President's Report 1975-76

CAPRICORN CONSERVATION COUNCIL

President's third Annual Report 1975-76

Membership

The number of affiliated bodies has remained at eight. Affiliates generally take an active interest in Council business only when their own particular issues require our assistance. While this is perhaps to be expected, it is rather disheartening to those with interests outside the purely local scene.

Appointment of a Director

John McCabe indicated towards the end of 1975 that he did not wish to continue in the capacity of paid Secretary. Following advertisement, Nick Deane was brought up for an interview, and subsequently appointed as the Council's first Director in December 1975. He spent some time in Brisbane with John McCabe at the QCC before taking up duties in Rockhampton early in the New Year. The Council is indebted to both John and Nick for doing an excellent job.

Inquiries, EISs, etc.

Written submissions were made by the President to the Fraser Island Inquiry, and by John McCabe and the President to the Ranger Uranium Inquiry. Both were followed by personal appearances before the respective Commissioners in Brisbane.

The President and Kevin Cousins made written summaries of our views to the Inquiry into Animal and Vegetable Pests in Queensland, and the President gave verbal evidence to the Committee in Rockhampton.

The Director and the President made written comments on the Concorde EIS, the President criticized in writing the Duchess Phosphate EIS, particularly as it related to the proposed drying plant in Townsville, while the Director also commented on the EIS dealing with the new ABC establishment proposed for Digger's Park in Rockhampton. The latter was particularly significant, since this represented a recognition by the Co-Ordinator General that the Council now officially has an Advisory Body status under the Environmental Impact Study guidelines set out by the State Government.

Comments on coal projects in the Nebo area are currently being prepared, following receipt of a bulky set of EISs dealing with the subject.

The above submissions and comments took a great deal of time. Unfortunately the onus for preparing these has fallen on too few people. It is important that our views be heard in high places, and that the Council earns respect for such activities. It is to be hoped that the incoming committee will recognize the importance of this work, and that the burden of these undertakings will be more widely shared in the future.

Mt. Etna studies

The three study grants mentioned in the second annual report have now resulted in production of three Reports. Of these, the $ 9,500 study culminated in the production of the publication entitled "Mt. Etna & The Caves". The book has aroused considerable interest and discussion following its launching by the new federal member for Capricornia, Mr. Col Carlage. The Council invested in a 100 copies, of which some were given away as complimentary copies. However, many remain to be sold , and a continuing effort to distribute as many copies as widely as possible is still urgently needed.

Mt. Etna/Limestone Ridge, Bracewell & mining laws

Two leases on Limestone Ridge previously relinquished by CQ Cement & Mt. Morgan Pty. Ltd. have recently been at last proclaimed part of a National Park. It is thought likely, in view of the information revealed by the Economic Study, and the proposed development at Bracewell, that Mt. Etna (R 444) will eventually be added to the National Park, hopefully before much more damage is done.

The Bracewell issue has once again demonstrated the archaic nature of Queensland's mining laws. It is quite untenable in this day and age that mining should automatically have priority over every other land use, and yet existing laws enable the Mines Minister to ignore all other alternative uses, regardless of merit. Our attitude to Bracewell has been that the dispossessed farmers must be adequately compensated for the loss of their farm land. We are also not convinced that a genuine need for limestone, necessitating the destruction of valuable farm land, has in fact been demonstrated. If the cement goes to making more freeways and high-rise city buildings, then we are opposed to its use. Similarly, a need for a steel works in Central Queensland (which requires limestone) is also questionable, if it means more cars, and other consumer luxuries with inbuilt obsolescence, and a lack of durability, such as [illegible] models of washing machines, refrigerators, and the like.

Abuses of existing mining legislation also came to light during a recent week-end discussion with small miners at Rubyvale by the President and Ted Fensom.

Coastal land-use

The Iwasaki Tourist Project has come to life again with renewed vigour, after a period of apparent dormancy. A new incredible set of proposals worth $ 50 million came to light in July, which makes demands on some 50 square miles of land, and embodying, apart from a Tourist resort, a Disneyland type venture rivalling their US counterparts, a fertilizer plant, and a woodchip industry based on the socalled Itajii tree.

Initial disbelief in the both outlandish and amateurish style of the submission was not borne out, when its authenticity was established. Expert criticism is currently being sought Australia-wide. Insistence on a detailed EIS of the proposed activities is being strongly canvassed.

Other activities

Our quest to secure relinquishment of sand-mining leases at Five Rocks failed. Fortunately our efforts were financially covered by an Australian Legal Aid grant.

Similarly efforts at securing a National Park in the Bayfield area were frustrated, as was further action at Blackdown.

A visit by Ted Fensom and the President to the Shoalwater Bay Army Training Area, and inspection of the CSIRO Woodland Ecology experiments there, proved an interesting and fruitful exercise. Possible sand-mining activities in the area need watching.

It was noted with satisfaction that the State Government failed to attract bids to develop North West Island to the tune of $ 100 million. The President, in company with CCPC members, addressed a public meeting in Gladstone on the subject, and established liaison with the NW Island Defence committee. Cyclone David however probably did more to save the island from inevitable destruction than any of our efforts. It is now essential to ensure the island be given some form of protection, preferably as a National Park, and State authorities are being pressed to exercise their responsibilities.

Following the President's election to the ACF Council, several visits to Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne were made. Of particular interest is the proposed national body concerned with preservation of native forests, in which we are participating.

Finances

Thanks to Ron McCabe's excellent management, the CCC had sufficient funds throughout the year. However, with the uncertainty of future funding, we are unlikely to be able to continue our present scale of activities. The incoming committee will need to make an early assessment of our position.

Attention is drawn to the special fund we now operate through the ACF and which enables donors to claim contributions off tax. It is hoped that individuals will contribute, and so extend CCC activities. To date the fund stands at $ 100 - more is needed.

Conclusion The President thanks all those who helped in the last three years, and he wishes the Council the best of luck in its future activities.

P.H. Springell 23/8/1976