income-related.

5

Free lunches in schools serving poor areas

Funded by savings in state expenditure on health, welfare, police and prisons as a result of this nutritional intervention.

6

Free tertiary education plus a student living allowance

Conditional on education leavers staying in New Zealand for the same number of years as they were studying.

Funded in part by an education levy on employers who profit from higher learning, along with savings in state expenditure from reversing the "brain drain".

7**Free & frequent public transport in our main cities**

Funded by a major shift of state road money to buses, trains and cycleways, along with a carbon-offset charge on airport arrivals and hotel beds.

8**Offer cheap solar panels to homeowners**

Funded by ending power subsidies to major corporations, including Comalco which uses 15% of New Zealand's total electricity.

9**Restore to workers their free right to strike**

No funding required for this legislative repeal of New Zealand's harsh parliamentary restrictions on the right to strike.

10**Enshrine the Treaty of Waitangi in a new constitution to guarantee the mutual rights of Maori and non-Maori**

Moving towards a new constitution will require only modest funding.



Residents Action Movement

<http://ram.org.nz>

MANIFESTO OF THE MAJORITY

RAM's manifesto is called the Manifesto of the Majority for one simple reason: it defends and mobilises the majority of society, the modest-to-medium income people who have been devalued by market forces in their own country.

The majority are the future lifesavers of our communities. They are the face of a humane and ecological era still to come.

A SIMPLE TRUTH

"During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." So said author George Orwell, of "Animal Farm" and "1984" fame.

In New Zealand politics today, the universal deceit is that Labour and National stand for very different things, so there is a fundamental choice to be made between them.

In truth, they represent two denominations of the same political faith, which we shall call the Church of Market Miracles. National are the fundamentalists, who claim that The Market will create the most wonderful Miracles so long as government keeps its nose out of things. Labour are the liberals, who submit to The Market but don't think it's infallible, sometimes needing a gentle government nudge to perform the Miracles we need.

While these two sects wrangle over doctrinal differences, often ferociously near election time, they both pray to the same God of Market Forces.

And what is the market? Once a modest mechanism of economic exchange, the market is today a global power dominated by exclusive cabals of seriously rich and powerful people. Each of these cabals acts in combination and competition with similar cabals around the world, all motivated by the quest for maximum profits. They use their economic and political sway to set the agenda of governments and nations. And they manipulate the buying and selling prices of everything, including wages (which are kept low) and food and fuel (which have soared). The market of the multinational corporations is the master of most of us, including smaller business owners.

Such a system is "not a democracy", says Ramsey Clark, former US attorney-general, it's really "a plutocracy: a government by the wealthy".

That is illustrated by the lock-step response of New Zealand's Big Two parties to the greatest threat facing humanity and our habitat: global warming.

In 2005 Labour proposed a carbon tax on big polluters, but quickly withdrew after opposition from corporate New Zealand. Then Helen Clark tabled a plan for creating a pollution market called the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

While supporting a pollution market in principle, National called for amendments to the ETS so that profit-making could be maximised at the expense of the already paltry emissions targets. Their demand was echoed by corporate lobbyists.

Lo and behold, Labour rushed to comply, unrolling amendments that made the woefully inadequate ETS even more useless as a pollution-reducing mechanism. What it will do is impose additional price hikes onto the grassroots. The Greens, who sadly had backed Labour's call for a pollution market, were once again pushed aside in favour of a political bargain with big business.

Now National and Labour are trading jibes over increasingly minor points of the ETS despite their common allegiance to a pollution market shaped by corporate greed, not human need.

The Sustainability Council of New Zealand calculated that the ETS would deliver less than a 2% reduction in gross emissions over the first five years, leaving New Zealand 30% above its Kyoto targets. And the Kyoto targets, say senior climate scientists, fall way short of the reductions in greenhouse gases needed to save our climate.

Meanwhile, both Labour and National promote the expansion of motorways, tourism and dairying, main sources of New Zealand's emissions, at great risk to our ecological future.

This sorry saga points to a simple truth: the electorate gets to choose only which faction of the Church of Market Miracles shall form the government. Market fundamentalists? Or market liberals? A very, very slim choice indeed.

THE MARKET MEANS CORRUPTION

Over the past quarter century, New Zealand has fallen prey to market madness. Market fundamentalists promised rising prosperity for everyone as the economic and political power of the market was greatly expanded.

Time has exposed these promises as calculated lies to hide the biggest transfer of wealth and power from the bottom to the top in the country's history.

Look at the terrible decline in the workers share of the economic pie. In 1983, the year before Rogernomics brought the market fundamentalists to power, the workers share of New Zealand's gross domestic product was 54%. That had plummeted 12 percentage points by 1994, the peak of market madness, when the workers share was a disastrous 42%. By 2007, after the market liberals had been in government for eight years, the workers share had inched back up only three percentage points, to 45%. So the workers share in 2007 was still nine percentage points lower than it was in 1983, despite a pay freeze imposed by the National prime minister of the day, Rob Muldoon.

As these official statistics indicate, Labour has moderated some of the extremes of market madness, such as an unbearably low minimum wage. These extremes had begun to

crumble anyway in the face of public hostility, illustrated by a groundswell of support for the strikes of low-paid workers. But the market liberals have preserved the core elements of what the market fundamentalists introduced, including:

- GST flat taxes which shift state revenue collection onto the grassroots.
- Historically low taxes on high incomes and business profits.
- Keeping all-but-one of National's harsh restrictions on the right to strike.
- Systematic policy discrimination against beneficiaries.
- Turning public enterprises into market players.
- Propping up privatisation through public-private partnerships.
- Redirecting state funds from social investment to market speculation.
- Market control of the Reserve Bank and the Kiwi dollar.
- Commitment to free trade on terms set by multinational corporations.
- Effective power of veto by business lobbyists over cabinet proposals.

