

# ECO

Environment and Conservation Organisations of New Zealand Inc.  
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## ANNUAL REPORT 1983-1984

### INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to present my second annual report to the ECO Annual General Meeting at the Clinical School, Wellington Hospital on Saturday 4 August 1984. The year 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984 has had many highlights due to the work of the Antarctica Working Party, Mining Working Party, ECO Representatives on IUCN, JCNF and other groups, the Executive and particularly our secretary Chris Horne and his helpers both paid and unpaid.

### THE NEW GOVERNMENT

The Snap Election called by Sir Robert Muldoon backfired on him and has provided the Environmental Movement with a fresh opportunity to put new initiatives before the government to secure better and more lasting environmental protection and enhancement procedures. I hope that the Labour Government will realise that the 'environment' cannot be compartmentalised and conveniently put aside because of economic difficulties inherited from the previous administration. Hard decisions need to be made by the new government but the environmental consequences of these should be adequately assessed and discussed with the appropriate parties. Two areas of the Labour Government's proposed policy spring to mind:

First the intention to establish a Ministry of Planning and Environment combining the Commission for the Environment and the Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Works and Development. I am not sure where this proposal originated from but if it is just a first step towards the implementation of the EDS / NFAC / RP&BPS / ECO initiative of

- a) A Ministry for Environment and
- b) A Nature Conservancy

then it has my support. There can be little doubt that the role of the Commission for the Environment needs strengthening and that its environment protection and enhancement procedures need to be integrated with those of the Town and Country Planning Act 1977. Before the Government takes the final decision I hope it will prepare a draft paper for discussion with interested parties, particularly environmental groups.

Second the proposal to place an environmental representative on the NZ Forestry Council. The Director of this august body has said that its membership is representative and should be given a chance to show what it can do. An examination of its membership shows that it is only representative of the forest industry and if its recent conference in Nelson where it invited all United Council Chairmen and Planning Consultants, but nobody else, is indicative of the way it intends to operate, then it will receive little goodwill from the public. However it is important that indigenous forests be removed from its control and that a representative from the environment movement be asked to join it. We look forward to our member groups being asked for nominations to the Forestry Council!

I now ask Cath Wallace to speak briefly to her reports on the Antarctica and Mining Working Parties and to answer any questions.

## ANTARCTICA

### INTRODUCTION

An airstrip construction project on a penguin colony; plans to set the scene for the exploitation of Antarctic oil, gas and other minerals; krill fishing; inadequate environmental impact assessment and protection measures; closed-shop Antarctic policy making in New Zealand: these are the issues which have been at the centre of Antarctic campaigning in 1983/4 and will continue to be important in future.

ECO has been the driving force in the New Zealand grouping of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, ASOC. It has been generously supported by the member groups in New Zealand, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Greenpeace NZ, Friends of the Earth NZ, the Auckland group, Focus on Antarctica and donations from individuals.

ASOC is an alliance of 122 groups in 20 countries. ASOC NZ has kept in regular contact with ASOC members world-wide through the secretariat in Sydney, with the US non-government groups through the Washington Antarctica Project and with Greenpeace International with New Zealander Roger Wilson who last year left the ASOC NZ group to become the international Antarctic campaign co-ordinator for Greenpeace International.

### MINERALS

The Antarctic Treaty powers have continued to negotiate a regime whose purpose is to set the ground rules for the exploitation of oil, gas and other minerals on the continent. ASOC has argued that Antarctica should be left as a monument to human forbearance and reserved under a management plan as a wilderness area in which minerals activity has no part. We have argued that it is dangerous to introduce resources competition to the Antarctic and that this could jeopardise the extraordinary success of the Treaty since 1959 in preserving the continent as a place free of international rivalries, off-limits to nuclear weapons and all military activity, except logistical support for research.

The Antarctic Treaty powers (New Zealand is one of 16) have continued with their negotiations and ASOC NZ has contributed to the international efforts of the non-government organisations (NGO's) to monitor their special minerals meetings. The fourth of these was held in Washington in January, the fifth in Tokyo in May this year.

