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Ed. Note: By special invitation from
Syd. Curtis, retired Deputy Director,
Q.N.P.W.S.

Facsimile No. 089 273 531 (page 1 of 2)
For Feral Publications, PO Box 42063, CASUARINA, NT 0811
Dear Mr Cat,

Your letter and copy of *the feral cat* arrived yesterday (Nov. 1) and I can therefore make your Nov. 3 deadline with my very hurried and preliminary thoughts, only by facsimile.

When I joined the Department of Forestry in 1946 on the advice of Dr. (later Professor) D. A. Herbert head of the University's Botany Department who predicted that a time would come when the Department would use graduate staff on National Park administration, a public service career was something in which one could take pride, and the National Park concept was one of mankind's finest ideals. The latter is still true. And if Queensland changes its government to one that understands and respects the Westminster system of democracy, the public service too may rise above its present problems, and again serve the wider community and not merely the political ends of the favoured few. Hang in there, you dedicated National Parks staff, you've got something tremendously important to fight for. And you seem to have a strong ally in one Herbert F. Cat!

Never thought I'd see the day when I had a good word to say about a feral cat. But there it is! you just never know.

As a public servant I had a duty not to leak any information, and it seemed to me that it would be unwise to do so, if only for the reason that no Government of any political persuasion would ever again have full confidence in the "leaker" if identified, or in any of the staff if the identity was not known. Now I am forced to the view that under extreme circumstances, an officer has a moral right and even an obligation to draw attention outside the public service to serious problems that prove impossible to have addressed within the service.

Commissioner Fitzgerald has gone well down this track with his recommendations for Whistle-blowers Protection legislation. But Queensland public servants do not yet have such protection, and we need caring and experienced staff to look after our parks, not "dead" heroes. Perhaps leaks are the only option.

It is always wise to hear both sides of a dispute before trying to form an opinion. I did in fact write a letter to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife seeking advice of any factual errors in the *feral cat* material, but in the end didn't send it for several reasons: Experience in my last few years as a public servant makes me believe it highly likely that it is correct; there has been no denial of the information since the C.M. article; on a previous occasion when I sought advice on the Recreation Areas Management Bill, I was told at great length that my legal advice was wrong and that better legal advice gave a contrary opinion, but I was refused access to that opinion or even advice of its origin - I conclude that I would be unlikely to be given anything worthwhile about the *feral cat* material.

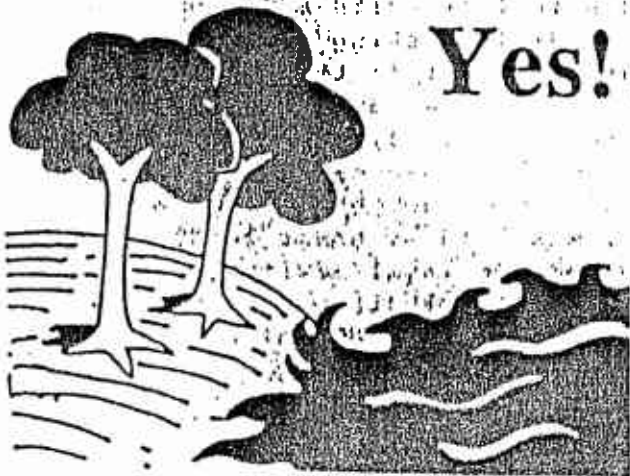
The *feral cat's* list of job applicants includes a number of excellent officers with appropriate training and experience for National Park administration (qualities lacking, one suspects, in the interviewers), and the National Parks and Wildlife Act though imperfect could provide the basis for sound administration and management, if properly implemented by a Director allowed to accept the responsibilities given him by Parliament in that Act. One can but hope that a change of government will see that rightful situation restored.

69 Miles Street,
Hawthorne, Q. 4171,

H. S. Curtis
2nd November, 1989.

Syd
2/11/89.

Vote



Yes! For a better environment.