Over recent decades our democracy has been gradually undermined and social and environmental problems have been getting steadily worse because businesses, farmers and the wealthy use their money and influence to get the decisions they want from political parties, officials and Ministers.

When the current Prime Minister was elected in 2017 she said that she wanted to make big improvements in the areas of child poverty, inequality, unaffordable housing, freshwater and climate change. It appeared that big changes were going to be made but during the past few years these problems have continued to get worse, not better. At the same time those who are well off have been given a huge amount of taxpayer money and assistance so they have greatly increased their wealth.

On 7 December 2021 well known economist and financial commentator, Bernard Hickey, wrote an article and said that “New Zealand’s economic response to Covid was among the worst in the world in terms of widening wealth inequality and the wasteful use of taxpayer funds. Asset owners’ wealth is on track to rise by $872 billion or 50% to $2.63 trillion within two years of the outbreak. Working families and beneficiaries who pay rent are now mostly worse off or barely treading water” On 26 January 2022 he wrote another article using information that was obtained from Statistics New Zealand. The well off are $952,000 million better off than in March 2020 but, in contrast, payments to beneficiaries increased by $48 million and they borrowed an extra $400 million from the MSD.

Public opinion surveys show that only about 6% of the public trust politicians. Many people, who were renting and not on high incomes, hoped that a majority Labour Government might finally do the right thing by them but they now probably feel that they have been badly let down. Not getting a vaccine and attending protests has for some been a way of showing their dissatisfaction with the Government but they do not seem to know what they should demand the Government do to make their lives more tolerable.

There have been numerous articles and items published and broadcast over many years about the problems facing society and the environment but only token gestures have been made towards dealing with them. It is now time to focus on the basic reasons for what has happened and look at what needs to change

The top priority for political parties is to gain or retain power and to do this they have to spend a lot of money on social media and election campaigns. Most of the money they receive comes from those who are already well off and if these people are to continue handing over money each year, they need to get a big payback. Large donations can help get access to a Minister who has limited knowledge and little time for making decisions so can easily be persuaded. As the rich grow richer and richer, their control of political parties grows stronger and stronger. This needs to be stopped.

There is a need for the public to be educated about the need for strict controls on political party donations, lobbying and the other activities that help ensure that the needs of vested interests are put ahead of urgent problems facing the community.

If the only funding political parties had access to came from taxpayers, it is probable that decisions would be made in the best interests of the community and future generations and the average person or family would be thousands of dollars better off each year. Another option could be for all donations to be sent to the Electoral Commission and then amalgamated and sent to the nominated political parties.

Political parties and the Public Service have not acted for the public good and in the best interests of all citizens so they each need to have a set of broad objectives to comply with. Vested interests should be prevented from being able to lobby officials and Ministers. The research and advice capabilities of Government Departments should be greatly increased so that they can provide high quality advice to a Government.

Business New Zealand met with the Prime Minister on 2 March 2020 and they put forward a wage subsidy scheme that was approved by Cabinet two weeks later. By October 2020 businesses had $22,700 million more in the bank than in October 2019 and they were 14% more profitable but they have never been asked to repay overpayments.

Farming contributes about 10% to GDP and farming organisations receive $151 million each year in levies to promote their interests and products. They have met with the Prime Minister more than 20 times each year. In addition, they have probably met with the Minister of Primary Industries over 100 times during the year and even more often with officials.

In Canada businesses are not allowed to make donations and citizens are limited to $1500 and only up to $100 can remain anonymous. There are similar rules in Ireland and research shows that other OECD countries have much stricter rules than we have here.

As a result of Serious Fraud Office investigations of three political parties, the government announced a minor review of political party donations in December 2021 with submissions required by 25 January. Vested interests, who make a lot of money by funding political parties, would have had the motivation to prepare submissions over the Christmas rush and holiday period and will use lobbying and other means to convince the Government that any change is a bad idea.