The Government acceded at the last minute to requests by ASOC and the NZ Association of Scientists that a nominee of the New Zealand non-government groups attend the Tokyo meeting as part of the official delegation. Disappointingly they left us to pay the bill for Dr Peter Barrett, the distinguished Director of Antarctic Research Centre, Victoria University.

One of our objectives is to persuade the new Government that the official delegation to all such meetings should have an Antarctic scientist and that Government should pay the cost.

Also at the Tokyo meeting was Annie Wheeler who was on the "outside" with other NGO people helping in the lobbying of delegates and the production of the newsletter "ECO".

The negotiations centre on an expanded version of the "Beeby Draft" Minerals Regime which was released by ASOC last year, after its preparation by Chris Beeby, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Though the new draft sports some improvements in environmental principles and the setting aside of some places out-of-bounds to mining, the proposed structure of the regime, the way decisions are to be made and the weighting of membership towards would-be miner states, will badly compromise environmental protection. Even worse, the Treaty powers so far have failed to make provision for the collective monitoring and enforcement of the rules they propose.

A source of dismay to ASOC NZ is the secrecy of our Government over the preparation and nature of the New Zealand position. We can see no reason for the exclusion of the public and interested groups from the process of drawing up the New Zealand view - yet we know less about it than we know of many other national positions. We will press government to relax secrecy before the next minerals meeting in Rio de Janeiro in February 1985.

### KRILL

Krill fishing is expanding at an alarming rate in Antarctic waters, most of the expansion of effort coming from the Eastern bloc countries. Krill is a small crustacean which occupies a vital place in the Antarctic food web.

The Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources has been established by the Treaty powers and has a laudable ecosystem approach. While it is good in theory, in practice its institutions have suffered from a lack of commitment by Governments either to its aims or its purse and, even if all goes smoothly, it will be several years before effective fin fishery or krill fishery management takes place. We will be asking ECO members to contribute to fund raising to get an ASOC person to Hobart for the next CCAMLR meeting in September. ASOC has asked for observer status at this meeting.

### FRENCH AIRSTRIP

The French began constructing an airstrip near Dumont d'Urville Research Station, Adelie Land, Antarctica, in the 1982/3 season. Blasting has occurred on the breeding ground of Adelie penguins and the strip will disrupt the air and surface passageways of Wilson and snow petrels, skuas, fulmars, giant petrels and emperor and Adelie penguins.

Since January 1983 ASOC and Greenpeace have tried to persuade the Antarctic Treaty powers to at least investigate our contention that this project was underway. We had little success until January this year when, after an international campaign that featured pressure on French diplomatic posts, video film and still photos of the blasts and other evidence, the French eventually appointed a Committee of Experts to review the project. So far the outcome has not been made public.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT SCRUTINY

The French airstrip is a good example of the inability of the Antarctic Treaty powers to live up to their claims to be guardians of Antarctica. We will continue to campaign for the introduction of an effective procedure for the preparation and public circulation

of environmental impact statements on projects; for collective scrutiny of the statements; as well as a mode of monitoring and policing the impacts of operations in Antarctica.

### CHINESE BASE

We hope to persuade the New Zealand government to give the lead to our Treaty colleagues with the introduction of internationally circulated impact statements on scientific projects. We hope that the Government will set a worthwhile precedent for collective environmental impact scrutiny in the case of the selection of sites for the possible Chinese base in the Ross Dependency.

### ANTARCTIC ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The international NGO community is pressing the Antarctic powers to set up an Antarctic Environmental Protection Agency which would have the job of monitoring the impact of projects, would handle the input of public views, and would by its presence, with the job of environmental protection, remove the diplomatic difficulty Antarctic nations face now if a member errs. Under the present arrangement, some nation has to take it upon itself to raise the issue of a lapse by a fellow party and all shy away from acknowledgement or action.

Later this year the United Nations will consider the question of Antarctica. We submit that whatever happens, the non-military and nuclear weapons-free status of the continent must be preserved. Most dangerous to peaceful scientific co-operation on the ice and indeed to world peace, is the opening of the continent to strategic resource rivalry.

