

# ECO

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## ANNUAL REPORT 1982/83

### INTRODUCTION.

1982-1983 was another busy year and this is proving to be the case for 1983-1984. The Government is paying only lip service to the N.Z. Strategy for Conservation and Development and the recent economic recession is merely slowing the pace of exploitative developments. Hawks are still touting the Aramoana and Nelson (Nickel) Smelters and major Energy and Mining Projects as the salvation of New Zealand's future. This is despite record unemployment and little evidence that "Think Big" is succeeding, except to integrate the country into the multinational corporate economy. Small scale, high technology, high value industry and service industry provide New Zealand with the way to the future, a way to provide employment without destroying the environment.

### WORKING PARTIES.

Work towards this end has been undertaken by the Energy Working Party with the help of the Environmental Council. Their report and that of Mining and Antarctica Working Parties are included below and I ask each of them to now speak to their report.

### ENERGY WORKING PARTY.

Over the past year the Energy Working Party has been active on three issues in particular: energy planning, Clyde dam options and the Motunui outfall.

Three members of the group have been carrying out research on alternative energy planning with a grant from the Environmental Council. The first in a series of working papers was produced in March which examined raw energy inputs and their end use. This paper represents a significant piece of research into energy use in New Zealand and prepares the ground for further work identifying conservation potentials.

Following the release of the Waitangi Tribunal's report in May, the Working Party became active in pressing Government to act on the Tribunal's recommendations. Members of the group helped to organise support for the Taranaki people concerned about pollution of the coastal reefs and testified before the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Synthetic Fuels Plant (Water Right) Bill which facilitated the rerouting of the outfall.

ECO's involvement with the Clyde dam debate also finally led to its appearance before Parliament's Energy and Commerce Select Committee to oppose legislation granting a water right for the Clyde dam.

The Working Party kept a watch on a number of other issues throughout the year but did not have the resources to pursue them. These issues included: Waikato coal extraction difficulties and planning problems, investigation of the Southland lignite coals as a source of liquid fuels, and energy conservation as it might be applied to local body elections.

## MINING WORKING PARTY

### Minerals.

While there has been a decline in some of the mineral exploration and prospecting activity in New Zealand, because of the dent the world-wide recession has made in the profits of the oil companies, many of which acquired mining companies during 1979-80, the price of gold has remained high enough to keep a stream of exploration, prospecting and mining applications coming in to Mines Division.

Finding out about applications is now easier than it used to be, because of the concessions in favour of public information made in the 1981 amendment to the Mining Act. However, tracing applications through the provisions of the Act, finding out about the conditions proposed by the Minister of Energy, and finding out which licences have been approved remains extremely difficult. Some of the relevant information is released locally, but so far our powers of persuasion with Mines Division of the Ministry of Energy have proved inadequate. Despite a flow of informal and formal requests, and two formal meetings, and the advent of the Freedom of Information Act, Mines Division appears to be resisting to the last attempts to extract on a systematic basis even information which is publically available in other places but held centrally by Mines Division.

The year has seen continued mineral industry activity in the Coromandel, the West Coast and in Otago. Working with relatively new scientific theories, the industry has had something of a frenzy looking for minerals in the epithermal areas. Thus geothermally active or recently active areas such as the Bay of Islands and the Rotorua-Taupo region have been the subject of many applications.

The mineralised ranges of the South Island have continued to attract attention. There is intense activity from small-medium miners on the West Coast and prospecting by larger companies. Conzinc Riotinto of Australia, CRA, has undertaken exploration and prospecting off-shore along large stretches of the West Coast and Southland. A subsidiary of Union Oil has applied to prospect the lagoon and lakes of the Chatham Islands.

On the Coromandel, opposition to the activities of the minerals industry is widespread amongst residents, farmers and visitors to the Peninsula. The Thames Coromandel District Council has a Bill, drafted by the Environmental Defence Society, before the Local Bills Committee, but there are few signs that the Government plans to take this Bill through the full course. Mr. Birch has already refused to curtail the issue of licences while the Moratorium Bill is before the House. Great Barrier Island is also the subject of a "no-mining" Bill.

