**Dr Russel Norman**

**Speech to the Green Party AGM**

**6 June 2010**

**No water, no milk … No environment, no economy**

It’s great to be back in Christchurch.

I give greetings to the mana whenua, Ngāi Tahu and Waitaha. We acknowledge your guardianship of this place and your ancestors buried in this land.

I acknowledge our immediate spiritual ancestor, who is also buried in this land – Rod Donald, buried a short distance from Christchurch at Little River Cemetery.

Tēnā koutou.

I acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the founding document of our nation.

I give greetings to the whenua. Aoraki and the Southern Alps, less than a million years ago the Pacific Ocean lapped at your feet. You gave us the magnificent Canterbury plains.

Tēnā koutou

I give greetings to the awa. Waimakariri, Rakaia, Rangitata, Hurunui – great braided rivers – your water is not being wasted as it travels eastwards to the ocean, your ribbons connect the mountains to the sea.

Tēnā koutou

And, I give greetings to the great water warriors of Aoraki. It’s a privilege to be back on the frontline of New Zealand’s water wars amongst heroes fighting to protect our awa and whenua.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

I see many of you here today who are part of this epic struggle to save our rivers, this epic struggle for the last of the wild places; for the heart and soul of New Zealand.

Take heart.  National’s move to abolish regional democracy is a sign of weakness not strength.

We love these rivers and we will protect them. We know the value of our rivers and the birds and the fish that inhabit them, and we will prevail. We will win because it makes human sense to look after our home. We will win because it makes economic sense to look after our natural resources. It’s smart economics to have clean water for the long term. It’s stupid to trash our rivers now for a quick buck, making it more difficult and more expensive later to get the clean water we need to grow food.

We will win because we have proven our ability to lead change.  We have proven it time and again during our 20 year history as a Green Party. Metiria talked yesterday about how we have, in the last year, helped change the agenda on mining in our National Parks and how we are helping change the agenda on inequality in New Zealand.All our MPs are helping to lead change. From saving whales to safe food; from human rights to better trains and buses – their work is changing Aotearoa for the better.

I know many Cantabrians care passionately about fresh water; so do I. And, I believe because of our work, New Zealanders are waking up to the challenges we face around water quality and water management. With awareness will come change.

We use our voice in Parliament to set the agenda. It is worth remembering that we only have that voice because New Zealand has a fair electoral system. Under MMP, all our votes count. Let’s keep it.

Here today I’m asking for your help to lead New Zealand in a new direction.

Our challenge is this:  We must join the economy to the environment in the minds of all New Zealanders.  We need to show them how a healthy economy relies on a healthy environment.

The National Government tells New Zealanders something different.  John Key says it’s a trade off – he says we must balance more GDP growth against more environmental decline. In effect he says we can have clean and green, or economic success.

We say clean and green is the basis of our economic success. No environment, no economy. Clean and green: If we keep it real, we’ll all be better off.

My message today is simple: no water, no milk; no environment, no economy.   And I’m asking you to help me share this message with the rest of the country.

We need to convince our neighbours, our friends, our families, our communities, our councils, our government and all political parties. We need to convince them that taking care of our environment is good for our economy, it is essential to our long-term prosperity.

When we look after our environment, we look after our economy. If we can tell this story successfully, we will change the nation’s agenda again. We will change the way New Zealand thinks about economic success and economic sovereignty.

No water, no milk; No environment, no economy.

And if we can tell this story successfully, we will also move New Zealanders towards more action on climate change -- the urgent action required on climate change. We will move them because this approach to New Zealand’s economic future is about living and working sustainably and prosperously. It is, fundamentally, the same attitude that we need to avoid the worst of climate change.  No environment, no economy is true nationally.  No planet no prosperity is true internationally.

**Local economies**   
The green economic story starts close to home. Local production keeps people in jobs and locally owned banks keep money in New Zealand.

We’ve been fighting hard to keep Kiwibank ours  Kiwi – 100% New Zealand owned. Alongside other, smaller, New Zealand-owned financial institutions, Kiwibank keeps money circulating locally rather than being siphoned off overseas.

