

The Other Side of Green

IT IS EASIER to be "green" than it used to be. Many more people can now see the logic, indeed the necessity, to go easy on the earth. That has not made the proponents of development and exploitation go away. It has simply made it more difficult for them to find a good press.

The opponents of conservation are still out there though and regrouping – witness the emergence of the Resource Users Group which successfully lobbied to block the Resource Management Bill. The more sophisticated adapt to change and mix in some regard for more enlightened public values as they go about their business. Some even recognise that the public has had enough of certain developments and redirect their energies into more friendly directions. Both attitudes must be better for the country. Other interests however, locked into a vision of New Zealand as a last frontier, persist with the philosophy of the pioneers and turn again and again on the land, to exercise their perceived right to take from it without regard to future generations.

These are the people who will never change their minds. The idea of looking after the earth for everyone is too much of a mind-stretch. To them policies to encourage the protection of forests and keep water and air clean, in the broader public interest, are a gross intrusion into their personal rights and values. Some have been denied the advantages of liberalising experience, through education or travel. Others trust to God or Science to find ways around our environmental crisis. Some are simply perverse. You will see them in the media exercising their property rights just to get one across the Government: clearfelling their patch of bush, for example. They symbolise the potential backlash to the environmental "revolution" and we may experience it anytime now.

Practically every New Zealander has had to rethink lifestyles and values with the sweeping social changes of recent years. This has been unpleasant for many people, so backlash is inevitable. Politicians who feel this backlash are quite likely to be sensitive to demands to put people before the environment. Yet environmental issues have affected very few jobs in the larger picture of unemployment and change through economic restructuring. "Greenies" are simply a handy target for those who cannot see through events to the real causes of change.

It has always been Forest and Bird policy to look for solutions to conservation questions which take people into account, too. This comes challengingly close to politics but it is the only way we can fairly say that our concerns for the future of the earth are to make it a place where people can live, as part of a natural system of life which will survive into the coming centuries.

Our Society welcomed the idea of protecting native forests on private lands as a move which was in the interests of the future community. Where individuals have had to pay a price for the rest of us, there is room for injustice, and a need to provide against this. For this reason we welcome the Forest Heritage Trust Fund of \$6.75 million which is to help with the protection of forests on private land. In South Westland our world heritage proposals included the development of tourist facilities, with attendant job opportunities.

If we want to hang on to the advances of recent years then we must continue to show our concern for people as well as the planet. Should we forget in our campaigning to provide for those who will suffer then we invite the backlash which, in changing times, could see our cause undone.

Gordon Ell,
President



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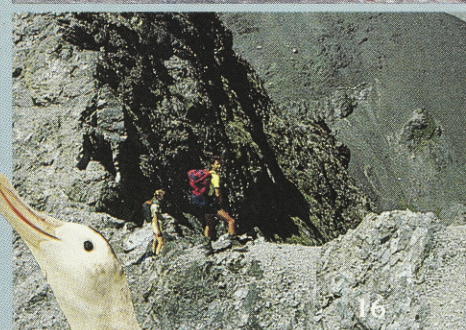
C · O · N · T · E · N · T · S

Articles

- 8 Kaikoura – Whales and Marine Reserve
- 16 Torlesse Conservation Park
- 23 Seabirds in Strife
- 31 A Winter's Tale
- 36 East Cape Erosion
- 40 Profile–Keith Chapple
- 44 Chathams Heritage Programme

Departments

- 2 Conservation Update
- 6 Worldwatch
- 7 Branching Out
- 46 Bulletin
- 49 Index
- 51 Officers and Lodges



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