

Tenth Romeo W. Lahey Memorial Lecture

15 March 1990



Romeo Lahey points to the future.
(Dr. E.O. Marks, Mr. R.W. Lahey, Mr. Geo. Gentry -
Outing to Mt. Glorious 193?)

The Romeo Watkins Lahey Memorial Lectures are sponsored by the National Parks Association of Queensland Incorporated to honour the memory of its first President, 1930 to 1961. After his retirement as President he was elected Life Councillor of National Parks Association of Queensland. From 1911 to 1915 he undertook intensive field trips, much correspondence and a door knock throughout the Albert electorate, and convinced the Queensland Government to gazette Lamington National Park firstly at 47 000 acres and finally in excess of 50 000 acres (his original concept). He served as an engineer in the first AIF in World War I and in the Australian Army in World War II. He died on 26 October 1968.

Under his guidance, the NPAQ was successful in many submissions to the Queensland Government for National Parks in widely spread parts of Queensland. In his 70's, he completed field work on the Association's proposal for a large National Park based on Windsor Tableland and the eastern escarpment including Daintree catchment and Mossman Gorge. Most of his plan for this large National Park in North Queensland was accepted by the Government.

The Next Sixty Years

by

Mr. Tony Groom

TONY GROOM has lived most of his life at Binna-Burra Lodge, adjacent to the Lamington National Park. He is the son of Arthur Groom - author, co-founder of the lodge, and first secretary of the National Parks Association of Queensland.

Tony managed the Binna-Burra Lodge for fifteen years, has spent a year in Antarctica as a weather observer, and in 1972 was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study national parks in the U.S.A. and Canada. He is the foundation president for the Scenic Rim Association, formed in 1976 to press for more national parks in the area, and is a life member of the National Parks Association of Queensland Incorporated.

As well as photographing and writing about national parks, he and his wife now operate group tours within Australia and overseas, specialising in national parks. When not travelling, Tony Groom lives at Binna-Burra with his wife, son and daughter.

TENTH ROMEO LAHEY MEMORIAL LECTURE

Romeo Lahey was undoubtedly a visionary.

Because he was a man with vision - he could see the need for National Parks when those around him could see only an abundance of exploitable forests. He had vision because he could look ahead 50 or 60 years to a time when National Parks such as Lamington would become priceless gems, rather than crackpot ideas.

1990 is a year of anniversaries of things close to our hearts - the National Parks Association celebrates its 60th Anniversary this year, Lamington National Park has its 75th Anniversary on 31 July. Yosemite National Park in California, a park which has many close connections with Lamington, is 100 years old this year.

So I feel it is appropriate to celebrate the Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture, in the 60th Anniversary of the NPA, by looking ahead through the next 60 years -- not in some idle attempt at stargazing, but in a real attempt to ready ourselves for what may happen in the future. By trying to predict what may happen, we, as individuals or as associations, may be able to contribute in a positive way, rather than by fighting a rearguard action.

The one constant in our world at present is change. We have come to accept change at a breathless rate.

Ten years ago, who would have thought that Australia could boast the second parliament in the world where the green party holds the balance of power, as it does today in Tasmania.

Who would have predicted that the environment would be one of the three major issues in a Federal election with all major parties wooing the green vote.

Just one year ago, who would have dreamed that the Berlin Wall would come down.

Who would have dreamed that Nelson Mandela would be released.

Who would have thought that supermarkets would be advertising the sale of non-bleached toilet paper or spray cans without CFS,s.

Ideologies that have existed for decades are overthrown in days. Technology introduces change to our lives, sometimes beneficial, sometimes frightening in its ramifications.

We can now send images around the world in seconds by fax machines or make phone calls from our car or plane. In a few years we will wear Dick Tracy style wrist phones.

Gene splicing will give us carrots that remain fresher longer, tomatoes that stop ripening as soon as they are picked and pigs with low cholesterol pork. The next decade will see a re-invention of television - not with improved programmes as we might wish, but through the melding of TV, the computer and the telephone.

Using fibre optics and compact discs, our communication tools will include video telephones, and a huge range of television information and entertainment services. One optical fibre as thick as a human hair has the potential to carry all the television programmes in the world.

By the year 2050 we will travel between Brisbane and Sydney on high speed water craft at 200 kph.

Some changes will be beneficial for the environment. Power generation by nuclear fusion will become old-fashioned with the development of photovoltaic cells - solar cells that use silicon sand to produce electricity. Transmission of electricity through new ceramic materials will result in a given amount of coal producing twice the usable electricity.