More market policies like these have made life much harder for Kiwi battlers. Even worse, with Labour walking the same path as National, the market has gained a legitimacy it otherwise would not have. And should not have. It is a legitimacy that is illegitimate.

Let us be clear. The market means corruption. Not always corruption in the sense of bribery and intimidation, although that's often the case. But always the market brings corruption of the spirit. Our humanity is crushed by market forces which care only about the power of money, treating people and nature as mere commodities to be exploited for profit.

Even the life-threatening rise in our planet's temperature is being turned into a glorious opportunity to create a global pollution market. To say this is immoral is to speak the truth too mildly.

POVERTY FROM RICHES

In terms of inflation-adjusted gross domestic product per person, New Zealand is much richer today than quarter of a century ago. Yet most citizens are now poorer in pocket and poorer in spirit than they were back then. The market has created poverty from riches.

Some families in New Zealand are seriously poor. Unable to meet all the bills, they depend on state top-ups and sometimes food banks. Often they cannot afford good food and medical care and school trips. They worry about paying next week's rent or mortgage. Some are seniors and sole parents and other unwaged people. But more are the working poor on lousy wages. Overall, their standard of living has fallen significantly since the curse of market extremism fell over the land.

How large is the group of seriously poor in this country? Estimates vary. Those living on incomes below \$25,000 number 1.8 million, 40% of total population. 100,000 are on the minimum wage of \$12 an hour. The number of kids living with families below the official poverty line is 235,000, 22% of all children. It looks like the proportion of seriously poor would be between 30% and 40%. And this is the fastest growing sector of society.

Other families are relatively poor. Most have bought their own home but are buffeted by high mortgages and rate hikes. Some, especially those under 35, cannot afford to enter the housing market. Incomes have not kept pace with the cost of living, bringing new money worries. Even people considered middle class see the gap between themselves and the wealthy elites widening into a chasm. Overall, their standard of living has fallen somewhat, or at best remained static.

How large is this group of relatively poor? Again, estimates vary. Over the last quarter century, New Zealand had the fastest growth in wealth inequality in the Western world. 75% of income earners now receive less than the average wage of \$38,000. It looks like the proportion of relatively poor would be between 40% and 50% of total population.

So around 80% of New Zealand's population are either seriously poor or relatively poor. We live in a four-fifths, one-fifth society, where only the top 20% of income earners have enjoyed a significant rise in their standard of living. And the top 1% have zoomed upwards way faster and steeper than anyone else.

The separation of the grassroots from the elites is growing more extreme with every passing year. Also growing more extreme is the pomposity of the profiteers and the swagger of the super-rich.

Now the market is finding new ways to gamble with our standard of living, including the biggest food crisis in world history. Multitudes of people in developing countries face outright starvation as food is priced beyond their reach. In developed countries like New Zealand, the seriously poor are in despair about skyrocketing food costs, while the relatively poor are finding it increasingly hard to make ends meet.



► **The people have their say. Thousands sign RAM's "GST-off-food" petition at outreach stalls like this one in Mangere.**

"The main reason for the rise in food prices isn't growing demand from the Indian and Chinese markets, or the rise in petroleum prices," Gladys Urbaneja Duran, Venezuela's ambassador to the UN Food & Agricultural Organisation, explained in June 2008. "The main reason is that food has been turned into yet another object of market speculation."

People are starving, people are going without, people are worrying about feeding their families because of market speculation. Zillions of dollars of hot money are circling the globe looking for a fast buck, driving up food prices and enriching selfish cabals of speculators and monopolists. Yet governments are refusing to protect their citizens from this gale of greed. Again we come back to the immorality of the market and its political priests.

PEOPLE POWER

So how can we help the grassroots to protect themselves? We need to do three things:

- **Prompt a public outcry.**
- **Organise that outcry.**
- **Turn it against the market.**

Let's explain in more detail.

We start asking a simple question: "Do you feel poor?" We ask it everywhere we can. With family and friends. At churches, unions and clubs. On talkback radio and the internet. In leaflets and letters to the editor.

Why should we do this? Because when multitudes of people start answering "Yes, I feel poor!", they break out of isolation and invisibility. They become part of a huge public outcry for justice.

Then we organise that public outcry. We link it to union campaigns for pay rises. We link it to Grey Power campaigns to protect seniors. We link it to RAM's campaign for GST off food. We sign thousands more up to RAM membership.

And, most important of all, we direct the outcry against the one big baddy: the market. Using the language of people's morality, we expose the modern market as immoral, corrupting and destructive.

We explain how to take immediate steps towards a life-affirming alternative. We urge the grassroots to support RAM's Ten Commandments which would bring immediate benefits to people and planet by weakening the market.

Through this integrated strategy, RAM becomes the inspirer of an organised mass movement for social change. Market forces are pushed backwards by an even greater force: People Power.

This good work cannot come too soon. The global market is unleashing great evils and catastrophes on the world's people: food crisis, economic slump, climate chaos, imperial warfare. It will be a race against time between the forces of market madness and the forces of social co-operation.

If we do our work right in New Zealand, what we accomplish could become a source of global inspiration for the grassroots.



THE DEVIL OF DETAIL

Other party manifestos are consumed by screeds of eye-watering detail on policies often ignored after polling day. Mind numbing! Usually unread!