Cath Wallace  
Convenor, Antarctica Working Party

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### MINING

ECO's effort on the mining issue has ranged from urgent action on individual prospecting and mining proposals, to input on policy and law, and the support and education of local groups and communities. ECO has also lent logistical support to Mining Monitor, though that newsletter is quite independent of ECO.

We have kept in contact with the many groups active on mining issues. We were very pleased to see the Coromandel Coalition established. Alistair Graham and I have promoted this for two years. We wish it every success.

Visits to various parts of the country have been made, with the help of NZ Environment magazine. As Mining working party convenor I was able to spend two weeks travelling in Otago, Southland and the West Coast looking at mining and prospecting sites. Further travels have allowed contact with campaigners in Northland, Auckland, the Coromandel and elsewhere.

Many individual mining and prospecting applications have needed attention - sometimes a matter of urgent research and lobbying,

such as peat mining proposals at Kaimaumu in Northland; gold mining and prospecting in Northland and on the Coromandel, (Crusader around Thames, MOCO at Waitokauri, AMAX at Martha Hill, Waihi, the Orokawa prospecting proposal); intense activity on the Central Volcanic Plateau, in North West Nelson, Buller, Westland and Southland; scheelite mining at Glenorchy; peat on the Chathams and lignite prospecting in Southland. There have been many more.

We have contributed ideas for mining policy to various agencies and departments during the year, including the Environmental Council and the National Research Advisory Committee. We also put considerable effort into the Mining Amendment Bill 1983, which was swept away by the election.

We took the initiative late last year in an attempt to persuade officials to adopt a better form and procedure for obtaining information from would-be miners who applied for licences. We did not get everything we wanted but the documentation required of applicants is now better than it was. With NEAC we are pushing to get the Environment Protection and Enhancement Procedures incorporated into the statutory requirements for mining applications. A highlight of the year was NEAC successfully challenging two CRA prospecting applications and in the process drawing attention to the lack of environmental impact data or policing.

Since the passage of the Official Information Act, ECO has managed to persuade Mines Division officials to keep significantly more material on open file available to the public. We are still working on getting more statistical material collected and collated. We were very concerned however to find that the Commission for the Environment has not been regularly seeing and investigating new applications to prospect and mine.

A feature of the minerals industry in New Zealand is that many of the prospecting operations undertaken in the heady boom days of 1979-80 are maturing now into likely mine proposals. These are appearing on the Coromandel, where gold and silver are sought and the West Coast, where there are many hydraulic digger and bulldozer operations. Fletcher-Challenge, AMAX and Mineral Resources hope for ilmenite and gold extraction on a large scale at Barrytown, and CRA has a rather similar 'cocktail' of minerals it is prospecting around Westport. For the moment plans to dredge the Grey River are stalled, but other companies such as the Canadian Placer are showing some interest and in December 1983 a dredge licence was issued for the Mikonui. If that goes ahead there could be trouble.

The coal and lignite situation has considerable potential for serious environmental damage. You will all have been kept abreast by the Coalition for Open Government of the National Government's plans for mining in the Waikato - at Ohinewai, at Huntly East and West, at Weavers mine and at Maramarua in the north. There are also plans to invade a stunning amphitheatre of bush near the whitebaiter's Mokau River, in an untouched corner of North Taranaki-King Country on the west coast of the North Island. The aim is to dig a large coalmine to supply a power station probably sited near the river. Inland, round Ohura, there are other projects, many of them by private companies.

You may not have heard that the Ministry of Energy is also exploring for coal further north on the west coast at Kowhia, a place of remarkable beauty.

On the West Coast titanium production proposals could stimulate further mining. Already the Greymouth Coal Co. and Pike River Coal Co. have prospecting areas over very precious environmental areas including an ecological reserve.

People in Southland and Otago are very disturbed by the Liquid Fuels Trust Board which is gathering water rights and sorting out which fields it plans to drill for lignite. One field of particular concern to environmentalists is the Ashers-Waituna field on the southern coast which is adjacent to one of New Zealand's two wetlands which have been designated as having internationally important status, the Waituna Reserve.

