

10 Years to Save the Planet

Norman Myers, internationally renowned environmental scientist, has pointed out that of all the world's resources, the one in shortest supply is time.

There are only 3,500 days to the year 2000, by which time the future of the planet will have been determined one way or another. Unless the political and economic log jam frustrating efforts to save the world is swept aside we will be passing onto our children a ravaged and increasingly hostile planet.

Already 4 percent of the decade has passed by. During this time, the world has been stunned by the unprecedented political reversals in eastern Europe. An environmental revolution is also sweeping across the world. Opinion polls show that the level of environmental awareness has never been higher. Yet, this has not been translated into meaningful actions. The environmental revolution has for most people been little more than a consciousness-raising exercise. Its most tangible manifestation has been the adoption by politicians of "ecospeak." This is a new political and commercial language characterised by frequent utterances of environmental platitudes but rarely backed up by decisive action to protect the Earth.

Nothing has been achieved on the environmental front to match the momentous collapse of the Berlin Wall. Conservation gains have been painstakingly slow, incremental and mostly inadequate. Yet Berlin Wall breakthroughs are desperately required on a host of issues such as ozone depletion, global warming, deforestation, species extinction, and population growth. Myers notes that "the space for action with the least investment and biggest dividend is limited to the next 1,000 days, a mere 3 years." After that Myers believes "we shall face the prospect of battling all the harder with less chance of success."

In New Zealand, those three vital years will largely coincide with the term of the next Government. The mantle of the green government is up for grabs with neither Labour nor National able to claim it as of right. The environmental track record of both parties is mixed. Geoffrey Palmer has championed environmental issues but often on a "think locally, act globally basis." Drift netting on the high seas has been condemned at international forums but pleas for the Government to intervene to prevent the death of hundreds of fur seals in our own deep water hoki fishery went unheeded. Worthwhile local initiatives such as the protection of South Westland's rainforests have been matched by development decisions that have rocked the conservation movement. These include the flawed Resource Management Bill, with its massive devolution of responsibility for environmental management to unsympathetic local governments and politically unaccountable planning tribunals. Calls for a sustainable energy policy have been ignored. Instead, state-owned Electricorp has splurged millions on advertising campaigns to promote energy consumption.

National's commitment to green issues has so far been lukewarm with the only highlights being support for a no-mining Antarctica World Park and for a nuclear-free New Zealand. Much more is required if conservationists are to be convinced that the party has turned its back on its previous disregard for conservation and its obsession with large industrial developments. Bill Birch's recent defence of the environmentally disastrous \$1.2 billion Clyde dam white elephant will have caused unease amongst voters looking for a more enlightened vision from within National's ranks.

The New Labour Party, the Democrats and the new Green Independents have a chance to challenge the major parties' pursuit of market place solutions as a panacea to all New Zealand's ills. But the first-past-the-post electoral system places them at a great disadvantage. For conservationists the coming election is vital. Once elected, a modern executive government has all too often shown itself to be insensitive to the will of the people. Politicians feel vulnerable and therefore receptive to public pressure during the desperate months leading up to the election. It is important that this election year conservationists take their issues squarely to the politicians and ensure they commit themselves to saving the natural beauty, ecological wonders and life-supporting ecosystems of this fragile planet.

Kevin Smith, Conservation Director



Contributors to *Forest & Bird* may express their opinions on contentious issues. Those opinions are not necessarily the prevailing opinion of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society.

Issue Number 256
May 1990
Volume 21 Number 2

Forest & Bird

C · O · N · T · E · N · T · S

Articles

- 10 Threatened Species Trust launched**
- 13 Mana Island and the Mice Plague**
- 18 Mine or Theirs?**
- 21 Red Moki – Vulnerable Fish of the Reef**
- 26 NZ's Fishing Policies – One Person's Story**
- 30 The Story of Beech Forest Fungi**
- 38 Wilding Pines – A Growing Problem**
- 42 Maurice Yorke – Farmer Conservationist**

Departments

- 4 Conservation Update**
- 8 Worldwatch**
- 43 Bulletin**
- 45 Officers and Lodges**



13



21



30



38

Forest & Bird is published quarterly by the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc.

Society's aims: to protect New Zealand's native species, natural ecosystems and landscapes and promote an appreciation of these.

The Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society is a member of the International Union for the Protection of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP).

Head Office: Seventh Floor, Central House, 26 Brandon Street, Wellington.

Postal address: P.O. Box 631, Wellington

Editor: Gerard Hutching

Registered at P.O. Headquarters Wellington as a magazine.

Design & Production: Creative Services Ltd
Typesetting: Computype Ltd
Photoprocess: Colourcraft Reprographics Ltd
Printing: Bascands; Christchurch

Advertising Manager: Jill Wood, Print Advertising, PO Box 3016, Wellington. (04) 733-010.

ISSN 0015-7384