And that means keeping it publicly owned. If Kiwibank is privatised and Kiwibank shares sold to small investors or to the NZ Super Fund, the shares will inevitably be on-sold and fall into the hands of large overseas institutional investors.

Kiwibank – let’s keep it Kiwi. Let’s keep it real.

**Exporting on our strengths**   
But, Greens know that we can’t make everything we need here in New Zealand. We need imports, and that means we need exports to pay for those imports.

And as a small producer at the edge of the world, we need an export brand to sell our products overseas. That brand is clean green New Zealand, 100% Pure.

It’s the best brand you could ask for as we enter a world of heightened environmental awareness. It is worth $13 billion to New Zealand, and can be worth much more in the future.

People in Korea, Japan, China, Europe, America, and all over the world are willing to pay a premium to “Buy New Zealand” because they think New Zealand is clean and green. The Taiwanese Ambassador tells me that 70% of the butter in Taiwan is from New Zealand because we are seen as clean and green. A smart economic vision would protect this brand.

We know that right now the PR doesn’t always reflect the reality – our country isn’t 100% clean and green. It is dirty in some places and pristine in other places.

A smart economic strategy for New Zealand would make clean and green a reality. Smart economics says we keep it real.

A Green government would build on our 100% Pure brand. We’d take a two-pronged approach:

First, Kiwis can be sustainable commodity producers selling safe food with environmental integrity to international markets.

Second, New Zealand can have a high tech green technology sector producing innovative services and products for a world with a thirst for green solutions.

We can seize our economic edge and profit from value-added exports, or we can sabotage that advantage and lose on all fronts.

Let’s take the smart option, the clean and green option.

Let’s make sure  “Made in New Zealand” is always a brand of integrity.

Let’s keep it real.

**Labour’s legacy**   
For too long, our governments have failed to protect the environmental reality that underpins our clean green brand.

When Labour was in office the export economy was driven by massive expansion in dairy and tourism. Both sectors are built on clean and green, but they’re heading for a terrible collision. Labour took advantage of clean and green as tourism boomed, but put up no fight to protect our rivers and lakes while those waterways were being overwhelmed by dairy effluent. Labour invested in clean green branding PR but did not invest in keeping it real.

Meanwhile, the domestic economy was driven by debt fuelled consumption and expansion in the housing sector. Our net private sector debt ballooned out to near 100% of GDP. That debt funded housing speculation and imported consumer items.  And banks profited by acting as giant funnels, taking money from international lenders and passing it on to house buyers. Overseas-owned banks extracted around $9 billion out of New Zealand in just the last five years.

**National’s contribution**   
The new National, Act, Māori Party Government has moved from Labour’s malign neglect to active destruction of our economic advantage.

It is hard to fathom that the Prime Minister of our country, a country that trades on clean and green, would want to dig up our most precious conservation areas for mining.

National has learnt all the wrong lessons from our economic history. They have looked at a history of boom and bust extractive industries and said “let’s do it again”.

For 150 years our export strategy has too often been based on the extraction of short-term non-renewable resources. We killed the seals and shipped them off, and then we had no more seals. We killed the whales and shipped them off, and then we had no more whales. We logged the kauri and shipped them off, and then we had no more kauri.  Then we cleared the lowland forest, and now we are sucking up all the water.

No water, no milk.

And now they want us to mine the best of our National Parks so we’ll be left with holes in the ground. It’s a get-rich-quick scheme that threatens our long term economic interests. ‘50% Pure’ does not cut it as a global brand.

No environment, no economy.

National Ministers are so fixated by greed for water extraction that they have run rough-shod over democratic rights in Canterbury – your right to vote for your local representatives. They lack the vision to see an economic strategy beyond mining our rivers and aquifers for water. The fact is Kiwis can be so much more than what we might dig up, suck up and sell off.

Our clean green brand is as valuable to New Zealand exports as Kiwi ownership is to Kiwibank. It’s ours. It’s our advantage, and the Greens will lead change to protect it.