The wetland is already threatened by excessive land drainage and CRA has a huge prospecting area right next to it. A lignite pit on its boundary might result in saltwater intrusion, dewatering and the disturbance of the unique alpine plant community which exists at sea level. If this one looks like getting much more serious we will be calling on all of you for support!

The Coal Act needs to be scrapped in favour of a set of procedures which would make coal mining subject to the Town and Country Planning Act 1977. We will be pushing for this change with the new Government. As it is now, there are few opportunities for public input to decision-making and we must change this. EDS has analysed the Coal Act. Mining policy must deal not only with site-specific issues but with the combined effect of many operations on a district and on the nation.

Looking beyond the often distressing details we have a duty to look for more lasting solutions. We cannot simply 'export' mining-related environmental problems to the West Coast, to Northland or to the third world. Equally we cannot ignore the plight of the unemployed.

Eventually with the mining issue - as with the debate about Antarctica - the question has to be asked: Do we need to dig and drill? How can we use less and use it more efficiently? This is the question which must be answered. Shouldn't we introduce energy and minerals conservation programmes which conserve by better design, less obsolescence, appropriate energy forms, recycling and reusing? This means controlling demand, not blindly expanding supply to meet expanding demand.

From the UK, USA, Canada & the Soviet Union there have come highly 'respectable', even semi-official reports that there is truly enormous scope for conserving a huge proportion of annual energy consumption of those nations, even with quite rapid increases in national income, population, travel per head etc. Researchers estimate about one-third of annual energy consumption could be saved by the introduction of cost-effective conservation methods.

Even better work done overseas suggests that conservation programmes employ more, not less people than the increase-the-supply alternative and employ people where they already live, not in some expensively constructed project camp hundreds of kilometres from worker's social networks.

The choice we have before us is whether the industrialised world is going to face up to its profligate consumption habits before or after Antarctica - the last great wilderness on Earth - is violated.

Cath Wallace  
Convenor, Mining Working Party.

I now ask Ann Bell to speak briefly to her report as the ECO representative on the NZ IUCN Committee.

### IUCN

The IUCN Committee has met four times since I took over from Dr Hugh Barr as ECO's representative. The main achievements have been the formalisation of the NZ committee by the adoption of a constitution. The wording in the constitution was discussed at length to ensure that it did not hamper the committee in commenting on environmental matters of international concern, and at the same time did not cause the committee to inadvertently embarrass the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which quite naturally, zealously protects its position as the official government agency on all matters pertaining to foreign policy. Eventually an agreed wording of the constitution was adopted on 17 May. The other important event was the visit to NZ in April by Dr Kenton Miller, the D-G of IUCN. He discussed the aims of IUCN at a meeting on 2 April. It was interesting to note how IUCN is funded and how this could affect IUCN's independence. We also discussed Antarctica. Later he met representatives from the NGO's. Now that the NZ IUCN Committee has a formal basis, the committee should be strengthened. Your previous representative Dr Barr and the Forest and Bird representative David Collingwood were among those responsible for the formulation of a IUCN (NZ) constitution.

A. Bell. 31 July 1984

### RECYCLING

Attempts were made to obtain a P.E.P. worker for a project on recycling to look at whether it would be economic to set up a can recycling cooperative. The application was turned down by the Department of Labour, but it could be resubmitted if there is increased interest in such projects by the new Government.

### ENERGY

Keith Johnston is endeavouring to finish the Least Cost Energy Plan Project which was funded by the Environmental Council. More pressing projects such as the Waikato Coal debate and the election have delayed completion by several months but Keith intends to complete the work soon.

### JOINT CAMPAIGN ON NATIVE FORESTS

Kevin Hackwell resigned as the ECO representative on the JCNF in July 1983. I took his place and have attended two of the three meetings since. I took part in the delegations to Mr Elworthy and Sir Robert Muldoon. The meeting with Sir Robert was an interesting experience but the subject of that meeting, Waitutu, is still to be resolved.

