

## Paper for Environment 1977 Conference

The Co-ordination of Environmental Conservation  
Organisations.

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The development of the environmental movement in New Zealand and overseas represents one of the most important events of the late 1960's and 70's. The grouping of people around particular goals has resulted in the establishment of a whole range of environmental organisations, large and small, the majority of which have clearly defined terms of reference which unite them in their purpose and support. Involvement of the public in this way should be part of the basis on which administrative and government decisions are made and as such should be actively encouraged in a variety of ways. Public participation must be developed. The question whether such diverse bodies can however be effectively co-ordinated has still to be proven.

The importance of co-ordination of the environment and conservation movement in N.Z. was recognised as early as 1962 when the Nature Conservation Council was established and when one of the principal functions was set out as:

"12. Functions of Council

(a) To act as a central body for obtaining and co-ordinating the views of organisations, bodies, and persons interested in nature conservation or to which any such organisations, bodies and persons may communicate their views or advice on any aspect of nature conservation - "

This role as a central co-ordinating body has not been accepted by the council up until the present. Co-ordination requires considerable organisation and finance and with limited budgets and resources the Nature Conservation Council did not tackle this task.

The difficulties of the task, the wide ranging interests of the environmental organisations and no clear indication that the bodies felt the real need for co-ordination will have also influenced the thinking of the council on this matter,

The failure of the major effort made by the Royal Forest and Bird Society and the Scenic Preservation Society to prevent the Labour Government and Parliament accepting the Manapouri Power Scheme involving massive

raising of the Lake in 1960 and the success of the Save Manapouri Campaign in 1970 and 1971 were clearly in their own ways the major stimulus that made environmental and conservation organisations recognise that co-ordinated effort was a highly desirable goal, if it could be successfully achieved.

The strategic thinking, planning, co-ordination, time, energy and money that was brought together in the Save Manapouri Campaign established a success model that will go down in the history of the environment and conservation movement in New Zealand.

At this stage a great deal of work and thought was put into this question of co-ordination and in December 1971 the organisation Conference on Environment & Conservation of N.Z. (CoEnCo) was formally established bringing together 12 major National organisations as 'A' class members and more than 40 organisations as 'B' class members.

The objectives were carefully thought out aiming to cover the important areas of co-ordination to enable authorities to be approached with a united voice; the promotion of conferences and forums; the review of legislation; the maintenance of liaison with statutory and non statutory bodies and government departments; assistance to member organisations; a role in public education.

In pursuing such objects the co-ordinating body was not to interfere with the activities of its member bodies but to act for them as a group or when they require assistance within the scope and approval of the organisation.

This was interpreted as the right of veto by some organisations and led to a great deal of debate.

It is easy to agree in principle that co-ordination by groups with a differing degree of involvement and concern for conservation and the environment is desirable in New Zealand. It is more difficult for me to be able to say that it has worked well and that CoEnCo, and since 1976, ECO have set a clear path to success in this difficult field.

Co-ordination becomes more difficult when there are conflicts of particular interest and view point. The differing views on deer management

held by the Royal Forest and Bird Society and the N.Z. Deerstalkers Association is a case in point but despite this such groups can and have agreed on many other areas relating to conservation and the environment and respect the right to differ on others.

In 1971 an important aim was to provide an alliance of major national organisations that could agree upon Action Fronts and proceed to develop these. The hope was that the combined membership of the different bodies could then be brought in to develop a wide consensus and pressure group that could influence public opinion and political decision making.

The constitution made no provision for individual membership along the lines of the Australian Conservation Foundation and until 1976 certain 'A' class members were actively opposed to the organisation seeking any funding support beyond its members, feeling that this would be in competition for funds from trusts and other bodies that they may also be approaching.

A further matter that caused debate concerned the extent to which CoEnCo could or should develop at Regional level and what the advantages of this would be. During 1976 this was resolved and provision was made on the executive for representation of 7 or more organisations grouped in an Environment Centre in a particular region. It was felt that this could help strengthen activity at regional level and in turn could enable the Executive in Wellington to be better informed. The 1976 Annual Meeting of CoEnCo amended the constitution to allow for Regional representation and at the same time changed its title to Environment and Conservation Organisations of N.Z. (ECO).

#### Achievements:

Since 1973 CoEnCo has held a series of annual forums where important matters have been considered. Publication of papers from these meetings have been widely distributed. A newsletter has been published 3-4 times per year and widely distributed.

Submissions have been made on a wide range of Bills coming before parliament and this is seen as an important role. These are prepared by working groups and drafts are circulated to member organisations for their comments. In this way an attempt is being made to both inform and receive from member bodies their views on particular problems.

In 1976 the Forestry working party chaired by D. Collingwood of Royal Forest and Bird has produced a Forestry Policy. Representations from Native Forest Action Council and other groups were involved and this illustrates the sort of collaboration that is needed. This has now been adopted as an Action Front. Working parties are also established on population, soil and land use, energy, town planning, finance and administration.

Representatives have sat on special committees and taken part in conferences including the Forestry Development Conference.

CoEnCo played a major role in the visit to New Zealand of Paul Erhlich in collaboration with certain other groups.

In 1976 a separate secretariat was established at 7a MacDonald Crescent, Wellington and Mr. B. Henderson took on the post as Administration Officer. This is an important move towards improved efficiency and communication.

Over the period since its formation there has been some change in membership of ECO which groups relate to lack of objective outcomes and advantages coming to them from the efforts of the organisation.

New groups have joined including the Environmental Defence Society, Native Forest Action Council and the Soil Association of N.Z.

#### Future Developments:

Co-ordination in the Environment and Conservation movement is needed at local, regional and national level. The strength of the movement and its impact on the thinking, planning and decision making on matters of concern must depend on progress being made at all levels. Major action fronts such as Save Manapouri will be infrequent, but such matters as Energy developments and Nuclear power are in this category.

The enlightened outlook by the Australian Government in its very active support of the Australian Conservation Foundation is a model which could be applied in New Zealand with considerable advantage.

Acceptance of public involvement and the part organisations can be expected and encouraged to play requires major financial support. Such involvement cannot depend as in the past only on voluntary efforts and voluntary fund raising. Provision of financial assistance at

varying levels must be accepted by government and machinery established to help distribute funds in the most effective way.

The health of the environment and the type of country we are developing is an area of utmost importance and support for the non government organisations concerned with these areas will be a major forward step that is totally consistent with the pattern of social development that has taken place in N.Z.

Statutory bodies such as the Nature Conservation Council and the Environmental Council could jointly be responsible to government for distribution and supervision of government source funds.

The establishment by the Environmental Council of a working party to examine the environment movement and to consider the question of how best it can be strengthened, co-ordinated and funded is also an important forward step that we hope will be productive.

ECO, the Environment and Conservation Organisations of N.Z. has I believe a role to play but like other bodies requires funds and certainly the annual subscriptions of member organisations are insufficient on their own to allow it to remain viable.

Efforts are being made to meet its requirements and to give the organisation the opportunity to fulfill a growing and valuable role.