Another path has been taken in the Manifesto of the Majority. We focus on the Grand Plan: how to rouse a People Power challenge to the modern market, enemy of humanity and our habitat.

That is something more energetic, more organic, more grassroots than policy wonks closeting themselves away to analyse the fine details of everything. And remember, details often sort themselves out rather differently under the impact of real-life events.

Yet even our manifesto cannot resist all the temptations of the Devil of Detail. So, dear reader, if you like a little detail, carry on to see a broad brush sketch of RAM's policies prefaced by our backgrounders. Scattered throughout are our Ten Commandments, highlighted in bold.

Mahi ngatahi empowers the grassroots

Imposing te makete (the market) on 19th century Aotearoa was an often bloody and criminal affair whose aftershocks can be felt to this day.

In the biggest home invasion in our country's history, British troops and mercenaries invaded Maori homelands in the 1860's. They had no just cause for breaking Te Tiriti o Waitangi, signed in 1840 between the Crown and many (but not all) Maori chiefs.

In the treaty's Maori version, "the Queen's Government" would be established in Aotearoa, while Maori were promised official protection in "the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their treasures".

The Crown's promise to defend tino rangatiratanga, Maori control of Maori lands and resources, lasted only until the colonial state gathered the strength to go to war. Driving this state terrorism were colonial speculators grouped around the Bank of New Zealand. Market forces spread across the land behind the bullets and bayonets of armed forces.

Unlawful land confiscations and forced sales established the sovereignty of big money in New Zealand. Maori collectivism was battered to near-death as the market, the government and the military targeted their "beastly communism", to use the telling phrase of one colonial politician.

In 1877 the New Zealand Parliament, made up of European businessmen, dismissed the Treaty of Waitangi as a "simple nullity", a position held for most of the next one hundred years. A memorial was erected in Auckland to "the dying Maori race" in 1900.

Yet the fires of Maori resistance burned on, sometimes low but never extinguished. There were continual evolutions and elevations of takawairore (agitation), petihana (petitions), tautohe (protests), hikoi (marches), whakataturanga (demonstrations), mau tohetohe i te whenua (land re-occupations), mahi poti (electioneering) and other forms of resistance to injustice.

The quickening pace of protest compelled governments from the 1970's onwards to at last start making concessions to Maori.

Acts of Parliament introduced the "principle of partnership" between Maori and the Crown, although nobody is in any doubt that real power remains with the state which rests on the market. In the words of Dr Rawiri Taonui: "While the Treaty does afford Maori some protection, for the most part the Crown unilaterally decides Treaty policy."

So the Labour government legislated in 2004 to close off a Court of Appeal ruling that Maori claims to customary foreshore title could go to the Maori Land Court. This new raupatu (confiscation) sparked an impressive hikoi out of which the Maori Party was born. In March 2005 Hone Harawira, the hikoi organiser who went on to become a Maori Party MP, called the Labour government "racist".



► Inspiring scenes as the seabed and foreshore hikoi reaches the steps of parliament. The emotions that day affected most New Zealanders.

Since then, important foreshore and seabed resources have been allocated to large corporations, while private developments are blocking public access to beaches at an alarming rate. All this is far outstripping government agreements with some iwi which have perpetual links to stretches of shoreline. The market is working with the state to monopolise foreshore and seabed resources under the guise of ownership by all New Zealanders.

Despite such setbacks the Maori revival continues, pulling governments into the negotiation of historic treaty settlements. The Treelords agreement with central North Island iwi in June 2008 broke new ground in two ways: it was the first major return of contiguous land to Maori, and was more than double the value of any previous treaty settlement.

These advances are spurring debates about what a modern reincarnation of tino rangatiratanga might look like. Te makete, naturally, demands a "corporate warrior" model where an elite of Maori executives secure effective control over Maori assets. In the face of market forces, however, the indigenous tradition of mahi ngatahi (co-operation) remains strong among flaxroots Maori.

If Maori can reassert mahi ngatahi as their economic base expands, this will empower everyone else in Aotearoa who wants human co-operation to come before corporate greed. It could, for instance, point the way towards how we put the public back into public assets, reversing the commercialisation and privatisation of state-owned enterprises.

All Kiwi battlers have a stake in the victory of Maori collectivism. Our futures are tied up together. In this sense Te Tiriti o Waitangi belongs to us all, regardless of our cultures of origin. Everyone at the grassroots should defend the treaty as our own as Aotearoa outgrows the constitutional fiction of the Crown. He ora te whakapiri: there is strength in unity.

Supporting the indigenous tradition of mahi ngatahi, RAM advocates:

- **Enshrine the Treaty of Waitangi in a new constitution to guarantee the mutual rights of Maori and non-Maori.**
- Recognise the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (which the Labour government voted against).
- Retain the Maori seats in parliament unless Maori collectively decide otherwise.
- Entrench the Maori seats (meaning they cannot be abolished by a vote of less than 75% of MP's).
- Reverse the discriminatory legislative ban on Maori taking court cases over foreshore and seabed title, in tandem with a general right of free public access to beaches.
- Allow the strategic governance of Maori assets to be devolved from trust boards to collective assemblies of iwi and hapu.
- Establish an Institute of Maori Language to promote te reo across the land, amplifying the good work already done by the Maori Language Commission and many other advocates of te reo.
- Welcome the flying of the Maori flag from public places on appropriate occasions.
- Help the Maori Party to win all the Maori seats.

