

6 March 1990

TO: PLC

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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BILL IMPLICATIONS  
FOR THE QUEEN'S CHAIN  
AND WATERBODIES

You should now have the PLC submission on the RM Bill.

It is now clear beyond doubt that Government has embarked on a deliberate, systematic attack on the whole notion of the public having rights of access and use of not only the banks of waterbodies, but within waterbodies themselves.

This has all the makings of an irreversible disaster.

The Conservation Law Reform Bill only deals with half the Queen's Chain

—primarily by section 58 strips becoming marginal strips, and becoming liable to private control, mass waivering, and closure to public access for any contrived reason.

The Resource Management Bill will effectively wipe out the other half of the Queen's Chain:

- being primarily road reserves, plus esplanade reserves;
- by requiring express consents for public access and recreation, backed up by criminal offence provisions with stiff penalties;
- by allowing easy disposal of road reserves (almost half the Queen's Chain);
- by almost guaranteeing that no further esplanade reserves will be created in future
- by allowing unfettered private control over public roads, with leaseholders having the power to obstruct the passage of the public and to exclude anyone.

In regard to waterbodies the RM Bill also—

- replaces customary rights of access etc, guaranteed by Crown ownership, control, and national policy, over the beds of lakes, rivers and the sea with discretionary consents in the hands of local authorities;
- requires express consent for public use of the beds and the airspace above, transgressors being punishable as above;
- allows the issuing of 'lease-permits' over the beds of rivers, lakes and the sea, for any purpose, with a very specific right to exclude all other persons;
- mistakenly? wiping out Crown ownership of riverbeds.

The whole picture is worse than anyone could reasonably imagine.

The PLC's efforts have had only a limited effect on the CLR Bill.

The news media has grown tired of our message; it is less newsworthy than last year.

No reliance can be placed on the Opposition reversing any of the changes if/when they gain power.

Time is fast running out before the Bills become law.

I am of the view that the Government is so wedded, in all areas of social and economic policy, to the 'market forces-level playing field-no state role-devolve responsibility' ideology, that persuasion based on rational argument alone is insufficient.

What's needed now is an all-out, no holds barred, national campaign that will convince government that it will be electoral suicide for it to continue on its present course.

I am not convinced that the PLC has either the energy or collective commitment to run such a campaign: I would like you to prove me wrong!, but unfortunately the track record so far has only seen half-hearted efforts by each organisation either as a result of overload of issues or from having other irons-in-the-fire that compromise an all-out effort.

I feel that it is now imperative that a much broader alliance of national 'outdoors' organisations and non-affiliated individuals be formed to fight the whole thrust of the government's moves, to force the Opposition into declaring its position, and if necessary getting directly involved in supporting or opposing candidates and parties depending on their avowed policies. From what I sensed of public reaction to the Queen's Chain issue last year (before we lost the media initiative) there is the basis for mass popular support for such a campaign. This will however require clear, simple goals, skilled communication/simplification of the issues, good organisation, full-time organisers, and a single-minded determination to see it through.

Please urgently consider the above.

Keep smiling,

Bruce.

PS. My immediate intentions this week are the preparation of a press release on the RM Bill, another one page 'fact sheet', and starting on another Public Land News special.