One prediction for the next one or two decades seems safe - and that is that the pace of change will be even more rapid than it was in the 80's.

The faster things change, the more we need to be prepared, to try and imagine how things will be in 10, 30 or 60 years time.

I would like to think that all these changes will be eclipsed by one other - and this will be a change in the way people think.

For centuries, western civilisation has maintained a human based philosophy. This way of thinking, which goes back to the book of Genesis, assumes that planet earth exists for the human race. More than that, the value of everything else is measured by its value to humans.

With a human centred philosophy like this, or anthropocentrism, it is easy to justify the extermination of other species. It's easy to accept the modification of entire landscapes for pastoral, mining or road construction. It allows some nations to continue to use illegal drift net fishing even though one dolphin is killed for every nine tuna caught. And governments can accept the logging of World Heritage Forests - as long as the human race gains something from the destruction, even if gains are fleeting, as they usually are.

The other way of thinking recognises that we are only one of several million species of living things sharing the finite resources of this planet. Although the intelligence of the human race has allowed us a brief period of domination - brief in the history of the universe - we have no right to modify and exploit the planet for our own use and whim.

Deep ecology is a term that has been given to this way of thinking. John Muir, founder of Yosemite National Park and Romeo Lahey both thought this way even though neither had heard of the term "deep ecology".

This is not a new way of thinking - in fact it is the oldest. The so-called primitive people recognised that they were part of an ecosystem in which everything is inter-connected.

In the past, conservationists have been a small minority believing that the well being of earth and all its life forms came first. Very recently, this way of thinking has started to flow through to the general population. Government and big business, following as they usually do rather than leading, are beginning to take notice of this way of thinking.

There is still a long way to go. In fact, if the principles of deep ecology were followed completely we would have to return to a primitive way of life. This is not likely so whatever is achieved will be a compromise. That compromise will mean less impact on our environment, more careful use of resources, less waste, less robbing from future generations.

There are signs that the worst excesses of anthropocentrism are in the past. Unless there is a backward swing of the pendulum, we could have a world 40 or 50 years hence, where unimaginable technology is tempered by the principles of deep ecology.

Perhaps few of us in this room will still be around in the year 2050 but actions that we take will certainly affect those who are.

Let's start with one of our favourite topics - National Parks.

What is a Queensland National Park?

First I believe some definitions are necessary. What is a National Park in Queensland and how does this differ from the worldwide concept of National Parks?

Our National Parks are administered by the State Government so we could be pedantic and say they are all State Parks, as they would be called in Canada or the United States.

What is more important is whether the Parks are of National or International significance. Some of our Parks are and some clearly are not. Is this a problem? Probably for those of us who live in the state and are familiar with the system, it is not but visitors from overseas can be confused.

What happens to Yakimoto san from Tokyo who hires a car, reads the RACQ map and drives out to Southwood National Park. He finds 7,120 hectares of brigalow and nothing else.

Clearly, if we consider the expectations of international visitors, it will be necessary in the near future to reclassify our National Parks in some way either by zoning or by terminology.

This raises another question - are National Parks for people?

Again, our human based viewpoint and a world wide expectation says that they are. In Queensland, some are meant to be visited, others are not. Those that are not are no less important as conservation parks and in many cases, they are vital for preservation of species.

However, there will be increasing problems with overseas visitors and perhaps even those from interstate, if our parks are not classified in some way.

What area will our National Park estate cover in the year 2050?

It is too early to say whether the pre-election promises of doubling the area of National Parks will be fulfilled but there are encouraging signs. The Department of Environment and Heritage will have a list of priorities completed in 18 months. Gazettals will follow and they are confident their target will be reached in three or four years. This will not only double the area to about 4 percent but will also double the number of ecosystems now protected.

The first gazettals will not require acquisition funds but will involve the transfer of crown land, such as 140,000 hectares of wet tropics currently under Forestry lease. Acquisitions will eventually require the outlay of approximately \$25,000,000 but the Service is confident this will be provided.

Acquisitions could also be assisted by the establishment of a National Park Foundation which uses donations from business and individuals as a source of funding.

A re-writing of the National Parks Act, due at the end of this year, will place much wider emphasis on conservation outside the National Park system. Fauna refuges and Fauna Management Plans will concentrate on such species as the koala, bilby and the bridge nail tailed wallaby. Nature conservation on private land and other government lands will be encouraged through co-operation, use of the Local Government Act, Lands Department leasehold requirements and, in particular, through education.

