# The Papers of David Thom - Onset of the Environmental Age

David Thom, an IPENZ Past President, has been the recipient of many prestigious awards and served on numerous national and international organisations. His awards include CBE, IPENZ Distinguished Fellow, IPENZ MacLean Citation, Institution of Civil Engineers Gold Medal and Spirit of Telford Awards, World Federation of Engineering Organisations Medal for Outstanding Service and the Royal Society Charles Fleming Award for Environmental Achievement. David was chairman of many notable organisations including the National Parks and Reserves Authority of NZ, IPENZ Standing Committee on Engineering and Environment, Environmental Council of New Zealand and the Environmental and Engineering Committee of the World Federation of Engineering Organisations. During his time of involvement in these organisations, he presented many talks and papers. Seventy of these are collected into a 630 page book with clear messages about the need for engineers to adopt new directions towards the way we treat our environment.

The book with a limited edition of 100 copies was launched on the occasion of David’s 90th birthday on 19th October 2014 by Emeritus Professor David Elms. As the principal of a large consulting company, David had been involved in many developments where he developed a deep concern for the environmental effects of engineering projects. The 1967 “Countryside in 1980” Conference held in Auckland was where David’s paper “Impacts on the Countryside “was a catalyst for his continuing involvement in environmental issues. A number of David’s papers discuss the importance of Environmental Impact reporting and its engineering implications. This came into force in 1974 as a requirement for Government projects following the newly elected Labour Government’s rejection of the proposal to raise the level of Lake Manapouri by 90 feet for electricity generation. The importance of environmental education at Universities and the re-training of practising engineers is the subject of a number of papers. Economic benefits of cleaner production and the importance of minimising or eliminating waste is also described in his papers. As a result of David’s international involvement, many of his papers were presented to international gatherings of engineering organisations where he worked with world leading engineers to formulate environmental directions. The outcomes of the 1972 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and its resulting Agenda 21 are also described.

Although some of David’s papers were written over 40 years ago, all are just as important and relevant to engineering and the environment today as they were when they were written. David’s book, although lengthy contains many philosophical arguments and pearls of wisdom that every engineer should be aware of.

Hard copies of the book are available at $50 + $7.50 postage and a digital version at $10 including postage. They are available from David email dthom34@xtra.co.nz

Reviewed by John La Roche, January 2015