

A BROTHER'S POSTSCRIPT

My sister lives in New Zealand, I Australia. No doubt both our lives are testaments to the forbidding colonising domination of homo sapiens- European ones more recently. More to the point, I see her every so often and our lives seem so very different, yet we both are activists, our parents both keen gardeners and bush walkers and our siblings keen naturalists or nature lovers. Our commonalities outweigh surely unless you consider our different citizenships.

New Zealand is different, so green and wet - emerald mostly, while Australia is dry, brown-grey mostly - hostile to European eyes and ways. Our flora and faunas are so contrasted. New Zealand separated from the Australian continent many, many millions of years ago, our mutual diversity of flora and fauna endlessly multiplying in originality of shape, colour, form and function. New Zealand appears older as a few birds and little else made the perilous journey to it over eons of time: its beauty, like ours, undaunted but more isolated. Ironically their flora and fauna are now threatened in part by Australian possums.

In the 'now', New Zealand faced its multi-culturalism more squarely as that between settlers and traditional owners. Australians had not the wit nor desire nor the imperatives to do so. The nature they found faced them like an aching homesickness - inhospitable they thought. The Indigenous, incomprehensible to the white, knew: 'whitefella got no dreaming' - incomprehensible to them. New Zealanders are bound by treaty, Australian whites are too encumbered to engage in such rationalisation. In very different ways, New Zealanders and Australians now express our concerns from very different backgrounds.

From the Australian point of view, one other thing stands out. We have coal: enough to sink the world.

New Zealand uses hydro and geo-thermal resources for energy. They have suffered materially for the lack of a simple inexhaustible pot of 'gold' to dig from the ground. Farming rather is their forté. They needed to accommodate the natural world, they could not ignore it: now we cannot either. They sell themselves, even see themselves as green in the general sense.

We will face in Australia the most terrible battles about coal and gas. Where I live we are gearing up with Draconian legislation supposedly aimed ostensibly at bikers. It is a prelude. The mining kings

and queens moved recently, overtly, into politics and the media. They know the alternative energy case is growing in technical prowess and cost efficacy every day: let alone its environmental superiority. They will have to strike hard at the Australian community to secure coals' future –their profits against us.

We are already 'at war' in the gaslands with a closely related and nearly as dangerous, fossil fuel.

So if we need to beware and organise, Catherine's work demonstrates the conduits to the corridors of influence are open even if just partly: hardly ajar here: more open there in New Zealand.

We should remember that despite my doubts these conduits are therefore still options, if we should organise our doubt about them too.

However as two siblings look to the future there is much more to unite us than divide us. This is despite natural, geological and economic and cultural history: even as different realities: coal and settler- Indigenous relations and our different lives have unfolded.

We would have nothing to disagree about except the means to secure a worthwhile future - and there nothing much.

If two siblings can't disagree there is either something very wrong with them or the world!