Incidentally, if you want to see how much a Government department can achieve through public education, call at the Primary Industries Information Centre at 62 Ann Street. If you have not been there already, you could be in for a surprise.

How many visitors?

There is no doubt that visitor numbers to our best known parks will increase dramatically in the next few years. At least four influences will result in increased numbers:

- 1 increased population
- 2 greatly increased numbers of overseas tourists
- 3 a greater awareness of National Parks and what they offer
- 4 more leisure time.

The population of Queensland is expected to increase from 2.8 million at present to over 4 million by the year 2011 with most of the growth in the south east corner.

In 1968 Australia had 215,000 visitors from overseas. In 1988 there were 2.2 million. This number is expected to increase to 5 million by the year 2001 - just 11 years away. Fortunately not all of these visitors will want to visit our Parks, but an increasing percentage will.

The fact that membership in the Australian Conservation Foundation has increased by 33 percent in just 12 months indicates that Australians are rapidly becoming more concerned about our environment. This concern will result in increased visitation to National Parks - on top of that caused by increased population and tourism.

Business management firms predict that the four day working week will be a reality by the year 1995 and also there will be an increase in retired people. Much of this increased leisure time will be spent in National Parks.

The Parks that we have in the year 2050 will be only those that we have now or are gazetted in the next few years. After that we will simply run out of areas suitable for Parks.

On the other hand, I don't believe that increased numbers mean that our parks will necessarily be degraded. With careful management and a little adaptation from us as visitors, our park system could absorb increased numbers without damaging the Parks or the experience.

Techniques may be as simple as:

- 1 Providing more day use facilities in attractive areas outside the parks. This will cater for the fairly large percentage of park visitors whose main interest is a picnic in the outdoors.
- 2 More education of the public so that their impact is minimised - language need not be a barrier.
- 3 Popular walking routes can be made one way, such as the Milford Track in New Zealand, so that increased numbers can use the track without seeing other people.
- 4 Limitations on the number of operators permitted to take visitors into the Parks. Restrictions already apply to the numbers of boat operators allowed in Cooloola National Park for instance.
- 5 Limits on the size of carparks provided at park entrances.

We can be grateful that all but the fringes of our parks will always be protected from vast numbers in any case, by the policy of no roads in parks. As most park visitors rarely venture more than a kilometre from their car, those who are prepared to walk can be guaranteed an uncrowded experience.

When I heard that up to a thousand people a day hike down the Samaria Gorge on the island of Crete, I almost decided not to visit this park. Fortunately I did as it proved to be a most enjoyable 18 km hike. Almost all the hikers go in one direction, so you see very few of the other 1000 hikers. A leaflet in six languages listing the park restrictions is handed to each hiker at the top of the gorge. Restrictions include no radios or shouting, no swimming in the creek as well as the usual no shortcutting, littering or picking flowers. These signs are re-inforced by symbols down the track as well as two rangers walking the track. Carefully designed toilets and rubbish bins encourage tidiness and in fact I saw less litter on the whole walk than I usually see in the first kilometre of track in Lamington.

The experience was a delight not only because of the magnificent scenery but also for the fact that it demonstrated that parks can be used by much greater numbers than we are used to, without being degraded.

Lack of funding will be an increasing problem in trying to cater for a much larger National Park estate and increasing numbers of Park visitors. The recent change in Government priorities will help and so will the increase in funds from the "User Pays" principle. However, in the future, when we start to run out of suitable areas for National Parks, the accent of the conservation movement could change from "more Parks" to "more money to manage the Parks".

An army of volunteers.

Another compensation for lack of funds will be an increase in volunteerism. As our leisure time increases and the number of retired people also increases, we will have a large pool of well educated, highly motivated people anxious to do something useful.

Volunteers are already being used in our parks, museums, art galleries and other places that are similarly starved for funds.

The Lamington Natural History Association was the first in Queensland to operate a park interpretive programme using volunteers and now the information centre at Binna-Burra is manned by volunteers every weekend. Volunteers are used extensively at Fleays Fauna Centre and of course, the NPA sponsors lantana clearing weekends on Mt Nebo, as many members are painfully aware.

