

**J**ock Lee, former Environment Commission employee and today project co-ordinator of the Triune Resources Ltd proposal to ship fresh water out of Deep Cove, would be offended if anyone questioned whether the cause he is championing is in the best interests of New Zealand. He is, after all, as he often points out, a fifth generation New Zealander.

But despite the patriotic assertions, Lee has been waging an uphill battle trying to convince the people and politicians of his native land that a foreign owned company, wishing to locate one of the country's largest ports in the heart of its finest National Park, does in fact have a concern for what is in the best public interest.

Ever since American company Triune bought the water right to take water from the Deep Cove tailrace of the Manapouri Manapouri power project in 1982, the scheme has been greeted with opposition from environmentalists.

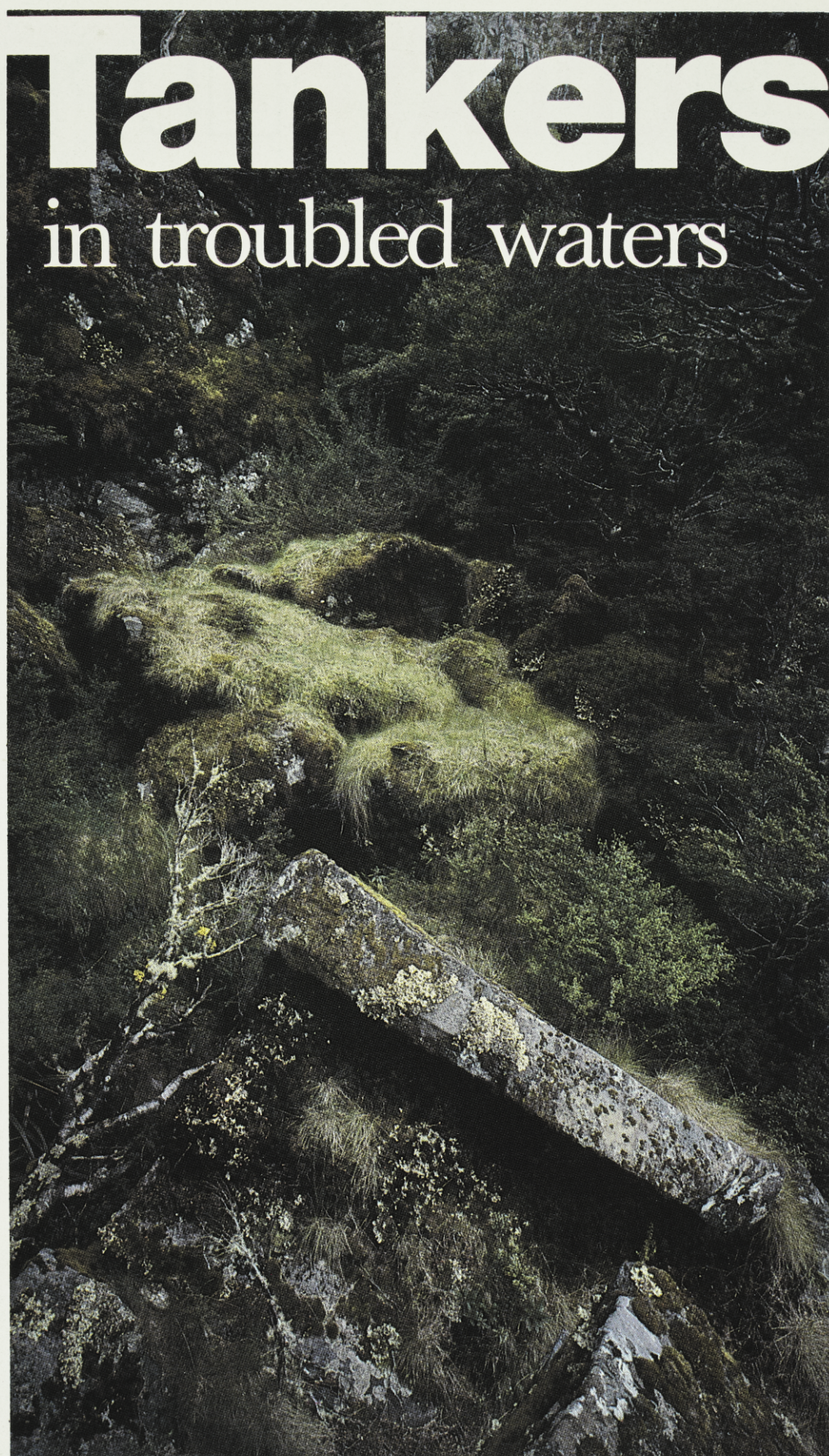
At its recent executive meeting, Forest and Bird formally declared its opposition, although making the point that the Society is not against the concept of exporting water. The motion read "that in the Executive's view, any shipping or industrial activity in Doubtful Sound to do with the export of water which would substantially impinge on the intrinsic qualities of Fiordland National Park, would be unacceptable to the Society."

Triune, in not properly addressing environmental concerns, has shown itself to be its own worse enemy. It has also demonstrated a large public relations problem. Since announcing the proposal, Triune has:

- Failed to admit that bringing five 120,000 tonne tankers into Doubtful Sound a week *might* be environmentally damaging.
- Made exaggerated statements of backing from local people.
- Made unsubstantiated claims that the scheme would be of enormous economic benefit to New Zealand — as much as \$75 million a year.
- Continued to pressure the Government to make a quick decision in order to fulfill impending contracts, claiming that the viability of the scheme would be imperilled if such a decision was not made. However, despite the contracts lapsing, the project is apparently still viable.

Forest and Bird, through one of its members, Captain Phil Robins — a harbour pilot — prepared a scathing submission on the safety aspects of the proposal, and the possible consequences on the delicate environment. Lee has referred to this submission as now out of date, since a new "operations manual" has been drawn up. The public, however, has not been allowed to see this yet.

The Society has also pointed out that Fiordland National Park will probably be struck off its expected listing as a World Heritage Site, described by David Bellamy as one of the cheapest advertisements an area can get.



by Gerard Hutching

Finally, the Society took issue with a report of the Tourist and Publicity Department that tankers in Deep Cove would attract tourists. The report, prepared by another former employee for the Commission for the Environment, Peter Brooks, claimed that tourists would appreciate the ingenuity of New Zealanders in conserving nature and at the same time exploiting natural resources.

The Society's reply was that if tankers were such a tourist drawcard, why was there not a thriving trade at Marsden Point.

While Triune has been attempting to persuade politicians and civil servants to its point of view in Wellington, most of the public debate on the issue has been carried on in Southland. There, letters columns have been running hot with