



Keith Chapple at the Whakakapa River intake: "Ordinary people had their say."

Hensley applauds him for "putting the rights of local people into perspective. I think people do care very deeply about the environment."

She sees the Wanganui issue as part of a "huge debate" and the question that has to be resolved is whether the regional or national interest comes first.

Electricorp's staff lawyer Hilary Talbot is similarly reserved in her comments. She found the Flows Coalition to be very professional, especially in relation to the way it presented evidence. Ms Talbot credits Brenda for her role in this.

Privately Electricorp officials feel deeply wounded by the bad publicity the SOE has attracted as a result of the Wanganui case. A *Frontline* programme on the Wanganui River earlier this year exposed Electricorp's role on the issue to a national audience – an audience usually assailed by Electricorp's TV advertising campaigns promoting power use. As the spearhead of the Wanganui campaign, Chapple is held responsible by some for placing Electricorp in such an unfavourable light.

However he is unrepentant. He sees Electricorp as "the great New Zealand clobbering machine writ large" and with Forest and Bird staff and members is now embarking as co-ordinator of Forest and Bird's nationwide energy conservation campaign. Electricorp will be a major focus. On the one hand, he points out, the corporation has a production arm which claims to have an environmental policy; on the other it has a marketing arm which is hell bent on increasing energy usage, hence profits.

Electricorp's sophisticated PR machine has fought back with an expensive video putting its side of the story. Fronted by Peter Hayden, better known for his role as presenter of TVNZ's *Wild South* series, and scripted by cartoonist Tom Scott, the video has the smart


PR title of *Our Future Generation*. Electricorp says the video is intended to portray the corporation as environmentally responsible and thus assist in its endeavours to be granted water rights for its power plants. The effect is somewhat spoiled, however, by the flier promoting the video – it features a photo of the Whakapapa River with the heading "environmentally sound."

Chapple believes that, with the threat of climate warming around the corner, the public is more likely now to get behind an energy conservation campaign than at any time in recent history.

"However, energy conservation does mean that people will have to change their lifestyles, and that will be difficult. For example, people on Auckland's North Shore will not

take readily to messages that their sole passenger car trips will have to stop; neither will industry want to control energy plants and reduce CO₂ emissions."

He believes it is vital that the campaign places the emphasis on the positive rather than negative values of energy conservation.

One thing is for certain: if the Chapples put as much drive and commitment into energy conservation as they did into saving the Wanganui, such a campaign has a strong chance of being a success (Editor's note: at the time of writing the Planning Tribunal had not announced its decision). 



Brenda Chapple: the "lynch pin of the Coalition."