### COMMENT ON WORKING PARTIES

As I noted in my first Annual Report in response to a characteristically churlish remark by the then Minister of Lands and Forests, I have nothing but praise and respect for the motivation, commitment and dedication of the members of ECO working parties. I stand by that remark and wish to extend it to all members of environmental groups throughout the world. The main aim of environmentalists involved in the conservation movement is a better quality of life for all, not just the members of powerful clubs such as OFEC and the OECD.

One side effect of the election is the termination of meetings with Dr Ian Shearer, the former Minister for the Environment.

Dr Shearer is a friend of the environment movement and I enjoyed meeting him during the year. I look forward to having similar meetings with the new Minister. The executive met the Environmental Council and members of the Commission for the Environment on several occasions to discuss a wide range of topics.

#### ADMINISTRATION

Due to the work of your secretary Chris Horne, honorary treasurer Bruce Henderson, and typists Jean Hill and Christine Hoyte, the office has functioned very smoothly in the past year.

The number of "A" class members has remained static. We thank them for their continued moral and financial support. I have however a small criticism to make of some of the "A" class members, notably RF & BPS, NFAC and EDS. I appreciate that they have difficulties with so much work, few personnel, transport and cost problems but the functioning of the Executive would be improved if these members could provide alternate representatives when their normal rep. is not available.

The number of "B" class members has fluctuated over the past year with sixteen movements. Eight member groups have resigned after winding up and eight other groups have joined. I welcome these new groups and hope ECO can help them in their work. I would also like to pay tribute to the "B" class representatives, whose work on the Executive is not always noticed but is certainly appreciated. The system of "B" class representatives is not perfect but without a stronger financial base to pay travelling costs for representatives throughout the country, or the alternative of regional representation, which would also involve travelling costs, it is the most effective system.

"Friends of ECO" continue to provide valuable financial support and in Wellington they help in doing time consuming but important jobs, eg collating, folding, enveloping, sorting etc, which is greatly appreciated. Their help and the work of Ester Einhorn the "Friends" hon. secretary is never overlooked. "Friends" sponsored a late afternoon function at the Otari Plant Museum at Wilton for Dr Ian and Eleespie Prior in March. We presented them with a bone carving and pot plants for their untiring work and support for ECO in the past. My thanks to Bob Fantl, Chris Horne and helpers for making the function a success.

Once again thanks are due to the generous people who contributed to the Special Fund which provides much of the money to pay your secretary's and typist's salaries. These benefactors are the backbone of ECO. Without their contributions we could not afford a paid secretary and would have to rely on volunteers for our work, a situation many of our member groups are in. It is difficult to be effective without full time paid activists. Please encourage your members to contribute to the Fund.

Despite this support it will be necessary to increase subscriptions this year. A modest increase, the first since 1980, is proposed by the Executive. The audit of our accounts should be completed before this meeting. Our thanks to the auditor, Alison Miller for her work during the year. We thank Bruce Henderson, our honorary treasurer for his work of managing our accounts.



I probably embarrass him but Chris Horne's efforts as ECO's secretary cannot be praised enough. Finding time amongst a busy schedule Chris toured the South and North Islands earlier this year with help from the Willi Fels Trust. Their much appreciated travel grant of \$1000 enabled him to meet groups and their members through much of the country and it would be useful to continue this programme.

Jean Hill our typist since September 1982 left us a year later and was replaced by Christine Hoyte. ECO has been lucky with its typists who have an interest in the content of their work. Our thanks to Jean and Christine and others such as Helen Rainforth who have provided secretarial support during the year.

### CONCLUSION

I have started my third year as Chairperson of ECO, a position which I enjoy as part of my effort to make a contribution to the environment movement. This may be my last annual report as the Constitution requires the Chairperson to step down after three years. I am available to continue, but the Executive will need to find a replacement eventually.

With the new Government and new policy initiatives on environmental matters, the incoming Executive will be busy for the next year, with many outstanding issues to be resolved and new challenges to be met. I look forward to the coming year with confidence in the contribution that ECO can make.

Roger Morris  
Chairperson

31 July 1984