**Green Party economic vision**   
If we continue to show the links between the economy and environment, if we continue to talk about the success that comes with sustainable, responsible business practice, we will help change how New Zealand thinks and we will change what New Zealanders demand from their Government.

There are plenty of Kiwis who see this future. We must be their champions.  We must be their political voice and we can help them re-set New Zealand’s economic agenda. And while National may look for direction from the whaling and sealing industries, we can look to those in our history who focused on the long term.

Julius Vogel had a vision of an economy connected by railways. Vogel didn’t borrow for tax cuts like the current Government; he borrowed to invest in our economic future.

Michael Joseph Savage built a kinder more equal nation. He built it with wooden beams and nails; his legacy is safe shelter for many New Zealanders – the solid state houses so many Kiwis have called home, and which, unlike the houses built under National’s 1991 Building Act, don’t leak and rot from the inside out.

Today it is the Green Party that has the clearest vision for a smart economic future – clean and green, keep it real. Let’s make that our starting point.

Let’s make 100% Pure non-negotiable. Let’s make that the standard against which all government economic strategy is judged.

**Commodity producer - dairy**   
We can look after our water ways and have a healthy dairy industry.   
  
It is good to be a commodity producer in a finite world, so long as it is only one part of your economy and so long as you produce sustainably. In a finite world, with declining arable land and with a growing population, the food producing business is a good place to be. As we hit the limits of the planet’s capacity to carry us, countries involved in commodity production are doing pretty well.

But, it also means that big commodity importers like China want to get control of the resources of commodity exporters – that’s why China wants to buy the mining company Rio Tinto in Australia and Crafar farms in New Zealand.  We should turn them down just as Australia turned down the takeover of Rio Tinto.

But what *type* of commodity producer do we want to be?  Producing low cost commodities that are simply sold into the bulk commodity markets is not a good strategy. A strategy based on producing more and more and selling it at the lowest price possible will destroy the environment on which we depend, while other countries undercut us on price anyway. It’s a double hit.

Consider Fonterra’s goal of annual production growth of about 4%. This means doubling production about every 16 years. But to double milk production over the next 16 years is to devastate the environment.

Already, many of our rivers are unfit for stock to drink the water from, and we can’t take our kids for a swim there. Already we have health warnings that newborns are at risk of nitrate poisoning from water taken from wells. I repeat, babies in Canterbury are at risk of blue baby syndrome caused by too much nitrate in our drinking water.

Doubling dairy production would hurt New Zealanders. It would also sabotage our clean green brand, and destroy the natural resource it’s based on.

No water, no milk; No environment, no economy.

There are many great farmers in New Zealand; farmers who care passionately about protecting our land and water, just as we do. Our job is to tell their story and to talk about the alternatives; sustainable stocking rates, riparian planting and fencing, premiums for organic production.

**Prosperity with Integrity**   
Here in Canterbury at the Chamber of Commerce, the CEO is Peter Townsend. Like many chambers of commerce around the country Canterbury’s isn’t known for radical sentiments. But, Peter has this to say:  “New Zealand cannot and should not compete internationally on price. The world is increasingly looking for products of high quality and integrity.” Peter Townsend is right. The world is full of low quality products; our brand differentiates New Zealand goods as high quality.

We are nuclear-free.

We are still largely GE-free thanks to the green movement and Green Party.

And we can choose to be 100% Pure by taking care of our rivers and lakes. We can trade on quality and we can look after our environment.  We can keep it real.

New Zealand’s story – Canterbury’s story – can be about grass-fed dairy cows, clean rivers, and good animal welfare. Organic production is already getting a premium of about $1 per kg of milk solids, and its market is growing rapidly.

It’s about trust and integrity. Right now we’re seen as honest and pure, making safe food while looking after our land and water. When we drown our rivers in cow faeces and fertilizer run-off, we’re putting that trust at risk.

