

As people who have heard me talk over the years will tell you, I am not in favour of the private ownership of natural resources such as water and land. I acknowledge the development, management and distribution costs associated with such resources as legitimate components of businesses which, in our contemporary society, commodify these 'God given' natural resources. What has set me thinking lately is the slow release of information that declares just how much of the sovereign soil of Aotearoa-NZ has been sold to overseas interests such as from the UK, China, Italy, Japan and the USA. Why hasn't it been readily available public knowledge before? It seems that the possible sale of the troubled Crafar dairy farms to the Hong Kong based Chinese Natural Dairy has blown these land sales into the open. My Christian inclinations lead me to say that we humans are only ever stewards of the earth, guardians of the land, and waters, and of the fish and animals therein. We are charged with their care in the interests of human wellbeing. Perhaps we could think about holding all the land of Aotearoa-NZ in common trust, vested in the Crown, who would receive lease money available for regional and national government expenditure. And, I wonder why it is that we, who have sold large tracts of land to foreign interests, fiercely refuse to allow Maori iwi and hapu to exercise their traditional guardianship, kaitiakitanga, over forests, reserves, foreshore and seabed. We have transferred to foreign business interests our guardianship and our rights to wealth created by the land use more easily than we can bring ourselves to trust Maori guardianship and management. Perhaps as a start we might pick up the suggestion made by both John Key and Hone Harawera in the NZ Herald Saturday 17 July 2010, that foreign interests might lease land rather than own it.