Volunteers are used even more in the US Park system. On a recent visit to the SS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii, administered by the National Park Service, we noticed that all the staff we encountered were volunteers - including the blind cashier in the snack bar, the uniformed lady at the entrance gate and the people emptying the garbage cans.

So the next 20 years could see a steady increase in the use of volunteers in all areas of Park management including track building and maintenance, weed eradication, revegetating degraded areas and interpretation.

Volunteerism will work only with the co-operation of government, unions and park visitors. Also it will work only if the problems of public risk, insurance of volunteers and public litigation can be avoided.

Which brings me to my next point

Within the next ten years we may encounter some new problems in our Parks -- one of these could be litigation.

Litigation in the US has reached absurd proportions. We tend to follow the US - 5 or 10 years later. This is one trend we simply must not follow.

A visitor to Yosemite National Park hired a bicycle and rode it the wrong way on a one way road. She was hit by a car and injured. She sued the Park Service and won. She was awarded 5 million dollars.

The Sierra Club - largest conservation group in the world - organises tours to National Parks and other wilderness areas, partly as a fund raising exercise and partly as an educational tool. Some of these trips involve easy rock-scrambling, or situations where a simple safety rope would make conditions safer for the participants. If a safety rope is used, the activity is then classified as mountain climbing and is uninsured. If a safety rope is not used and there is an accident, the participant can successfully sue for damages due to negligence.

Our legal fraternity and government must do all in their power to prevent such nonsense.

We must remain free to accept responsibility for our own actions. We must not stifle the spirit of adventure with a wet blanket of rules, regulations and threats of law suits.

We should follow the New Zealand system where there is a limited liability on public land.

A place to sleep.

The question of what visitor accommodation facilities we may or may not need for our parks is a controversial one that needs more debate in the near future.

Perhaps the question has been more controversial than it need have been because of what we already have in Queensland - luxury island resorts like stranded cruise ships, with no relation to the National Park they adjoin, or the ultimate obscenity - a high rise resort that can be seen from adjacent National Park islands.

Instead of concentrating on what we could or should have, we have been intimidated by the so called "white shoe brigade" -- whose influence seems to have been reduced a bit of late. Goodness gracious me, even the colour of their shoes has changed to a deeper shade of pink.

My own belief is that the special nature of National Parks requires accommodation facilities that reflect the same qualities. I would not even call it tourist accommodation because I would like to believe that National Park Visitors are not mere tourists.

Overseas parks provide enough good and bad examples for us to get it right, even at this stage. Accommodation like this intimidates visitors and isolates them from the park they are supposed to be enjoying. (Slide Chateau Lake Louise, Banff NP.)

National Park accommodation facilities, whether they are campgrounds or lodges, should be subject to a list of requirements. At present there is no demand for this from government, and no way that government could impose these requirements if they existed.

Some of these requirements are obvious, such as buildings which complement the scenery, rather than compete with it, impeccable waste disposal systems and landscaping using only endemic species. Further, I believe the operation of the facility should be devoted entirely to the National Park - which means no golf courses, horse-riding, conventions which have no connection with the Park - it's a long list. One ranger in the US said that every Park should have a sign at the entrance saying, "If you can do it somewhere else, don't do it here."

Campgrounds should be designed and landscaped so that you see only one or two other campsites at a time. The size of campgrounds and lodges should be limited by the carrying capacity of that area of Park.

The items for sale in the souvenir shop and the food available should have as much connection with the Park or local area as possible.

All of this is wishful thinking if there is no control, or even guidance.

The argument of whether these facilities should be inside or outside the park is not nearly as important as what standards are required and who controls the standards. That is where the debate should be.

The Recreational Area Management legislation, I believe, has been misunderstood. The latest modification may clarify its intentions and show that the aim is not to over-ride the sanctity of National Parks.

I believe this legislation does provide the framework for the required control over National Park visitor facilities both inside or outside the park.

My first choice would always be for controlled facilities outside the Park provided visitors can walk to the areas of interest. If this is not possible, I believe facilities inside the Park would be preferable to uncontrolled facilities outside the Park. For the worst example of this, you could visit Estes Park on the edge of Rocky Mountains National Park or Gatlinburg and Cherokee on the edge of Smoky Mountains National Park. All accommodation facilities have been kept out of these two parks but to visit them requires a stay in a second rate Disneyland atmosphere.

The story behind the scene.

Do we need more visitor centres and interpretive programmes? I think we do. Perhaps not so much for people like the members of this association but let me describe the National Park experience that some people have ...