### PEAT.

One of the biggest non-coal or iron-sands mining proposals, that for mining the resins and waxes from peat at Kaimaumu, has been a focus of Working Party attention. The Commission for the Environment has not asked for an Environmental Impact Report and though the Minister of Energy promised during the debate on the Mining Amendment Act 1981 that major mining proposals would be subject to EIR and audit, we are still waiting. The Department of Lands and Survey has outlined proposals for a Reserve, but the company, Kauri Deposits Survey Ltd., is trying to reduce the size of the proposed reserve. These moves are being resisted by the environmental opposition.

### COAL.

Waikato Coal and the proposals to mine Ohinewai, the difficulties experienced by State Coal at Huntly and the requirements of N.Z. Steel have attracted the attention of the Working Party. Groups outside ECO such as the Coalition for Open Government are also monitoring and analysing events.

Power demands may also lead to the development of the coal fields in the Mokau area of North Taranaki, West King Country, round Ohura, and at Kawhia where there are estimated reserves of over 140 million tonnes. A power station burning Mokau coal has been proposed.

The development of Southland lignites is the largest mining development planned. Coal development proceeds under the Coal Act. Scope for public participation is virtually non-existent under the Act. Changes to the Act are urgently needed and a priority for environmental action.

### ANTARCTICA WORKING PARTY.

The Antarctica Working Party - which doubles as the New Zealand Organising Committee of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition - has been most successful in bringing Antarctica to the notice of the people of New Zealand. The Working Party has evolved from a mere organising group for other international conservation groups to being an active participant in policy and decision making networks around the world.

On the home front things have also gone well, with ECO, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace all confirming policies on Antarctica calling for wilderness status for the whole continent. More significantly, 'Forest and Bird' has developed an 'interim' policy on Antarctica which among other things, states "... that the wilderness character of Antarctica should be recognised and preserved in perpetuity."

This is exciting because it maintains complete consensus among non-governmental conservation groups throughout the world in feeling that Antarctica should be set aside as the last great wilderness area. This policy has held despite strong pressure

from the Governments of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties - of which the New Zealand Government is one. These governments advance the argument that oil extraction and hard rock mining is inevitable in Antarctica and the best we can do for the Antarctic environment is to ensure that miners take care. Our argument is that resource exploitation in Antarctica would be quite unnecessary if the countries involved would implement conservation and recycling policies at home.

We have found ourselves in a central position in this debate largely because the first two meetings of the Consultative Parties specifically to discuss minerals exploitation in Antarctica have both been held in Wellington. Members of the Working Party were actively involved in lobbying delegates from all fourteen nations involved.

Unfortunately, because of the secrecy of these high level diplomatic meetings and the speed with which these diplomats are trying to clinch a deal on a minerals regime, it has been difficult to find out what is being discussed. What we do know is that not a single delegation is putting the case for conservation of Antarctica. We are thus in the difficult position of having to rely on public pressure to advance our position while the mining companies have the implicit support of diplomats and thus by inference of politicians as well.

The politicians, however, keep protesting that protecting the Antarctic environment is top of their list of priorities. It was this gap between what they say and what their officials say that prompted the Working Party to publish the text of the 'Beeby Draft' - an outline of what a draft minerals regime for Antarctica might look like prepared by Chris Beeby of New Zealand in his capacity as Chairman of the last meeting of the Consultative Parties in January here in Wellington.

A third meeting on Antarctic minerals has just finished in Bonn, West Germany and Roger Wilson, of Greenpeace and a member of our Working Party, has been in Bonn organising things for the conservation groups involved. We do not yet know whether we have been able to influence the secretive diplomatic negotiators but we have been remarkably successful in stimulating public debate. Now the big question is how will the debate go internationally. We expect Antarctica to be on the agenda at the United Nations General Assembly in September.

