

ANA Conference Poem

You may be surprised to find
I was reading the sports pages
Of the 1956 Public Health Act.
The Hurricanes lost to the Chiefs –
They've become crusaders,
They advocate – no, we don't use that word –
They nudge – so we're ploughing up the rugby field.

In Mangere tank loaves are one dollar each,
But you can get 178,000 litres of fizzy drink for 89 cents.
All 21 suburbs have home-delivered pizza –
When they put cream and brown sugar on top,
I have to look the other way.

Tall poppies grow in a recycled bucket.
The Dalai Lama sits cross-legged in the Greek liquor store
And uses his best bedside manner
To re-assure the woman on the plane
That breastfeeding is one form of food security.

If you've ever had a baby,
You know you need to go out
Of the licensed commercial kitchen –
But the bus goes the wrong way
To collect students from four other schools.

So the childcare centre cooks
Breach the barricades and ride their bicycles
To get across the energy gap
And when they break through the barrier
Of opposition from council staff,
I am driving the other way to my yoga class –
And I can't get grilled fish anywhere.

The stakeholders are holding their steaks,
From which the Mad Butcher –
(Yes, the Mad Butcher – I've mentioned him twice) –
Has cut out all the fat, bone and connective tissue.

We look for allies in unusual places –
Like the 900,000 middle-aged people
Who sit in the 40 feijoa trees for 8 years
And play the banjo when they're not working on food policy.

They can never have enough evidence,
They can't resist the temptation to update the science –
But we're relieved they don't have a Power Point presentation.

The social marketers are social marketing
And the farmers' markets are marketing
Locally grown hydroponic heroin and speed
In Super Blue milk bottles.

How long will projects last?
How many garage doors are opening around Wellington?
How much salt is there in the average NZ food bank?
Why is my local library selling chocolate?
What is the difference between broccoli and snot?
Why is my local library selling broccoli and snot?

How can we inspire people to become more like Shane?
Watercress, watercress and more watercress!

Sometimes the coalition takes so much energy
You don't get round to doing the work.
But the news is not all bad –
Advocacy has changed the world.
When facing a difficult task,
Act as if you have ADHD
(Attention to detail, having a dream).
Leave here on Wednesday
Better connected and inspired.
Get caught being good –
Don't hide all your goodness
In muffins.

Ian Harcourt 2009