

ONE OF THE biggest disappointments with the Resource Management Act was the separation of the Crown Minerals Act so that sustainability principles did not apply to the use of minerals. When the Acts were passed in 1991, Labour said they would put the two back together.

Blincoe today has backed away from that position. He says that since they are now separate, the least disruptive solution for those responsible for applying the law will be to change the Crown Minerals Act so that sustainability and depletion principles apply.

The Resource Management Act provided for the establishment of a body to control hazardous substances and new organisms. Almost two years later the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms legislation has not even been drafted.

"Progress is zero," says Hodgson. He

wants to see categories defined for toxic substances and clear policy on new organisms. He is particularly concerned about micro-organisms because they are impossible to control. Blincoe says Labour will be rigorous in protecting New Zealand from new pest species. He adds that he is adamantly opposed to the introduction of myxomatosis which he describes as crazy, inhumane and a "short-term dirty solution".

Another area which remains outside the ambit of the Resource Management Act is fisheries. Blincoe and Hodgson are concerned about the management of marine ecosystems. Blincoe's electorate relies on the orange roughy harvest. However, he is happy to suggest that quotas will have to be reduced. He adds that the economic implications of the fishery collapsing would be felt across New Zealand.

Internationally, Hodgson would like to return New Zealand to the forefront of the global environment movement. Under the 1984-90 government, New Zealand led the world with the Resource Management Act and had instrumental roles in drift netting and ozone agreements as well as nuclear policy. Hodgson says New Zealand's moral authority on the global stage was high because the government was rigorous at home.

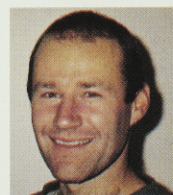
Hodgson would like to see New Zealand make further progress on nuclear issues, ozone protection and whaling. He would also like to introduce a labelling scheme for imported timber and suggests that local forestry expertise could allow New Zealand to play a key role in international forest conservation.

WHILST BOTH Hodgson and Blincoe are keen to make things happen, the commitment of the Labour hierarchy to environmental issues must still be in question. Both MPs point out that David Caygill is Labour's number three, and deputy leader Helen Clark was a former Conservation Minister. They say that Mike Moore is right behind them.

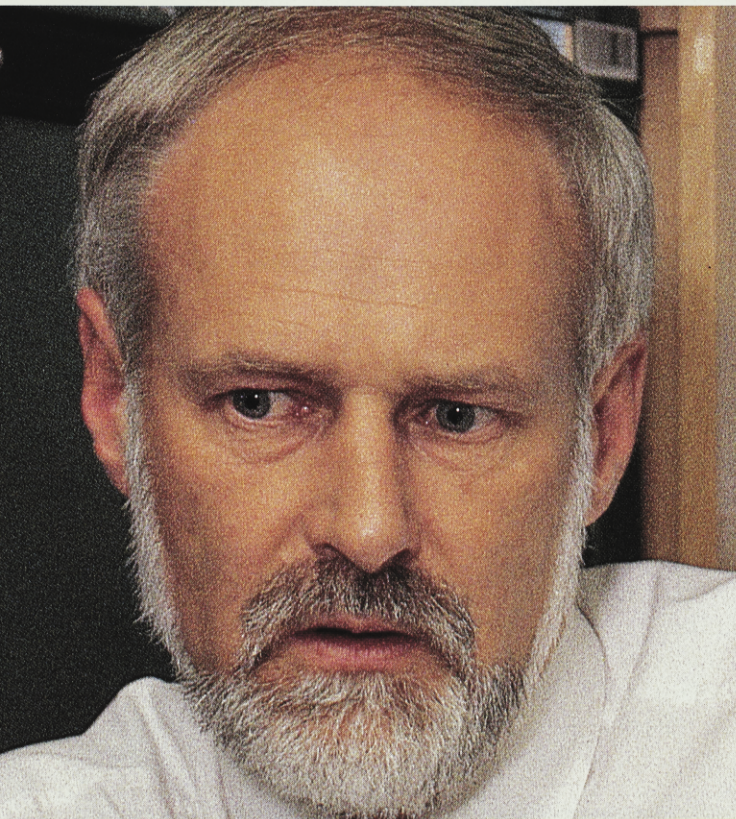
Some other Labour MPs, however, do not have a sparkling environmental history. Sources close to Geoffrey Palmer reported his exasperation in Cabinet with the fiercely anti-green views of some ministers. A number of these ministers departed in 1990, but there are still senior figures such as Richard Prebble who remain trenchantly opposed to an environmental agenda.

Also curbing Labour's environmental enthusiasm is the influence of marginal rural electorates, including the West Coast, where crude anti-green politics still hold sway. Labour's inclination in these areas is to sit tight and avoid commitments. Yet a more visionary approach could be more productive. On the West Coast, for example, tourism has long displaced native sawmilling as an economic force.

While funding remains undisclosed, doubts about Labour's commitment remain. Despite their enthusiasm, will two relatively junior ministers in a Labour government be able to convince Cabinet of the need for strong environmental initiatives and find the funding to make them happen? ♦



Adam Leavesley is a member of the Wellington Rainforest Action Group.



CLARE CUNNINGHAM

Pete Hodgson

THE FIRST thing Pete Hodgson suggests to newcomers to his office is that they take a few minutes admiring the harbour view, before getting down to business. He is new to Parliament, having won the Dunedin North seat in 1990. Despite his inexperience, colleagues describe him as a key strategist in the Labour caucus. He is responsible for the portfolios of Environment and Research, Science and Technology and is associate Energy spokesperson.

After school in Whangarei and veterinary science at Massey University, he worked in rural and urban veterinary practices both in New Zealand and overseas, and also as a teacher, fruit and vegie retailer, and Labour Party organiser.

Opposition to the Vietnam War was one of the first causes Hodgson took up. This was followed by involvement in issues such as the Springbok tour and the environment.

The campaign to stop the raising of Lake Manapouri in the early seventies was his first taste of environmental activism. He also opposed the Clyde Dam and the proposed Aramoana aluminium smelter.

Hodgson is a member of Forest and Bird. He enjoys gardening and often spends free time turning his small corner of Sawyers Bay (near Dunedin) from exotic to indigenous vegetation. He says the garden is starting to look good.

Other interests are swimming, skindiving, windsurfing, tennis and woodwork.