Bridging the democratic deficit: Part One

Reverse the erosion of our civil liberties

Our system of governance is parliamentary democracy, an historic advance over feudal and authoritarian regimes. However, since the economy and the state are dominated by unelected Kings of Capital and Bosses of Bureaucracy, we still suffer from a democratic deficit that is institutional.

Our democracy is mostly limited to the personal and political spheres. We have the right to vote for governments and councils. We have freedom of expression and assembly. We have the right to peaceful dissent. We have the right to a fair trial and to remain silent under police interrogation. We have the right to privacy. Democratic rights like these, though limited, were hard won and are extremely important to defend.

And defend them we must, for our civil liberties are under siege. NZ workers suffer the harshest legislative restrictions on their right to strike of any parliamentary democracy in the world. The right of workers to speak their minds on the job and about their job has been severely eroded by corporate control freaks. Unfair dismissals may be given legislative protection. Free trade agreements allow the import of low-paid overseas contractors who are denied the protection of New Zealand laws. Recent governments have passed a raft of legislation allowing state spies to invade our homes and burgle our bank accounts and bug our computers. Police are cracking down on dissenters who are starting to be labelled as "terrorists". Immigrants are becoming the target of political panics and repressive legislation. Our right to silence and to trial by jury, inherited from the Magna Carta, are now at risk. The democratic deficit is widening.

To defend and extend our civil liberties, RAM advocates:

- **Restore to workers their free right to strike.**
- Strengthen laws to promote free speech in workplaces and protect staff against unfair dismissal.
- Overseas contractors who are imported under free trade agreements shall receive the standard industry rate of pay, be allowed to join New Zealand unions and be protected under New Zealand law from the pressures of their often authoritarian governments at home.
- Binding citizens initiated referendums on the recall of members of parliament.
- Binding citizens initiated referendums on the repeal of parliamentary legislation and council resolutions.
- Commission of Inquiry into the intrusive powers of state spies.

- Establish a well-resourced, independent agency to investigate complaints about the police and intelligence agencies.
- Entrench our right to silence and to trial by jury (meaning they cannot be weakened or abolished by a vote of less than 75% of MP's).

Bridging the democratic deficit: Part Two

Shift economic control from elites to electors

The Business Herald's main feature on 9 May 2008 was headlined: "SUPERCLASS: The 6,000 people who run the world." However you define democracy, it cannot be 6,000 people deciding the fate of the planet's other six billion.

A people who do not democratically control the main levers of their economy cannot truly be called a national community. They are a nation divided. Elites made powerful by their economic domination are divided from the majority made invisible by their lack of control over the main means of producing and distributing the necessities of life.

Shifting control over nationally-significant economic assets from elites to electors is critical to bridging the democratic deficit.

Yet the market fundamentalists have taken New Zealand in the opposite direction. Their policies of privatisation and commercialisation of state-owned enterprises have alienated the public from public assets.

The market liberals have used government cash to rescue some wrecked privatisations, like the railways, ACC and Air NZ, without taking the market out of current and former state-owned enterprises. Disasters like Telecom's ultra-slow broadband and chronic electricity insecurity flow from the pursuit of profit at public expense.

Meanwhile, Comalco's Bluff aluminium smelter uses 15% of New Zealand's total electricity, paying a top-secret, super-cheap price not available to any other user. Rio Tinto, the owner of Comalco, operates in 61 countries with annual revenues of NZ\$65 billion. This corporate welfare bludger enjoys socialism for the rich, at the expense of homeowners struggling to pay rising power bills. LabNat politicians buckle under to Comalco's threat to close the smelter if its sweetheart deal ends. Yet it would be much cheaper to free up 15% of power generation without building any new station, while Comalco's workforce got full pay to retrain for other jobs.

The financialisation of the global economy is increasing the power of hedge funds and other quick-buck speculators. They are the main drivers of skyrocketing prices for food and fuel as they corner commodities in a flight from the credit crunch that their own greed triggered. These corporate parasites are ruining livelihoods and communities around the world.

While it is hard for one country to stand up against the speculators, a big roadblock is the subservience of governments to market forces. Take away that subservience, and possibilities for effective action open up. That is the experience of Venezuela, where the people's government of Hugo Chavez is forming a partnership with other Latin American countries to repel the speculators. We could start doing the same in New Zealand if there was the political will to do so.

To begin shifting economic control from elites to electors, RAM advocates:

- Return state-owned enterprises to control by elected governments instead of corporate boards.
- Transitional return of telecommunications and electricity to direct control by centralised government agencies.
- Cease subsidising the power bills of Comalco and other large corporations.
- Public control of high-speed broadband, with its construction funded in part by a ring-fenced levy on business beneficiaries.
- Redirect Super Fund, ACC and Kiwisaver investments towards funding the economic, ecological and social development of New Zealand, rather than increasingly risky speculation on mostly offshore stock markets.
- Government re-regulation of banking and finance, with special restrictions on the operation of hedge funds and other quick-buck speculators.
- In any firm employing over 1,000 staff, top management to consult an elected Workers Council enjoying statutory co-management powers.

Making ends meet: Part One

Funding an economy that's invisible

The media is full of it. It's on the lips of politicians. Universities study it. Yes, it's the economy. But it's mostly an economy of profits and productivity, of firms and farmers.

Other important elements are usually left out of the frame. Like the workers whose underpaid work makes the profits of others. Like the mums and community helpers whose unpaid work makes society tick. Like the kids growing up in households where the bills exceed the money coming in.

Theirs is an economy that's invisible. It's an economy of the grassroots. So long as they go

to work, pay taxes, attend school and don't kick up a fuss, who in authority gives much thought to them? Except if it's election year and votes have to be won.

