

JAMES BARNES ... worried that oil companies and miners are casting hungry eyes on Antarctica. His book shows you how to join in the fight.

An American lawyer is starti the world's 'most pristine' pl worst enemy — man ...

KEEP OUT!

By CAROL VEITCH

JAMES Barnes has never been to Antarctica, but it has become something of a passion for him.

Much of his life is spent trying to protect what he calls "the most pristine place on earth".

An American lawyer who specialises in international and environmental law, James is in Australia to promote a book he's written entitled "Let's Save Antarctica."

It is illustrated with color photographs by Eliot Porter.

James' arguments for leaving Antartica alone, have been heard before ...

If man is allowed to exploit the region, the great whales, seals, birds and fish in the area could be destroyed.

The Antarctic ice cap is a key to our global climate. Any change to the ice cap could have devastating results.

Antarctica is our best monitoring zone for measuring global pollution.

His concern is not new, but James Barnes' knowledge of international law and the area means he's at the forefront of influencing Governments and making others aware of what decisions are being made.

He served as a public member on various U.S. negotiating teams involved in Antarctica and the Law of the Sea.

HE is a co-founder of the Antarctic and Southern Coalition (ASOC) and is a member of the United States State Department's Advisory Committee on Antarctica.

One of his biggest cases in environmental law was arguing that the Alaska pipeline should not be built.

"We won the case in the Supreme Court but that decision was eventually outvoted by Congress. The pipeline that was built was different to the original plan. It was basically an environmental pipeline."

His book differs from others focusing on the area because it tells the reader what they can do to become involved, what organisations to join and contains a petition form from ASOC calling for Antarctica to be declared a world park.

"This is the only area left on earth where different groups of wildlife are able to feed and breed according to the natural order of life," he says.

He calls the book "a citizens' handbook". He believes that many people are concerned about the future of Antarctica but until now, have been unsure how to register their fears. Several schools in Australia have already placed orders for the book.

James is worried because he knows oil companies are "looking hungrily into the future for new fields and mining companies are wondering if there is a rich deposit of platinum in Antarctica.

"If an oil drilling accident occurs, and everyone thinks it's almost inevitable because the wind is so terrible there, it could have an effect for a long time.

"If there's an oil well blow-out it could affect the whole region because, in such a cold climate, the oil might not biodegrade for 100 years."

"Returning Antarctic waters to their natural state after a major oil spill would be impossible. The logistics of a clean-up would present severe problems because of the large area, its remoteness and the probable absence of extensive base facilities."

A more imminent danger in his eyes is the amount of krill (shrimp-like creatures) being fished out of the area. Krill, the foundation species of all Antarctica's wildlife, is the primary target of Japanese and Russian fishermen.

"Antarctica is important to fishermen in the rest of the world because it flows out and feeds the other oceans. As fish die they drop to the ocean bed and form nutrients which go to other waters. If the Antarctic fish are wiped out there will be fewer nutrients to feed other oceans.

"ENvironmentalists are not against them fishing, all we're saying is 'Let's set up a scientific fishery to have a plan and understand how the ecosystem of the area works.'

"Their view is that the ecosystem should be understood before it is exploited further. The environmentalists have stressed the importance of an independent observer system, to ensure that rules are being followed and have criticised the absence of a central method for enforcement."

The environmental community around the world has asked governments to pool all available information on the workings of the Antarctic marine ecosystem in a central data bank.

"So far governments haven't gone along with this," says James. "They are more concerned with their sovereignty claims."

The Antarctic Treaty set up in 1959, which provides the legal framework for decision making in the area, comes up for review in 1991. James believes that Australia, which has the largest claim of the 12 governments involved, should take a leading role to protect the area.

The main problem, he says, is that Antarctic Treaty meetings are "kept secret".

"No observers are permitted at meetings of the parties and little effort is made to seek views or advice from other interested governments or organisations."

James hopes his book will make the public want to become more involved in the decision making.

He first became fascinated with Antarctica as a child and it was almost inevitable he would specialise in environmental law when he graduated from university.

"It was a field that started around 1970 as people's awareness of their environment grew. I was one of the first environmental lawyers, now there is a small group within the United States."

President Carter once invited James to make a trip to Antarctica, but lost office before James could accept.

He's now hoping to make his first trip there next year with other environmentalists to erect a symbolic flag calling for the protection of the area.

It's a long way from the court room.

• *("Let's Save Antarctica", by James Barnes. Greenhouse. $5.95.)*

a new campaign to save
, the Antarctic, from its

BELOW: One of Eliot Porter's pictures from the book.

