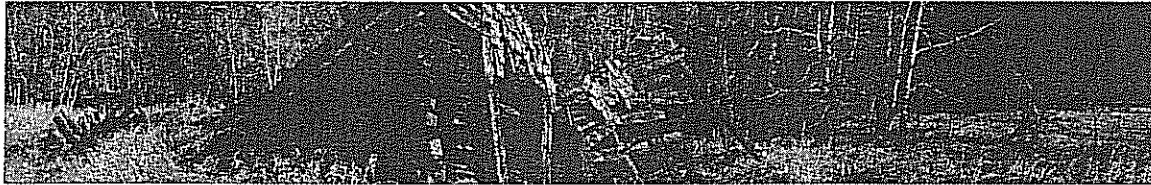


Governing on the Downslope of Collapse

by Paul Meleng



In the era that is now past, the Lucky country of Oz and the amazing USA grew on the back of free (or stolen) land and resources and a booming supply of energy. There was always something new for governments to give away or announce. "New" land and frontiers gave the brave an alternative to low wage slavery. We might call the politics of that past era: "Governing on the Upslope".

We are now overpopulated (for our lifestyle) and many natural resources such as water and fish are depleted or seriously threatened. Government PR and vote buying is no longer a matter of doling out water licenses from the rivers, fishing licenses, new land releases, etc. For a long time into the future, it will be a task of taking much of the previous largesse back to protect systems from total collapse. Despite the fact that this (hopefully) will be based on clear scientific evidence and urgency, there will be many howls of anger and frustration. Few friends are made but many enemies. The same situation will have to be faced across most finite biological resources.

Energy costs from traditional sources are going up not down. The natural wealth of "The lucky country" no longer provides affordable education and health care to the level or numbers it once provided.

Desperate pipe dreams of farming the wild north are once again raised, (touted as a food bowl but actually growing sugar and adding to the global diabetes epidemic) whilst ignoring the lessons of the large collections of rusting pipes and machines that sit as mute warnings across that landscape. And even if successful, few jobs will result compared to the steady loss of thousands of southern city jobs as they are whittled away by stiff competition from lower cost countries. For example, an increasing number of accounting and back office clerical jobs are now done in Asia by Australian trained high level graduates, on a third of Australian salary rates. Good for companies. Bad for local workers. These are unstoppable mega trends and we live and play politics in denial of the facts.

The reason we are increasingly frustrated with politics is that we are trying to find and elect a government of people who can do the job we want them to do within a system that is now past the sustainable tipping point: Government is on the downslope and doomed to fail under the current arrangements. We try to preserve the status quo and extract more from it and we are mentally and emotionally opposed or afraid of the change that is necessary now to avoid collapse, which is why there will be so much angst displaced onto any official.

So the scenario we face is governments changing in an endless loop of taking turns to take the blame for failing to do the impossible. People will serve their time and qualify for their super and line up corporate jobs with those they have favoured but with little hope or vision for the future of the country. Their election campaigns are funded by the vested interests of the carbon and consumer economy clinging desperately and savagely to old privileges – they are fighting over lifeboat allocation on a sinking ship. Governing on the Downslope.

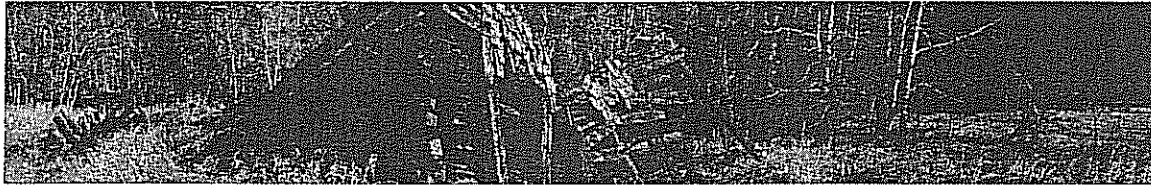
We are trying to work with a million page tax act that punishes labour and real enterprise and privileges passive asset ownership and land and we are trying to do that with collapsing natural resources.

- We need to KISS and change the system.
- We need sustainability not growth.
- We need quality not quantity.
- We need Permaculture not Agriculture.
- We need taxes on land value and resource use, not labour and enterprise.
- We need to end 50% tax breaks for passive asset speculation.

We need to end massive private windfall gains from re-zoning or development approval and all the inevitable corruption that goes with it and is in fact created by it. Instead, collect a "betterment tax" for sharing the new value created or collect it as land tax on the higher value over time.

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We need to end the old colonial game of land and development largesse for the in crowd. The old "land rush" mentality. Instead, treat the Common Wealth as such and not as a cake to be cut for the friends and backers of politicians. The "cake cutting" is the primary source of all corruption and poor decisions.

We need to re-set the incentives right across the whole system of government of OUR country to reward real productivity, sweat, brilliance and enterprise and environmental frugality and preservation.

Make it so that the winners in the system are those who produce the most added value, benefits and services and real wealth from the smallest environmental footprint. Welcome in anyone who can do that. Make the care of our common country and adoption of the new Upslope the real test of citizenship for old and new.

- **We need to be the truly clever country. Wise rather than smart.**

When a system is failing it is time to face the fact and then completely re-vision and re-organise. This is what the highest paid corporate chiefs are paid multi-million dollar salaries and bonuses for. They come in for 3 to 6 years and they engineer significant change to move a company into the new mode for a new situation. No one pays them to just shout at people and say try harder.

Trying harder in the wrong way and the wrong direction has no future, and the young people of Australia already know that. The more educated they are, the more they know we are on the wrong path, living for the old status quo and not for the world that they must have and bring about for our grandchildren.

We all know now, from examples like South Africa, or even just from changes to our own superannuation system, that change can be brought about while still respecting the prior rights of people who made decisions under the old system. Major financial commitments can be "grandfathered" with the new rules applying to the new deals. Not all pain can be removed for those most affected, but change can be introduced thoughtfully rather than by resorting to the Guillotine.

An American ambassador and thinker George Cabot Lodge once wrote: "The biggest management task is to induce the maximum social change from the minimum social catastrophe." That sounds like a good guideline.

Complaining about the standard of politics today will achieve nothing. That failing system that is trying to govern on the Downslope will only attract hopeless ego maniacs who are still too focused on the old game to realise that is what it is.

We bemoan the drug problem and the youth suicide problem etc without asking the deeper question. What are the goals and hopes of the young other than to survive and have some fun in a failing system with a depleting environment and a future of worsening climate and opportunity, run by a bunch of people with their heads in the sand?

Take note of the ancient wisdom, Bible, Proverbs 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people perish (or the people cast off restraint); but he that keeps the law, happy is he.

It is not so much a mental health or a drug problem as it is a vision problem.

We need a new Upslope towards a more inspiring sustainable objective for all. One with real hope and honour and logic and one that inspires the young to participate.