Well, the grassroots have got news for those in authority. We're sick of not getting enough money. We're tired of being treated as invisible. We are fed up. Big-time.

There's something happening at the grassroots. Call it the start of a revolution, if you like, although it's not about bloodshed. It's about questioning the old authorities, not just accepting what they say. It's about supporting anyone standing up to have their say, even if you don't always agree. It's about looking around for new ways to find relief from price rises which outstrip family incomes.

This mood can be summed up in one word: change. The grassroots want more money. And more respect. And we know that will only happen if we change the way things are now.

Meeting this mood for change, RAM advocates:

- **Remove GST tax from all our food.**
- Staged transition away from GST (which takes more from the poor than the rich) to a Financial Transaction Tax (which takes more from the rich than the poor).
- Remove tax on the first \$10,000 of personal income.
- Introduce a new top tax rate of 49% on:
 - Personal incomes over \$200,000.
 - Company profits over \$1 million.
- Inflation adjust Kiwisaver tax credits and phase in compulsory employer contributions of 9% of gross wages.
- **Free lunches in schools serving poor areas.**
- Set a legislative deadline of 2020 to eliminate child poverty.
- **\$2,000 "baby bonus" to every mum.**
(This amount is not enough to make women want to get pregnant just for the money, but it would provide a helping hand to families when a child arrives and it would allow a mother to escape an unwanted relationship along with her child.)
- Pay equity legislation to bridge the wage gap between women and men which persists despite the equal pay law. (Statistics NZ point to a substantial pay gap between men and women across all levels of education. Men with no qualifications

have a median annual income almost \$6,000 higher than women. That rises to \$14,000 at a post-school qualification level.)

- Extend paid parental leave to 26 weeks and increase the payments.
- **Lift the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.**
- Index the minimum wage to two-thirds of the average wage.
- Unionise the nearly four-fifths of NZ workers who are not organised and therefore suffer from lower pay, worse conditions and fewer rights than they otherwise would have.
- Legislate for a universal entitlement to minimum redundancy compensation.
- Curb the industrial cancer of casual work, contract work, labour hire and other precarious employment practices which reduce wages and increase vulnerability.

Making ends meet: Part Two

Keeping a roof over our heads

Headline in the NZ Herald, 21 January 2008: "NZ houses world's least affordable". Those being hit the hardest are the youngest. According to NZ census figures, a person born in 1956 had a 75% chance of owning their own home by 35, while someone who turned 35 in 2006 had only a 58% chance of doing so.

So what has been going on? Over the 30 years to 2007, soaring house prices in New Zealand far outstripped pay rates, depressing the previously high rate of home ownership. Local mortgage interest rates were among the most extreme of any industrialised nation. Lately an international credit crunch has hit, threatening to plunge highly-mortgaged homeowners into negative equity as house values suddenly fall. Yet private accommodation rentals remain dearer than many comparable cities elsewhere in the world.

In short, the housing, finance and labour markets have failed most Kiwis.

Talk with common people about housing and it's soon clear what most want. They want their own home in order to give them a greater degree of personal security. And they want good state housing at affordable rentals in order to provide a greater degree of social equity. Buried deep in the popular mindset, these two wants have for many decades resisted the buffetings of economic bad times and housing policy U-turns.

If these two wants are to be met in the stormy times ahead, we cannot rely on the failed market.

Decades ago, when New Zealand was a much poorer country than now, the state could afford 3% loans to first-home buyers. Resurrecting this policy will help to reverse the accelerating decline in home ownership rates. And it will challenge the blackmail of the banks (mostly Australian owned) whose rapacious rates of interest have been bleeding the grassroots for too long. Jesus swept the moneylenders from the temple. Isn't it time for us to sweep them out of the house with 3% state loans?

To help people keep a roof over their heads, RAM advocates:

- **Offer first-home buyers a 3% interest state loan.**
(May have to be income-related.)
- Accelerate the construction of state rental eco-housing in partnership with local communities.
- Redirect a portion of Super Fund, ACC and Kiwisaver investments towards 3% first-home loans and state eco-housing. Social payoffs will reduce welfare benefits, accommodation supplements, tax credits and other state obligations, which will more than outweigh immediate revenue losses.
- If private construction firms go out of business before repairing leaky homes they built, the owners to be jointly compensated by the government and local councils since their defective legislation and oversight contributed to the problem.

Making ends meet: Part Three

Growing the social wage

Central to the well-being and security of grassroots families is the social wage. That embraces free education, free public health care, welfare benefits, superannuation, tax credits, accident compensation and other services provided out of state revenues.

The social wage is probably the area of most divergence between the market fundamentalists and the market liberals.

The first instinct of market fundamentalists is to cut, cut and cut the social wage because it moderates the sovereignty of the market. But they sometimes back off in the face of deep loyalty to the social wage shown by grassroots families. So, for instance, National has adopted Labour's policy of interest free student loans.

Market liberals, however, lean the other way. Their first instinct is to support the social wage as a compensatory mechanism to stabilise the market. But they sometimes back off in the face of deep hostility to the social wage shown by market forces. So, for instance, Labour has lined up with National to retain tertiary student fees and refuse a student living allowance.

The existing social wage is not safe in the hands of the market liberals, let alone the market fundamentalists. Yet there is a crying need to grow the social wage in order to meet the education, health and benefit needs of grassroots families.

