



Accord signatories, from left, David Crawford (Federated Mountain Clubs), Gerry McSweeney (RF&BPS), Bryce Heard (Tasman) and Philip Woollaston (Minister of Conservation). Photo: Dominion

Dialogue not Conflict

The Tasman Accord makes good economic and environmental sense but it also signals a new approach to environmental problem solving. Traditionally, industry and the environment movement have been like prize-fighters in a ring, acrimoniously slugging it out with each other until a referee – usually the Government or the courts – intervenes and comes up with a compromise which often pleases neither the environment movement nor industry.

By contrast, in the Tasman Accord negotiating process parties directly involved sat down to discuss issues and find solutions. For nearly a year, Forest and Bird (Gerry McSweeney, Basil Graeme and Kevin Smith), on behalf of the environment movement, Tasman Forestry (David New and David Buckleigh) and David Field of the Conservation Department identified common ground, tabled information on the ecological and commercial importance of blocks and pro-

gressively resolved issues of disagreement. We were helped in the task by a major report on the ecological values of all Tasman's holdings prepared by Kevin Smith with help from other Forest and Bird and DoC staff.

The amicable Accord signing ceremony in Fletcher Challenge's Wellington boardroom represented a giant advance from the bitter battles of the late 1970s and early 80s to save the kokako-rich forests of Rotorua's Mamaku plateau.

Mammon on the Mamaku

Under an extraordinarily generous 1973 leasing arrangement, the Government leased NZ Forest Products (NZFP) the Mamaku plateau native state forest for clearance, burning and conversion to pines. Surrounding the state forests were other native forested lands owned or leased by NZFP where clearance proceeded apace. At that time these forests had kaka, kakariki and many kokako. By 1976 half these native forests had been elim-

inated soon followed by all its kakariki, most of the kaka and many kokako. In 1969 the late Sir Charles Fleming penned a blistering attack on the logging operations and their effect on birdlife in a *Listener* article entitled "Mammon on the Mamaku".

The article and the Native Forests Action Council's 1977 Rainforest Campaign riveted public attention on Horohoro and other Mamaku plateau forests. Outrage at the burn-offs was widespread and was spearheaded by Tauranga and Rotorua conservationists and Hauraki plains farmers led by Brian Wright and Gordon Stephenson.

Finally in 1983 at the height of the battle to fully protect the Kaimai-Mamaku Forest Park, ecological surveys were carried out of the 20 percent of original native forest which remained of NZFP's Mamaku State Forest lease which adjoins the Forest Park. As a consequence of these Forest and Bird and Wildlife Service surveys and with the co-operation of NZFP, much of the remaining leased state native forest was reserved.

All this time conservation attention had focused on the public estate. We felt largely powerless to influence native forest clearance of private land. Unfortunately, this feeling was reinforced at the Commission for the Environment's 1985 Tauranga conference on native forest which served to uphold private property rights over native forests and the public's sense of powerlessness to halt the consequent tragic loss of lowland forests.

However, dramatic changes in attitude were simultaneously taking place amongst kokako scientists and the public. Public abhorrence of native forest logging and clearance was growing throughout New Zealand and even on the West Coast burn-offs ceased in 1986. Removal of Forestry subsidies also rendered uneconomic most "conversion" operations. Kokako research on the Mamaku plateau building on Wildlife Service survey data also revealed that these Bay of Plenty forests held the largest surviving kokako populations in the country. Only by halting the destruction of these forests and the fragmentation of the linking forest corridors could the birds have any chance of a future.

Unfortunately the Wildlife Service's timid and powerless negotiators agreed to protection of only minimal corridor areas on the plateau – amounting to little more than steep gully systems – soon shown by kokako researchers to be almost useless to sustain kokako.

From 1984, Forest Products forest clearance operation therefore relentlessly continued to eliminate nearly a thousand hectares a year of forest on the plateau.

Changing Conservation and Corporate Scene

The tide turned in early 1988. Newly appointed Forest and Bird staffers Ann and Basil Graeme, Bay of Plenty conservationists and enthusiastic staff of the new Department of Conservation resolved once and for all to save their kokako and halt each summer's mushroom smoke clouds from native forest burn-offs. The 1987 stockmarket crash and the demise of Forest Products Rada group also signalled big changes on the corporate scene.

The Australian-dominated Elders Resources NZFP company arose from the ashes

