

\$10,000 during the course of a three-hour radio appeal.

"The decision not to employ counsel was a big worry. However I decided to put my best foot forward and fronted up at the court.

"When we decided to advocate it ourselves we were sending a message to Electricorp – that ordinary people were prepared to have their say on the Tribunal's terms," says Chapple.

The coalition confined itself to regional issues: the impact of the diversions on the blue duck, recreation, the trout fishery, the history of the scheme and tourism and regional development. The Department of Conservation played the major role, tackling energy conservation, economics, hydrology and environment. On the Putiki marae – the first time a Planning Tribunal hearing had been held on a marae – the Wanganui Maori Trust Board told of the spiritual values of the river to their people. "The river can only live and maintain its mauri, essence of life, with a plentiful supply of water from its source," said tribal elder Mr Taitoke Tawhiri.

Central to the coalition's thinking about the case was the fate of the blue duck, since birds are the best indicator of environmental degradation. Being a torrent duck, the loss of the cold headwaters around Tongariro National Park had a devastating effect on the bird's population. It has been claimed that the blue duck is especially vulnerable because it does not readily fly from one catchment to another. Therefore, the argument goes, once the habitat is degraded in a river, the population there is highly vulnerable. The strong territorial instincts of the blue duck mean that chicks fail

to establish new colonies.

However, Electricorp's expert witness contended that, while the bird was threatened, there was evidence of it moving from catchment to catchment. This was based on observations of *one* bird. However, researchers point out it appears more likely that males only are travelling long distances; therefore new populations are failing to establish.

Chapple says there is no doubt the blue duck is fragmented and under pressure. He cites the example of the diversion of the Tongariro River in 1984. Beforehand the population was 32; today it has plummeted to five.

Despite the huge negative impact the diversion of the rivers' headwaters has had, the coalition does not advocate scrapping the Tongariro scheme.

"The nation has spent money on the scheme, we should be able to get something out of it. But Electricorp have shot themselves in the foot. Fernyhough said the decision on the Wanganui would affect all rivers, but that's nonsense.

"Had they accepted the catchment board's decision they would have had a pretty good deal, allowing them half the water from the western diversion," Chapple says.

He sees one benefit of the Planning Tribunal hearing being the higher standard of information presented than at the catchment board hearing. As a result the tribunal could more accurately judge the percentage of water that should be restored for ecological purposes.

**W**HEN HE ARRIVED in New Zealand in 1968, Keith Chapple had little inkling he would be making national headlines 20 years later. Born in London in 1943, he cut short a philosophy and political science degree at Reading University in favour of travelling the world. His first 18 months in New Zealand was spent on a farm near Lake Waikaremoana, which he describes "as good an introduction as any to New Zealand." He was impressed by his contact with local Maori; years later the Maori community alongside the Wanganui River would prove invaluable allies.

From there he lived in Auckland where he met Brenda.

"We used to sit down at dinner parties and solve the world's problems," he recalls.

It was not until 1980 when he and Brenda moved to Kakahi, near Taumarunui, that theory was transformed into practice. The occasion was a developer advertising his intention to extract metal from the Whakapapa River. From his home on the terrace overlooking the river, he describes in his quiet and intense manner how locals formed Friends of the Rivers of Kakahi (FORKS). Well known

artist Peter MacIntyre, who owns the house the Chapples live in as well as a neighbouring holiday cottage, was a founding member. His love of angling and artistic appreciation of the area's natural beauty had also led to his campaigning against the Tongariro power project in the 1960s. Then the term "environmental considerations" was relatively unheard of. However in the early 1980s FORKS won the day against the metal extractor and continued as a ginger group for several more years.

Chapple's next major issue became the 1984-86 campaign to create a forest park centred on Tongariro State Forest. It was the end of an era: in its dying days the Forest Service was still clearing native forest using taxpayers' funds. Even after the logging had stopped, officials continued to insist that they, and not the local people, knew what was the best use of the forest. The issue taught him not to trust bureaucrats and showed him they were not the servants of the people. Brenda proved her worth with her secretarial skills and determined advocacy.

"In our first meeting with the Forest Service they treated us very patronisingly. However Brenda took extremely accurate notes and at the next meeting we were able to go through each point of what they had agreed to. They didn't expect us to be so professional," he says.

In 1986 he became chairperson of Forest and Bird's King Country branch.

"When we arrived King Country people had a pioneering ethic but you couldn't blame them. Now we've become accepted for our views. Just look at the stance taken by the locals over the Wanganui – that's a real achievement."

**P**RAISE for Keith Chapple's abilities – from both supporters and opponents in the Wanganui case – abounds.

Massey University Geography lecturer Peter Horsley sees his role as crucial.

"He had the extra tenacity and a clear vision of what had to be done. Without him there would have been a different outcome. Keith was respected by all in the tribunal."

Horsley says that Chapple's role in bringing in local opinion to the tribunal hearing was especially important.

According to Jim Guthrie, the Wanganui case would never have got where it did if it had not been for Chapple's commitment. He had galvanised other, perhaps less committed people: "Once you've got on the train, you've got to take it to the station," is the way Guthrie puts it. The Dunedin lawyer – a member of the New Zealand Conservation Authority – also found Chapple "extraordinarily well read" with a taste for fine red wines (discovered on a trip to Hawkes Bay).

Electricorp officials are reticent about criticising Chapple. Public relations head Juliet



Judge David Sheppard of the Planning Tribunal.