

The Editor,
Dunedin Star Weekender,
Dunedin.

7 November 1989

Dear Sir,

CONSERVATION LAW REFORM BILL - MARGINAL STRIPS

In reply to Mr George McMillan, Chief Executive, Landcorp-

Landcorp has lobbied hard for exemption from the exclusion of the Queen's Chain from lands to be transferred to the corporation.

In the view of the Public Lands Coalition Mr McMillan's claim that "Landcorp has not initiated this legislation" is hardly credible. They may not have actually drafted the Bill however it is clear that their pressure resulted in changes to Government policy and hence the marginal strip provisions of the Bill.

In July 1987 Mr Peter Egan, Landcorp's Deputy Chairman, stated at Lincoln College that "Landcorp has suggested to Government that the value of the lands affected by the laying off of marginal strips will be seriously diminished."

In September 1987 Federated Mountain Clubs learnt that, as a result of Landcorp lobbying, Cabinet instructed the State Services Commission to convene a working party from several departments to review the question of riparian strips.

In March 1988 Mr David Chalmers, Landcorp Chairman announced in his half-yearly annual report that "the corporation's operations on some of its farm properties are likely to be significantly and adversely affected by these [marginal strip] provisions and representations have been made on the matter. It is understood that the situation is being reviewed by Government."

The PLC believes that Landcorp has created a 'problem' with the Queen's Chain where none exists. The rest of the rural community has learnt to live with these legal public access rights in the same way as legal (paper) roads which dissect the countryside.

The public access on Landcorp holdings that Mr McMillan proposes is "subject to operational requirements and subject to permission being sought." This is good reason for the retention of guaranteed public access along riverbanks etc by way of publicly -owned strips. In my view it is more than coincidence that adjoining landowners, including Landcorp, will obtain powers under the Bill to close strips for 'operational' reasons. The concept of public access that Landcorp proposes is no substitute for the legal right of access along the Queen's Chain.

The claim that the proposed legislation will only apply to future disposals of Crown land is wrong. New strips will be created under the amended law, however all strips including existing ones, will be liable to be passed over to private managers, including Landcorp. This will create the power to close the Queen's Chain to public access. No public notice, objection procedures, or Ministerial consents will be required.

Contrary to Mr McMillan's claim existing Queen's Chain will lose their status as 'Crown land reserved from sale' and become 'marginal strips' subject to the new law. Repealing of Section 58 of the Land Act on page 126 of the Bill is the mechanism proposed.

Mr McMillan's last statement must be an exaggeration when only 20 metre wide marginal strips are proposed around the edges of natural lakes. The Land Act currently requires a strip "not less than 20 metres."

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