Most visitors to Lamington are content with a picnic on the grass outside the park entrance, followed by a sleep in the sun, provided the scrub turkeys give them some peace. I often quote the lady who saw her son venturing off towards the rain forest on his own personal journey of discovery. She yelled at him, "Don't go in there, Johnny, there's nothing but trees and mud."

Can you guess the average length of stay of visitors to the Grand Canyon National Park - 1.5 days?, 24 hours? - no - it is just 2.5 hours! Considering the number of people who do stay overnight or longer, this means that many people must flash past one of the Seven Wonders of the World in about 34 seconds.

I was standing near a lookout on the Canyon Rim one day, when a large American car pulled up. The husband got out and started walking towards the lookout - he had one of those polaroid cameras that give you instant pictures. The wife called out after him, "Take a photo honey, bring it back and show me if it's worth a look."

We in this room may see the amusing side of these stories but these people may be making their first tentative step into a world that is, sadly, totally alien to them. If the park interpretive programme can plant just one seed in these minds, that seed may flourish and eventually change that person's attitude.

So I believe park interpretation plays a vital role now and should be expanded in the future as fast as funds or the use of volunteers will allow - and the more touches of magic that these programmes can include, the more effective they will be.

The Park Service aims to increase interpretation as fast as possible, with the emphasis on children.

This is in addition to the Environmental Education programmes being conducted by the Education Department and other bodies.

Environmental Education was introduced to the schools system as recently as 1974 when the first field study centre was opened. There are now 17 such centres plus a mobile one plus an unknown number of private centres such as that at Binna-Burra. Lee Williams of the Department of Education says that Environmental Education is about to explode - the major change being a shift from "once a year" excursions to environmental education being added to the daily school curriculum. One comforting fact about the future is that the children passing through this system are yet to make their impact on the decision making processes.

I would like to read from a letter written by a 12 year old who had attended the Binna-Burra Environmental study Centre. The letter was addressed to the Chairman of the local Shire Council.

"Dear Sir,

Our Grade 7 class went to Binna-Burra for five days. We were extremely displeased with a sign we found which said "Unused Land for Sale".

If the land is unused, how do birds live there and all the other animals? In the five days that we were there we couldn't see how the land was unused.

If houses were constructed there would have to be drain-pipes, sewerage, and then there would be shops going up and the whole area would be polluted. Then the animals would be killed. There would be many names engraved on the trees that were left. Then the trees would finally die until there were none left. The whole area would look like a mini city.

After about ten years there would be high rises being constructed. There would be no rainforest left and there would be dams built.

One day, you will wake up and see litter on your doorstep and wonder where all the rainforests went to.

I sincerley hope you can do something to stop the rain forest's grim future."

You will be relieved to know that the sign referred to is a fictional prop used for the exercise. There is no subdivision planned.

Beyond National Parks.

I would like to leave the National Parks now - not that I have covered the subject adequately - but I believe that in the next 10 to 60 years, after the spectacular successes of the past year or two, the conservation movement will turn more and more to our lifestyles in general and in particular to the places where we spend most of our time - the cities.

After all, a National Park or State Forest is great to visit but the effect will be fleeting if the city in which we live has become unliveable. Here in Brisbane, we may be complacent and think "Only in New York, or only in Mexico City, or Tokyo or Los Angeles." However the problems of these cities are symptoms of world problems which make them our problems also.

If you would like a chilling account of one possible scenario for the future, read the book "Good News" by that renegade American author Edward Abbey. At least it's only fiction -- or is it?

The unliveable city may be closer than we think. The ravishing beauty of one of the world's most spectacular cities is rapidly becoming overshadowed by a grittiness, a harsh ugliness, that comes from too many people, from poverty, from the constant threat of drug induced violence and from inhuman design of buildings, transport and streetscapes. (Sydney)

Perhaps this is why 40,000 people left Sydney last year.

I don't believe Brisbane is heading in the same direction yet. Of course, there are problems of waste disposal, visual pollution, poor design and the rest but there are many positive things happening which I believe can be a lesson for other cities.

Expo showed that cities of the future could be designed around people. It gave a glimpse of what cities could be like - not just during world fairs but all the time. I hope positive ideas will flow from Expo for many years to come.

It took only one person, restaurateur Peter Hackworth, to change an area of barren, high rise forecourts, totally empty and lifeless on weekends, to a lively people place - every weekend.

