President's Report 1982-83

CAPRICORN CONSERVATION COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT - 1982/83

1982 - 83 has been a year of some improvement for the C.C.C.. However there is still a great deal more we could be doing.

This year is the 10th year of operation of the C.C.C. and looking back over the first few annual reports it is interesting to note some of the differences in the way C.C.C. operated in 1973 compared with 1983.

Ten years ago the main strength of the membership was from member bodies. Today, although we are constitutionally still dependent on member bodies, it is the affiliate members as individuals who provide most of the effort.

In 1973 - 74 the government grant was $6,300 and income from donations was $55. Since then the government grant (which is now $3,000) is tied to our other income on a dollar for dollar basis.

The two main issues which concerned C.C.C. when it started were: Iwasaki and Mt. Etna. Ten years later neither of these have been resolved satisfactorily. Construction of the Iwasaki Resort still goes on with the overwhelming blessing of the Queensland government, and our many questions on environmental degradation remain unanswered. In spite of the trade off to establish the Fitzroy Caves National Park at Limestone Ridge, Mt. Etna itself is getting closer to destruction daily.

This year conservationists can take some heart at the decision by the High Court to stop the Gordon below Franklin Dam. However in these days of economic recession and unemployment it appears that a number of issues are becoming purely a choice of the environment versus jobs.

Late this year we have started to employ an office assistant on a part-time basis. Sandra Venn-Brown was selected from 18 applicants and has proved to be keen and efficient and capable of taking on more in the way of project work in the future.

Blackdown Tableland National Park was officially declared last November and the C.C.C. in conjuction with the Capricornia Bushwalkers

made a detailed submission to National Parks on the boundaries and the management plan. There is still need of more lobbying to help save the headwaters of Rainbow Creek catchment from logging.

The mining of Mt. Etna continues relentlessly. We have been making an eleventh hour bid to the National Parks Minister saying that his responsibilities under the Fauna Conservation Act requires him to take action to stop the mining.

Although we consider this to be an extremely important issue, our probability of success could not be regarded as high. Again in his last reply to us, the Minister has used the argument that the jobs of the quarryworkers are more important than the bats in Bat Cleft.

We have seen no progress at all on the National Park for Mt. Archer. We are, however, becoming very concerned at the way that residential development is creeping up the front slopes of the mountain. We have expressed this concern to the media and the Rockhampton City Council. The Council's response was not encouraging. The people of Rockhampton will have to do something urgently if they want to prevent the Berserker Range from being stripped and scarred and covered with houses.

The massive task of cataloguing the Jock McCabe Memorial Library has eventually been completed by Anne Hughes. Many thanks must also go to Esther, Margaret and Gail who all helped with typing the cards.

For the coming year, the projects we should be tackling are:

i) Education
ii) Publicity
iii) National Parks proposals

i) In the field of education, it is heartening to observe how many of today's school students are doing projects on environmental issues, both through their own interest and by assignment from more enlightened teachers. We are not equipped to provide kits of handout literature for them.

ii) Publicity and media relations is one area which needs improvement. In the past, members of the executive have been called upon to make public statements on environmental matters of concern to the public. This always occurs at short notice. Some preparation would assist greatly.

iii) The establishment of National Parks as a result of our efforts in lobbying the government is by far the most cost effective contribution that we can make to the preservation of the environment. We all know that Central Queensland is one of the worst regions for the proposition of areas reserved as National Parks in the state. Greater effort should be spent by C.C.C. in the preparation of National Park proposals.

However, the two biggest challenges we face in the coming year are:

a) fundraising, and
b) apathy.

a) The fundraising problems we had this year will only be worse next year if we receive a larger government grant.

The work being done by the C.C.C. Executive is falling on very few shoulders. Certainly the offic e work has improved dramatically since we employed our office assistant but what is also needed is either (i) a major environmental disaster right on our doorstep to motivate public action, or

(ii) a larger membership of people on the executive who can help share the workload of decision making, policy formulating, letter writing, etc.

In conclusion I wish to thank all those on the executive committee and others who continued to help in keeping C.C.C. running over the last year. I also thank those who could not spare their time but contribute by way of generous donations to the Capricorn Conservation Council.

I.H. Herbert
President

19/8/1983