Last month, the ECO Executive passed a resolution calling on the member bodies to support its call for Antarctica to be discussed by the United Nations. Such a debate was felt to be the only way to get worthwhile open debate on the important international issues involved in deciding what to do with Antarctica.

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS ON WORKING PARTIES

I have nothing but praise and respect for the motivation, commitment and dedication of the members of the ECO Working Parties - I won't mention any of them by name as there are too many but I stress that their financially unrewarded work gives the lie to comments made by Jonathon Elworthy, Minister of Lands & Forests. The only reward for New Zealanders involved in the conservation movement is a better quality of life for all, not just the rich and power elite.

## OTHER ISSUES

ECO is represented on the Joint Campaign on Native Forests by Kevin Hackwell. The JFC has been very active this year including the publication of the Strategy for Environmental Management in New Zealand in October 1982, the Easter Gathering at Tauranga and an objection - and appeal still to be heard - to the proposed road to through the Waitutu State Forest in Southland.

ECO remains involved with the IUCN in New Zealand through past chairman Hugh Barr - who is also involved on ECO's behalf on the Wilderness Advisory Group. A major victory in a wilderness area was won when the Australian Federal Court stopped the Gordon - below - Franklin Dam in Tasmania. Because of differences in political structures, it is doubtful if the decision has any legal significance for New Zealand but a win is a win! Unfortunately I'm sure the Tasmanian Government will try to find a way around it.

Government continues to show its disregard for the law with its "wheeler-dealer" type of action over the Clyde Dam and Motunui Outfall. The Clyde Dam deal with Social Credit looked like American style "Pork Barrel" politics with trade-offs suggested by Social Credit in return for their vote. I personally believe that land-based disposal for North Taranaki Projects' wastes is a winnable campaign. One strategy would be to pressure the Taranaki M.P's to perform in the region's interest and not necessarily the nation's e.g. lowest cost solution. A campaign focussing on the National M.P.'s' self-interest as supporting land-based disposal to be rewarded with Taranaki remaining blue rather than turning red or green and yellow in November 1984. A commitment for land-based disposal should be extracted now and with a start well before the election

The monthly meetings with Dr. Ian Shearer, Minister for the Environment, continue to be a worthwhile exchange of views and information and an inaugural meeting has been held with Dr. Michael Cullen, Shadow Spokesman on the Environment. The executive has met the Environmental Council and members of the Commission for the Environment on several occasions.

## ADMINISTRATION.

Membership of ECO has remained static with 9 A Class members and 55 B Class members. These figures hide a movement of ten in the B Class and 1 in the A Class where the N.Z. Medical Association has resigned but the Environmental Defence Society has become an

A Class member - a welcome addition. The Executive looks forward to working with its representative. The Friends of ECO have increased slightly to 246 and we thank Esther Einhorn for agreeing to takeover from the secretary for the past two years Norrie Lewis. The Friends held two special fundraising events during the year and I thank them, and those who contribute to the Special Fund for generous financial support.

ECO is in good shape administratively and financially due to the work of its Secretary Chris Horne and Treasurer Bruce Henderson. Chris has the office running smoothly and efficiently with typing ably done by Mrs. Jean Hill. I thank the Willi Fels Trust for their donation towards his salary but he remains overworked and underpaid, something I hope to change this year with the approval of Member groups, and the Executive. Bruce will not present the annual financial report for the first time in my memory - he and Marion are on a well deserved overseas trip. I have pleasure in presenting them on his behalf in the knowledge that they are in good health. We face the problem of finding a successor for Bruce in the medium term and a volunteer would be appreciated.

#### CONCLUSION

I have enjoyed the past year as Chairman of ECO and consider I have made a small contribution to increasing its effectiveness, in particular helping it to run more efficiently. I acknowledge that ECO has adopted a lower public profile in the sense that the Chairman has not made as many media statements as in the past, but I see my role as to facilitate and co ordinate and am happy for the Working Party Convenors to make statements after consultation.

Given the continued support of the hard working members of the Executive, the Secretary and Treasurer I am happy to continue as Chairman.

Roger Morris.

19 July 1983