

Dear Sir,

Occasionally in the past I have had the temerity to comment on the contents of the *NHB* and its objectives as expressed by you as its editor. Rather often, in the spate of printed material that ceaselessly descends upon us all, I do tend to give it a quick once over and then consign it to the appropriate bookcase.

Such was my intention with the recently distributed Summer 1999 issue. But this time I found myself stymied. Firstly, I learned of the passing of Elliot McClure. I had the privilege of meeting him only a couple of times in the early 1990s when I was chairman of the now defunct Publications Committee. What struck me most was the vigour and endless enthusiasm of this very special gentleman. I have an indelible memory of some lunches together and the privilege of discussion with a scientist of rare distinction.

That was how I came to look more closely at the latest edition of the *NHB*. Naturally my eyes moved on to the commentary on the Mae Yom National Park. I thought that the views expressed therein were precisely those that need to be championed by the Society in its endeavours to throw a ray of light upon the endless rape of the Thai countryside and the consequences it will have on a future I cannot expect to see. It was also very brave and I salute you, as editor, for having the courage to publish views that in Thailand are so often seen as being correct but cannot in any form be heard. I would not wish to venture onto the soggy ground that divides the world on the question of dams but it is very evident from J. F. Maxwell's commentary that the Mae Yom National Park is of such importance, nationally as well as scientifically, that it forms a unique case demanding unique consideration.

Thus fired up I turned the page to find Tyson R. Roberts' "Plea for Proenvironment EIA." Impossible to flip the pages and move on. I do not know whether you as editor and your Editorial Board have embarked on a new policy aiming at alerting readers to the totally miserable performance of mankind with respect to our environment. Actually that is a misnomer because the problem is the lack of any respect for our environment. Whether or not, I fear that yours is a very small voice hardly capable of confronting the entrenched forces determined to extract the last profitable cent from our world regardless of the consequences for posterity. But that is not, by any means, to diminish the importance of what you are saying through the pages of the *NHB*. Indeed, one might say that it should have been said long ago at a time when so much more of our forests and other natural resources could have been saved.

It would be easy for me to continue to comment in detail on Mr. Roberts' "Plea." There is so much that could be said about "...crony capitalism, nepotism and fraud..." but I hesitate to bore you or your audience. This is not a lecture on the conditions so eloquently reported by Mr. Roberts. It is, however, a recognition of the tremendous importance of what he has to say and the probable total ignorance of it by those who might have the power to act.

If I were to contribute to your *NHB* Commentary I would have much more to say. Whilst I can only lament the attitude of the majority of the world in these matters I am forced to recognize that we are not making any headway. The economic/financial world is bent on its own progress and probably its ultimate destruction too and does not really give a 'fig' for the environment. 'Is there profit in it?' appears to be the only question they ask themselves.

My point is that it is precisely the wake up call of Mr. Roberts that we should all heed and give our attention to. At the same time I must confess to a high degree of scepticism in expecting action. But my hope remains.

As a (retired) meteorologist still concerned about El Niño, global warming, climate change, etc. I sometimes ask myself where we are headed. One fears that we are determined to destroy our planet. It may be a few hundred years ahead when others will have to pay for our excesses. But it could also be much sooner. The time scale is not in our favour, scientific developments coming at increasingly short intervals.

Notwithstanding these unpredictables my purpose in this letter is to commend you as editor of the *NHB* for your realism and courage in publishing views not always acceptable in Thailand. The other no less important point is the way in which you are pursuing through the pages of the *NHB* a fundamental purpose of the Siam Society in promoting academic excellence. For this the Society is very much in your debt.

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