

kate dewes

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Sent: Monday, 7 November 2005 3:18 p.m.
Subject: Tribute To Rod Donald

CAFCA and ABC join with those expressing great shock and sorrow at Rod's sudden death at the tragically young age of 48. First and foremost our hearts go out to his partner Nicola and their three young daughters.

Rod was an active member of both organisations. He had been a fixture at every ABC protest at the Waihopai spybase, ever since he entered Parliament in 1996, firstly as an Alliance MP, and then as Green Co-Leader. He didn't just parachute in either. Along with fellow Green MP, Keith Locke, Rod played a leading role in the protest activities. As well as being a major drawcard for the media, a featured speaker and a good humoured negotiator for access rights with the base commander, Rod spent those weekends in a tent like the rest of us, did his share of the food preparation and was an invaluable help by means of lending us his family tent and driving us around in his van. We were hoping that he would be joining us again at Waihopai this coming January and we will miss his presence every much. Last Easter he joined us for what he told me was his first (and only) visit to the Tangimoana spybase when we held a protest activity there. Rod was an indefatigable booster of the anti-bases cause at every available opportunity. He and Keith were the only two MPs that we could count on to campaign on this issue, not only in Parliament itself, but at the gates of the spybases.

Likewise, Rod was a key political contact for CAFCA, whether he was campaigning against the sale of TrustBank to Westpac or the 2005 Overseas Investment Act. He was very regularly in touch with us seeking our advice and giving us information on all aspects of foreign control of Aotearoa, particularly (but not exclusively) those to do with rural land sales to foreigners. CAFCA is not affiliated to any political party, and we reserve the right to be publicly critical of all them, including the Greens (and we have been). It is no secret however that the Greens were the only party in Parliament with whom CAFCA had any sort of working relationship, particularly since the Alliance left the building. And it was a very productive working relationship that was basically made possible by Rod's enormous energy and his passionately progressive nationalism. He was an active CAFCA member, always attending our AGM and public meetings as his Parliamentary schedule allowed. He was generous with his time and personally generous with his money.

Sure there were minor downsides to having such a high profile politician on board. Sometimes the media reported ABC activities as if they had been organised by the Greens. The fact of the matter is that if Rod, and Keith, hadn't come along, most likely neither would the media. From CAFCA's point of view, we see land sales as a small part of a much bigger picture of transnational corporate takeovers, but once again, Rod's very active leadership of the Greens on the issue of foreign control gave it a media and public profile that it may not have otherwise achieved.

Rod also led the Greens in very high profile opposition to the slavish worship of "free trade" by the major parties. Wearing my other hat as a committee member of GATT Watchdog, I am indebted to him for that. Once again, his angle on the issue was not necessarily ours but he, and the Greens, brought considerable political firepower to bear on it.

As for me personally, this is another big shock in a year of them (it's only a few months since Owen Wilkes' untimely death). Although we were never personal friends and didn't mix in the same circles, Rod and I had been colleagues, fellow political activists in Christchurch, for nearly 30 years. It is hard to think that I will never run into him pedalling around town again with one or more of his beloved daughters, talk politics to him at protests and meetings, have him ring me out of the blue to pick my brains on some aspect of foreign control, or turn up at our place to personally sell us tickets to Green fundraising movies. Like untold thousands of others, I will miss him immensely. It is cruelly ironic that someone so vibrantly alive and young at heart should be snatched from us. So long friend, happy travels and a safe journey.

Murray Horton

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