In spite of the best efforts of the National Trust and others, we have lost some of our attractive, old, human scale architecture, but some has been preserved and we will need to be ever more vigilant to prevent further losses. The latest Heritage legislation announced last weekend is a positive step.

The encouragement of the Brisbane City Council and some rare long term planning are now bearing fruit and within two years, Brisbane will have a pedestrian, riverside promenade all the way from the Regatta Hotel at Toowong to the Story Bridge. This will include a bike path, restaurants,

viewpoints, a sound shell, lively people places, - even a mangrove boardwalk, surely unique in the world's capital cities.

Cities can offer pockets of greenery and they can allow streets to be reclaimed for the people. The City Image conference to be held in Brisbane in April will highlight these issues for planners, architects, developers and others but there is much we ordinary citizens can do.

We need to fight every inch of the way to keep a human scale in our cities. New York and London are two of the most traffic congested cities in the world, and yet every year each city allows 42 kilometres of its streets to be closed to traffic for a marathon. Each race can accept only 20,000 of the 50 or 60 thousand who apply, but more importantly each marathon attracts up to 2.5 million spectators who line the streets. In New York, in particular, this becomes a 42 km long street party - adding life to the city in a spectacular way.

In the words of one onlooker in the Bronx, "This used to be one of the best neighbourhoods. Now it's just dying. The marathon is one of the few things we got that makes you feel like jumping about."

In Brisbane, on the other hand, attempts to run an annual marathon on the Commonwealth Games route have failed due to an unwillingness to close the streets.

The "Big Two".

I have deliberately chosen not to dwell at length on what may be the greatest environmental disasters of all time - the greenhouse effect and damage to the ozone layer. To try to cover these topics, even superficially, in less than 45 minutes, would be like trying to sum up the bible in three paragraphs.

Twenty years after conservationists issued warnings about global heating and melting of polar ice caps, these topics are at last on the public agenda. They are constantly being covered in depth, such as at the recent ANZAAS congress in Hobart and the Northern Territory Department of Conservation seminar in Darwin two weekends ago.

Experts far more knowledgeable than I are unable to agree on the extent of damage already caused or on future consequences.

I would like to believe that these two disasters have already had their greatest effect in that they have changed people's attitudes.

Every person in the world who can read or watch TV should now be aware of the mess we have created in the short period of man's ascendancy on earth. Whether it is too late remains to be seen. Whether there is a backlash or another swing of the pendulum may rest with the conservation movement which now has the responsibility of maintaining the impetus caused by public awareness of these two disasters.

This awareness will be maintained by reasonable and logical arguments, always bearing in mind that each of us contributes to the problem.

This awareness will speed up research into alternative power sources so that instead of relying on fossil fuels for 77 percent of our power, we will be using renewable energy. The technology is already here.

This awareness will encourage us to recycle more and to reduce our voracious consumption of resources. The ordinary household toilet uses 11 litres of water at an average cost of 27 cents every time we use it. 38 percent of domestic water usage goes down the toilet. But hope is at hand. A new invention by Luther Blount in the US uses just over one litre per flush - our new awareness will encourage us to accept this new technology as fast as possible.

People power.

One thing about the future is quite clear - and that is that people have found a new power. People all over the world have become disillusioned with their leaders and have taken power into their own hands.

People power did not stop the Cape Tribulation road - but a few years later, it did stop the Wesleyvale paper mill, and it stopped the construction of the world's tallest building.

People power works on every level - locally and globally. One school girl in Nambour recently collected nearly 12,000 signatures to be sent to the Brazilian President asking him to stop clearing the Amazon rain forest. On the other side of the world, people have risen against almost overwhelming odds and, in just 12 months, have overthrown a half dozen totalitarian regimes.

Another example of people power at work is the anti-smoking movement. The David of the anti-smoking lobby has had some hard won successes over the Goliath of the Tobacco industry. Government finally reacted and we now have clean public transport, smoke free flights, smoke free areas in the workplace and in some restaurants.

And now a little job for the future - I would love this hard-working lobby group to turn its attention to an equally objectionable habit.

We have some quaint euphemisms around these days. A "developer" is someone who does this (slide Villaworld "development" Coomera). "Gay" has taken on a new meaning but none of these euphemisms exhibits the audacity and downright untruthfulness of the term "disposable nappy".