To grow the social wage, RAM advocates:

- **Free tertiary education plus a student living allowance.**
- Free trade training for workers.
- Extend all child-based tax credits to all low-income households.
- Free medical consultations with family doctors.
- Sex education and birth control advice to be freely available, along with access to safe abortions for women who do not want to be forced into motherhood.
- Index superannuation to two-thirds of the average wage.
- Increase the level of weekly earnings that can be kept by beneficiaries in part-time work before their benefits start reducing.
- Restore benefit levels to where they were before the 1991 "Mothers of All Budgets" benefit cuts.
- Promote structural co-operation between state sector workers and the communities they are servicing.

A very different path to save life on Earth

"Clean and green." That's the picture of New Zealand painted by Fonterra executives, tourism marketers and other propagandists of profit. Their self-serving spin is, however, far from factual. In addition to many other environmental crimes, this country has a shocking record as an emitter of greenhouse gases, the main driver of life-threatening global warming.

For the year 2000, carbon dioxide equivalent emissions per person in New Zealand were 19 tonnes, not far behind the 26 tonnes of the world's worst polluter, the United States. Compare that to four tonnes per person in China despite breakneck industrialisation there.

Over recent years of market liberal government, New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions have not fallen. Just the opposite. Emissions increased significantly, as did Labour's "green" chatter. Many deceptions, little or no action, that's the story here on climate change.

Worldwide we see similar happenings. At Kyoto, Bali and other UN climate conferences, dignitaries spout lots of hot air in a ghostly symmetry with the warming planet. Meanwhile global emissions keep on rising. And rising.

"We're toast if we don't get on a very different path," warned Jim Hansen, director of the Goddard Institute of Space Sciences, who is widely regarded as the world's most eminent climate change forecaster. "There still is time to stop the worst, but not much time. We see a tipping point occurring right before our eyes."

Rather than states taking a very different path, their rhetorical ballyhoo is covering up a lack of effective action to avert climate chaos. This is a sin of cosmic proportions. But why are seemingly diverse countries committing the same sin? The answer lies in what they have in common: the market.

Environmental destruction is hard-wired into the market. A few years ago the World Resources Institute studied how natural resources are used in the industrialised economies. They found that between half and three-quarters of resource inputs are, within a year, returned to the environment as waste. The market trashes natural resources, turning them into landfill and pollution and greenhouse gases.

The explosion of waste and pollution has been sparked by the market's profit fixation. To undercut competitors in the struggle for profits, firms offload costs onto the environment, including greenhouse gas emissions. And if any corporate freeloaders are billed for the pollution cleanup, they threaten hellfire and damnation. How dare anyone challenge their Holy Crusade to become more profitable than rival firms simply because the planet is being crucified.

Yet the Crusaders of Capitalism are now facing a potentially superior theology: the ecological evangelism of the People of the Planet. So the God of Greed has decreed a fall-back strategy. Set up a pollution market which allows corporates to profit from trading in greenhouse gases while giving the appearance of tackling climate change. Call it something seemingly inoffensive like an Emissions Trading Scheme. Allow the market to pass on the economic costs of global warming to the grassroots.

Hallelujah! That's exactly what Labour wants to do in New Zealand. And so does National. Despite ferocious fisticuffs over minor matters, both factions of the Church of Market Miracles promote a pollution market called the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). And the Green Party has become a partner of the pollution market despite the misgivings of many of its members.

Listen to Tom Burk, former director of Friends of the Earth: "To believe that market forces can be used to fix climate change is to believe in magic."

Greenpeace describes the ETS as "fatally flawed". A Greenpeace report published in March 2008 concludes: "The current proposal for the structure of the ETS will deliver no significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, will act as an impediment to the rapid implementation of less carbon intensive production technologies in the manufacturing industry and will do nothing to slow the destruction of forests to make way for increasingly greenhouse gas intensive forms of dairy farming."



► **Evo Morales, environmental activist and president of Bolivia.**

Even the Business Council for Sustainable Development, an establishment body not noted for radicalism, says the ETS would deliver "corporate welfare" of at least \$1.4 billion over the next decade to just eight of New Zealand's largest industrial emitters.

Evo Morales, the first indigenous president of Bolivia, is proposing a very different path. He told the United Nations in September 2007: "It is important to organise an international movement to deal with the environment, a movement that will be above institutions, businesses and countries that just talk about commerce, that only think about accumulating capital. We have to organise a movement that will defend life."

Such an international movement is in the process of formation, driven by the grassroots rather than by governments.

A broad climate action coalition called 350 was launched across industrialised countries in June 2008. Its name comes from the need to return our atmosphere to 350 parts of carbon dioxide per million. That figure is now 10% higher at 386 parts a million. The famed US climate scientist Jim Hansen is a 350 spokesperson. Their website is at <http://350.org>

The launch of 350 intersects with an older movement across the Global South, driven by indigenous activists in countries like Ecuador and Bolivia, for payment of the ecological debt owed to them by industrialised countries.

Today's dangerously high concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are the result of two centuries of accumulated emissions which have mostly come from the industrialised countries. These states owe a vast ecological debt to the rest of the world. America, the European Union, Japan, Russia, Canada and other industrialised countries (including New Zealand) must pay off their ecological debt. They must offer funding and expertise to help newly industrialising countries switch to renewable energy.

Building an international movement requires local initiatives to marginalise the market so that we can take a very different path to save life on Earth.

RAM's approach to public transport, emission reduction targets and public assemblies on climate change shows how we combine action on the climate with challenges to the market.

Transport accounts for 19% of New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions. In 2007 the sector's emissions had soared by 64% over 1990 levels. Beginning in 2004, RAM has been campaigning for free & frequent public transport in our main cities.

