President's Report 1974-75

CAPRICORN CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Chairman's second Annual Report

Membership. The number of affiliated bodies still stands at 8, although we lost one (Gladstone WLPS) and gained another, (Trades and Labour Council Conservation Committee). The latter however have never sent a representative to a meeting.

Constitution. Ron McCabe kindly took on the unenviable task of completly rewriting the Constitution. It was adopter in May 1975, and it will come into effect after the AGM. There were minor misunderstandings over the question of the quorum at General Meetings, but this now appears to have been resolved.

Main events. As in the previous year, our work was so closely linked with that of member bodies, that it is impossible to apportion credit for the accomplishments or failures. However, John McCabe who was appointed on a full time, if underpaid basis, in October has done a tremendous job for the Council. Grahame Wells who joined the paid staff for 6 weeks before Easter 1975 was a great help to John. The Council's smooth running must also be attributed to Ron McCabe's skilful handling of our funds.

The Mt. Etna and Iwasaki issues both again dominated the local conservation scene. Both can be claimed to have reached a statemate at the time of writing.

The Mt. Etna issue errupted early in the year when Mines Minister Camm gave what appeared to be final approval to demolish the mountain in March 1975. However thanks to intensive lobbying, CQ Cement have not yet gone ahead with further destruction.

The relinguishing of Limestone Ridge leases by CQC and Mt. Morgan Ltd. are an encouraging sign. Associated with the Mt. Etna conflict is the plight of the farmers at Bracewell, who are to be dispossessed by large scale limestone mining. We have established contact with the local protest group there.

The year saw the sitting of the State Government Rarnborough Tourist Inquiry in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Yeppoon during Sept.1974. We had support from the QCC, ACF and individual conservationists, particularly from Dr. Arthur Harrold. Some valuable support also came from quite unexpected sources. The COG Report was eventually released in March 1975, and it proved to be favourable to us in many respects. It still remains to be seen if Mr. Iwasaki is prepared to go ahead with his project under much more stringent terms than he had intended to, or indeed if the State Government will insist on their adherence.

Other local issues also came more to the fore this year. The long battle battle over the subdivision on top of Mt. Archer, fought chiefly by the Capricornia National Parks and Wildlife Preservation Association appears to have been lost in December 1974, when the City Council sold all the housing allotments for a total of $0.5 million. We are still hoping to get at least part of Mt. Archer declared a national park.

Sand mining raised its ugly head in our region during the year. We were involved to a limited extent with the Agnes Waters-Round Hill Area, and more recently with the Five Rocks and Shoalwater Bay leases. Pressure is also mounting on the State Government to proclaim the Blackdown Tableland and Bayfield National Parks, while quarrying on Double Heads appears to have been stopped.

Despite the Premiers stated about face on conservation earlier this year, this region is yet to see his new policies implemented. Areas of neglect on our part include urban problems in Rockhampton and the activities of coal mining companies in the hinterland.

We have also been interested in wider issues, particularly in the question of uranium. Federal parliamentarians were lobbied, and a submission made to the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry.

Australian Government Assistance. The cutting of our administrative grant from last years $6,563 to $4,450 this year procluded any real expansion of our activities. Indeed, we were only able to carry on because of a substantial carry over from the earlier grant.

A great uncertainity hangs over the coming year, and this makes forward planning difficult.

The grants to date, given either to CCC or to conservation groups for work in this area, and including the Corio Bay Study grant for last year, plus the 3 Mt. Etna Study Grants in the current year now adds up to $29.615. Excluded from this sum is legal aid for the 2 sandmining cases.

In analysing funding, one is led to the conclusion that it has been Australian Government policy to favour funding specific projects rather that providing money for general purposes. We should therefore concentrate on seeking more money for such special projects. Inevitably this must mean greated involvment by member groups themselves, since they have greated knowhow of their problems, and are thus in a better position to secure grants. CCC can of course apply for the grants on behald on member bodies as was done by QCC with Mt. Etna.

We should of course also try and raise money from elsewhere. This has been very difficult in the past because we have had our hands full with conservation issues. It is hard to see a change in the near future, and clearly we will have to rely on Government funds for a long time yet. Perhaps it is time the State Government came to the party, particularly as we are frequently called upon to provide educational material and advice.

Communication.

Perhaps our greatest failure continues to be our ability to adequately project our ideas to the public. We have had a big press campaign, particularly over Mt. Etna. Three film crews took pictures of the Bat Cleft and/or Mt. Etna including TDT from the ABC-TV. TDT also accompanied the Environment Minister, Dr. Cass on his flying visit in March 1975. We also talked to Mike Evans (State Secretary, National Party) and to a group of five Liberal backbenchers from State Parliament who made an inspection of Mt. Etna. A delegation to Mines Minister Camm was also organized to discuss limsstone mining.

Communications with fellow conservationists improved during the year. Apart from regular visits to Brisbane by both John McCabe and myself, John attended a national Conservation Council meeting in Sydney. We contributed financially to the Radical Ecology Conference in Melbourne over Easter, and liased with the Cape York Conservation Council during their confrontation over Quinkan funds.

We were visited on several occasions by QCC and CYCC members while two teams (from Brisbane and Sydney) quizzed us on how to improve communications between conservation groups. John McCabe and I also attended 2 meetings in Bundabers with groups about to form the Wide Bay-Burnett Conservation Council.

The Council has had a dozen papers published on topics related to its work. Although the first five of these were published during our previous year of operation, the complete list is attached for the record.

(1) Bloom and Springell 1973 Lead in petrol controversy (reprinted from Search) ECo Info 1(3), 17-20.
(2) Springell 1973. Fight for the Capricorn Coast. EcoInfo 1(5):51-53
(3) Springell 1973. Impressions of World Conference on Animal Production. ECO-INFO 1(3) 34-35.
(4) Springell 1974 Risks in the Energy Scramble.EcoInfo 1(6);25-27
(5) Springell 1974. The Yeppoon project. EcoInfo1(6):32-33.
(6) Springell 1974 Activities of the political syndicate. EcoInfo 2(4): 18-20.
(7) Wells 1974/75 Mt. Etna-Limestone Ridge. EcoInfo 2(56):39-42
(8) McCabe 1974/75. Sand mining Round Hill Head EcoInfo 2(5-6:55-58
(9) Springell 1975. The Australian Environmental scene. Ecologist 5(2):42-47.
(lo) Wells 1975 Yen for Yeppoon. Community 1(10):3
(11) Springell 1975 Destruction in Capricornia. Radical Ecologist No.2:13-14.
(12) Springell 1975. Capricorn: An urbanising Coast. Community 1(11):10-11.

P.H. Springell,
Chairman 29/8/1975