These things, which would cost a family 12 times more than conventional nappies, are anything but disposable. They should not be flushed down the toilet - but they are. They should not be put in the wheely bin - but they are. They should not be stuffed behind rocks in National Parks - but they are. In America alone, 18 billion of these ghastly things are

used every year and will still be around in landfills, breaking up into deadly dioxins long after the babies that wore them have grown up and died.

The anti-smoking movement came up with some wonderful acronyms - ASH, COUGH, GASP etc. For a small fee they are welcome to use my acronym for the anti-disposable nappy movement -- PACKAPOO, which of course stands for

Prevent
Artificial
Clothes on
Kids --
Always
Put
On
Oldfashioned nappies.

The dawn of a new era?

About ten years ago, I knew people who decided not to have children because of their disillusionment in the way the world was heading. I believe such a decision is less likely today. Old ways of thinking have been replaced by new attitudes.

Henry Lawson wrote about "bush all around - nothing but bush".

Then came Judith Wright writing poetry about the beauty of our strange looking bottle trees, cycads and grassstress and now every major city has a Society for Growing Australian Plants. The natural progression from this will be a greater reverence for the Australian landscape and a desire to conserve it.

Similar changes in attitude are occurring world wide. If you had visited Yosemite National Park 30 years ago you would have watched in awe the Yosemite Firefall - when tons of glowing coals from a huge bonfire were bulldozed over the cliffs from Glacier Point. Changing attitudes made the Park Service realize this was environmentally unacceptable. No doubt in the future, the use of mules in the Grand Canyon, and the use of helicopters in Parks around the world, will be seen as equally unacceptable.

Each of us can probably think of things we used to do in National Parks that we no longer do, and I'm not referring to the restrictions of old age, but the fact that we now have greater environmental awareness. This process will continue and habits we now have will also change - perhaps in unthinkable ways.

We may eventually realize that hard-hooved sheep and cattle cause unacceptable levels of land degradation and we may switch to farming kangaroos. Of course some will become vegetarian rather than

eat kangaroo, but bigger switches in attitude have already been made. There will be serious debate about the legalising of drugs and it may happen - because it is immoral to perpetuate the chain of violence and exploitation associated with drugs.

Attitudes seem to be changing at a faster rate than ever. The 1980's could be called the Decade of Greed. Tom Wolfe called it the "Me Generation".

Self-centredness turned into selfishness and greed became an art form and the subject of books and movies. Corruption became an everyday word applied to the man in the street and to heads of government alike.

Goodbye to all that.

But all societies ebb and flow. I believe the recent spectacular crashes of these paper houses of greed will herald a new decade. The 1990's and the early part of the next century could be a new era for the common good.

The idea of the common good is not a quaint, outdated concept. It is, in fact, one of the basic organising principles of society, and has been so, ever since cave-men went out in the first hunting parties.

A return of interest in the common good will result in greater compassion of individuals for each other, greater trust between nations and more reverence in all of us for all life on earth and earth itself.

And so, despite the worst efforts of mankind, things of great beauty, both man-made and natural, can last for centuries. I believe that whoever is around in 60 years time will still thrill to the music of Beethoven, the words of Schiller and the images of hope from the National Parks of the world.

Copies of previous Romeo Watkins Lahey Memorial Lectures are available at 50¢ each or \$1 including postage.

National Parks Association of Queensland
The Great National Parks Movement
Down The Years With National Parks in Qld.
A National Parks Manifesto For Queensland
History In Queensland National Parks
In Wildness is the Preservation of the World
The First Fifty Years
Reservation of Rainforest in Queensland
The Conservation Movement and the Queensland
National Parks and Wildlife Service

R.A. Clelland
A.H. Chisholm
W. Wilkes
D.D. Lahey
J.K. Jarrott
R.L. Specht
J.K. Jarrott
G.H. Cossins

Dr. G. Saunders,
Dr. R. Hynes and
Mr. D. Marshall

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INCORPORATED

AIMS AND OBJECTS

- (1) To preserve intact in their natural condition the existing National Parks of Queensland; and to secure the reservation of all suitable areas.
- (2) To educate public opinion to a fuller appreciation of the necessity and value of National Parks.
- (3) To form a link between the public and the administration dealing with the National Parks.
- (4) To co-operate with other organisations having the same or similar objects.
- (5) To assist in the enforcement of protective regulations concerning National Parks.

Membership is available to any person who is in accord with the above aims and objects.

National Parks Association of Queensland Inc welcomes additional members.

POSTAL ADDRESS

P O Box 1040, Milton Centre Q 4064