Success in this campaign would do three important things:

- **Getting cars off the road would deliver a huge reduction in carbon emissions.**
- **The grassroots would benefit from the elimination or reduction of their transport costs.**
- **The market would be weakened by making public transport free of charge.**

RAM is calling on the New Zealand parliament to legislate mandatory emissions reduction targets in line with recommendations from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The IPPC wants emission reductions of 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020, and 50-85% by 2050. While many climate scientists say the IPPC targets are too low, they would be at least a UN-endorsed start towards mandatory requirements which will undermine the pollution market.

RAM has begun raising the idea of public assemblies on climate change. The participants might include religious faiths, trade unions, professionals and scientists, community groups, tangata whenua, environmental associations, farming and business lobbyists, educational institutes and political parties. The battle of ideas among these diverse sectors could isolate the corporate voices promoting a pollution market and open up democratic spaces for grassroots-inspired action. Localised solutions to climate change, such as micro energy systems, could be explored. So too could centralised solutions, such as free & frequent public transport.

RAM's first steps towards a significant reduction of greenhouse gases would include:

- Nationwide public assemblies on climate change to foster real action.
- **Free & frequent public transport in our main cities.**
- End motorway expansion and switch funds to trains, buses & cycleways.
- After expanding public transport options, levy vehicle congestion charges.
- Expand the goods haulage roles of electric rail and coastal shipping.
- Promote urban redesign to localise work, schools and shops.
- Resource strong communities as an antidote to wasteful consumerism.
- Education campaigns on the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.

- Carbon-offset charges on airport arrivals and hotel beds.
- Prioritise the development of solar, wave and wind power generation.
- **Offer cheap solar panels to homeowners.**
- Return power generators and distributors to unified public ownership.
- Cease all electricity subsidies to big business.
- Workers laid off for ecological reasons to receive full pay while transitioning and retraining.
- Low-income families hit hard by climate change policies that raise living costs to receive state compensation.
- Export state coal only to countries which are moving to renewable energy.
- Adopt the UN-endorsed IPPC targets for emission reductions.
- Government-mandated emission settings for all industries.
- Zero-emission bonuses to assist smaller firms spend to end pollution.
- Escalating pollution charges on bad offenders in each industry.
- Bring out-of-control corporate polluters under state control.
- Government-mandated regional maximums for farm animal numbers.
- Farmer-friendly incentives to promote a switch to low-emission agriculture.
- Stepped-up research into farm inputs and processes that reduce methane.
- Foster organic farming in cities to localise sustainable food production.

Over the medium term, RAM believes climate security requires an international shift within societies towards co-operation, equity and democracy. Such a shift would:

- Move economic activity towards equitable and ecological production, rather than a sole fixation on profit.

- Include all human and environmental costs in efficiency measurements.
- Embrace whole-of-society governance over economic strategy.
- Reshape the state into a social custodian of humanity and our habitat.
- Repay the ecological debt that industrialised countries owe to the rest of the world.
- Adopt whole-of-world actions that mobilise humankind against climate chaos.

Who wants to train criminals?

The Golden Rule of ethical philosophies is: treat others as you would have them treat you. In sharp contrast, the Golden Rule of the market is: the people with the gold make the rules.

So we have laws that, while appearing to treat everyone the same, in fact discriminate against the majority of society. For instance, both the poor and the rich can lawfully own companies which not only profit from the work of hired staff, but also receive tax breaks not available to workers, beneficiaries and seniors. Guess who gets the advantage of this "impartial" law?

As Anatole France famously noted: "The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and to steal bread."

Our laws are doing nothing to stop the wealth divide growing to obscene proportions while the power brokers treat the majority of society as invisible. These are destructive drivers of the breakdown of community, the main cause of criminal behaviour.

"Poverty means disease and crime, ugliness and brutality, drink and violence." So said English social analyst George Bernard Shaw in 1890. Little has changed since then.

We are horrified at appalling assaults and murders. How can life be valued so cheaply? That's the question commonly asked by pundits and politicians. Yet they mostly ignore the bigger question: how can communities be valued so cheaply? So cheaply that even strangers know without being told when they are entering a poor suburb.

Targeting individual criminals without serious efforts to change the social conditions which produce them is self-defeating.

In 1995 there were 4,500 people in New Zealand prisons. By 2007 that had soared to 8,400, a spike of 86%. At close to 200 per 100,000 New Zealanders, our imprisonment rate is almost twice that of most continental Western European countries and is fast approaching that of Libya, Azerbaijan and Brazil, says professor Andrew Coyle, a fellow of the International Centre for Prison Studies in London.

Experts warn that prisons are training centres for repeat criminal behaviour. So more

prisons put us all at more risk, yet more prisons are being built in New Zealand. An expanding cycle of re-offending is being locked in. We must break free from that cycle, especially for youth offenders.

"Putting young people in prison does nothing more than school them in a culture of resentment, anger, distrust, alienation and further offending," say Ian Lambie and John Langley, senior NZ academics on the Independent Advisory Group on Youth Offending. "It is nonsense and yet we continue to have calls for our youth to have tougher sentences, be placed in prisons more readily, to spend time in boot camps." These things, they note, "cause more damage than good".

There is a hard core of the embittered, the twisted and the deranged who will never change, and must be locked up for public safety reasons. For the rest, especially the young, a new road must be taken because the old path is merely circular.

A new road would lead to educational and occupational co-operatives where criminals learnt not just new skills, but far more importantly, new morals. The key value is co-operation, central to the traditions of Maori, Pasifika, unionists and others at the grassroots.