We need to ask ourselves whether consumers will continue to choose Kiwi butter when they read in the paper that our rivers are dead and that we’re mining for coal in the last of our treasured conservation estate to burn in our milk processing plants.

No water, no milk; No environment, no economy.

**Government won’t grasp the nettle**   
John Key’s Government wants to balance GDP growth and environmental degradation. This year, a bit more dairy intensification and mining balanced by a few more polluted rivers and desecrated National Parks; and the same again next year. His idea of balance, of environmental destruction traded for GDP growth, is an economic and environmental dead end.

No individual or single company can protect this brand without Government support. When it comes to upholding 100% Pure we need an economic framework that rewards those who play nicely with nature.

Today I’m repeating the Green call to reward smart farmers. By putting a resource rental or price on water–takes, we can make it financially worthwhile to protect our rivers.

This way those making efficient use of water gain the competitive edge and we protect our brand. This is the smart way to protect our economic advantage.

To make these types of policy changes, we also need to change the way New Zealand thinks about the economic equation.  So I need your help to get the message out there: No water, no milk; no environment, no economy.

**Hi-tech Green tech**   
Now, New Zealand’s economic strategy can’t be just about commodities. We also need to embrace the clean tech, high tech, green tech revolution that will soon redefine economics. Clean green technologies that are knowledge intensive and resource efficient are not the whole solution to the environmental challenge but they are an important part.

Nicholas Stern, one of the world’s top economists, believes green technologies have the potential to bring nations out of the recession, transforming society in as striking a way as railways and information technology have done previously.

The global market for clean technology goods and services is already worth $415 billion per year. It is projected to grow to $1.9 trillion by 2017. If we could access just one percent of this market it would be worth $19 billion a year to our country.

The next economic wave is the green economic wave and, if New Zealand wants to prosper, we must prioritise research, science, and technology spending in areas such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, green tech manufacturing, green design and energy efficiency.

Let’s look at energy.

Here in Christchurch we have Windflow. Windflow is a successful wind turbine manufacturer with a unique design, employing about 50 workers. Windflow has made its way in the world with no assistance from the New Zealand Government.   
Some of the Green MPs bought a few shares, but imagine if our Government supported our sustainable industries. Imagine the kind of green tech industries we could build and the kind of green collar jobs we could have in New Zealand.

We also have Mighty River Power, one of our State-Owned Enterprises. Mighty River Power is now exporting the technology for low carbon geothermal electricity generation and making a US$ 100 million investment in California. We have geothermal experience and geothermal expertise in New Zealand. These are our opportunities.

And, Mighty River Power is managing to compete even with the greenhouse subsidies that are given to coal fired power in New Zealand. Imagine the kind of business success we could build in New Zealand if we put a real price on carbon to reward  those companies that produce low carbon energy.

When it comes to clean tech, the Government’s reinstitution of funding to support research and development was a step in the right direction. But for maximum impact, the R&D spend needs to target green tech and clean tech solutions.

Today I’m calling for the Government to reward our smartest high tech, clean tech creators. By tagging R&D spending to clean tech we give them an advantage while keeping our clean green branding safe and sound.

**Conclusion**   
Protecting our unique branding advantage – 100% Pure – is about taking control of our economic destiny.

Owning our own banks guarantees profits stay here in New Zealand, and protecting our export advantage guarantees export earnings.

New Zealand’s economic independence and national identity is at stake. We can have economic sovereignty and success. We can have a fair economy that works for all of our people, and protects all of our water and land.

Today I’ve set out our next challenge: to present this economic choice to New Zealand. To tell stories about responsible farming and energy innovation so that all Kiwis get the message: No water, no milk; no environment, no economy.

Let’s keep it real in a clean and green Aotearoa.

Let’s have a South Pacific paradise of pristine water, renewable energy and with a stunning natural heritage.

Let’s be the number one destination to buy food and to visit. With pure water and smart technology we’ll not only have milk, we’ll cream it.

The Green Party has led change for 20 years.  Our next challenge is to lead this change in economic attitude. We can help Aotearoa make the smart choice and keep it real.

**Ends.**