Co-operation is at odds with competition, motivator of the market and the criminal alike. Fostering an environment of co-operation that is able to free the human spirit within criminals, allowing their behaviour to change, will require a challenge to the market that reaches deep into deprived communities.

Neighbourhood co-operation built on the back of community empowerment is the key to crime prevention.

For people in poor suburbs to collectively control their destiny and improve their lives, they need a massive injection of public resources: kindergartens, kohanga reo, language nests, school facilities, tertiary scholarships, sports clubs, music & arts centres, public libraries, computers-in-homes funding, adventure courses, marae re-building, Pasifika centres, neighbourhood gardens, training centres, work co-operatives, trade apprenticeships, state enterprise start-ups, union resourcing, community grants, project funding, youth workers, substance abuse centres, community booze controls, better footpaths, more public transport, suburb beautification, state home improvements, housing grants, food discounts, restorative justice systems, crime buster patrols, crime-free street bonuses, the list goes on.

While such things are costly, they may well be cheaper in dollar terms than building more prisons, jailing more people, hiring more police, funding more legal aid, paying more benefits, meeting more health costs and all the other charges on the state that flow from criminal behaviour.

The budget for New Zealand's core criminal justice agencies in the 2007/08 year was \$2.7 billion. Additional social costs of criminality amounted to \$6.4 billion. In total, that's \$9.1 billion, a whopping 5.5% of gross domestic product. Yet the National Party, trumpeting an end to wasteful government spending, is calling for more money to be spent on the proven failure of more jailings with longer sentences. And Labour echoes National. Both factions of the Church of Market Miracles are PC: Promoting Criminality. That's worse than being soft on crime.

Investing in social co-operation and collective empowerment, rather than building prisons that train criminals, would fuel a monumental growth of community pride alongside a staggering reduction in crime statistics.

All this is well known. It has been explained in detail by any number of experts. So why aren't the politicians doing it? Why are they exploiting the symptoms, not solving the problems? Because their first loyalty is to the market. The market's core element, competition, would be weakened by state investment in social co-operation. It's that simple. And that shameful.

Both National and Labour are engaged in the criminal act of creating more criminals.

In contrast, RAM advocates state support for community co-operation which would create a dynamic alternative to criminality:

- Zero tolerance towards crimes against people and property in tandem with zero tolerance towards the dollar-driven breakdown of community out of which criminals are born.
- The state to switch from building more prisons to funding community empowerment.
- Heavy government investment in poor suburbs with local residents having the final say on policies and implementation.
- Weed out hard-core criminals and channel the rest into educational and occupational co-operatives where they learn new skills and, more importantly, new morals based on the key value of co-operation.
- Build restorative justice systems where the victims of crime can take control and be compensated by the perpetrators.

Pull out of the war without end

The United States was born out of a revolution against British colonial rule more than two centuries ago. Back then, the new America's slogans of liberty and democracy inspired people on all continents.

What a contrast with today. Those same slogans are now a tawdry cover for acts of aggression around the planet. Washington's elites are using US military might to compensate for the erosion of America's economic supremacy. Wars for oil in the Middle East are breeding the virus of Islamophobia, racist hatred of Muslims and their beliefs, further poisoning international relations.

Top US policymakers are talking seriously about war without end. Today, Iraq and Afghanistan. Tomorrow, who knows?

The NZ armed forces and spy services have long been trained and equipped as auxiliaries of a US-led global military-intelligence alliance, rather than being a national defence force.

NZ troops are fighting in Afghanistan under US operational control, though their number is small. It is within New Zealand itself that the NZ government gives crucial assistance to America's global military operations. The Waihopai spy base, near Blenheim, intercepts international communications and feeds them to US military intelligence.

Entrapment in the imperial strategy of the US state poses a clear and visible danger to the security of New Zealand.

Pulling out of Washington's war without end would provide the best defence for New Zealand, as well as being the only ethical course. Doors would be opened to better relations with the many countries attempting to build alternative poles to US domination, including Latin America and China, along with much of the Middle East, Africa and Central and East Asia. It may also meet with covert support from much of the European Union, who are seeking ways to assert their independence from America.

After enjoying a 20-point lead in 1950, the developed economies have now fallen several percentage points behind the emerging economies in terms of global gross domestic product. By 2025, predicts the OECD, this gap will have widened to around 30 percentage points. Such an epochal shift in global economic power gives a material basis for New Zealand to become more independent in world affairs.

RAM will promote an independent defence and foreign policy:

- Close down Waihopai spy base and withdraw New Zealand from the US-led military-intelligence alliance.
- Reorganise the NZ armed forces and intelligence services into a national defence force, rather than an instrument of US imperial policy.
- Enrol young people into volunteer defence and reconstruction brigades and train them for resistance to hostile forces and assistance to deprived communities.
- Retain our nuclear-free law.
- Draw on Aotearoa's best traditions of social inclusion to counter Islamophobic racism against New Zealand's peaceful Muslims.
- Help Pacific countries build their infrastructure in ways that promote regional peace and prosperity. Send out teams of NZ engineers, builders, medics, teachers, agronomists and scientists who work in co-operation with local communities and train up local experts.
- Increase New Zealand's foreign aid to 0.7% of gross domestic product.

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Like all good plans, The RAM Plan will be continually updated to intersect with changes in real life and to include words of wisdom from our friends.
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This July 2008 edition of The RAM Plan is authorised by RAM chair Grant Morgan, 24 Church Rd, Mangere Bridge, Manukau City.

If you like what it says, there's a place for you in our people's movement. Go to our website <http://ram.org.nz> txt/call Grant 021 2544 515 or email grantmorgan@paradise.net.nz