

14 July 1969

Dr. Eliot Porter
Great Spruce Head Island
Sunset, Maine

Dear Dr. Porter:

Thanks ever so much for taking the time to answer my letter. I also supported Dave Brower in a small way (arranging for him to speak locally) but never expected discourteous retribution--if that's what it is. And I'm appalled they would treat you so.

For two or three years I've had a merry chase with the club. Letters to me were often vague, sometimes flatly contradictory. This I ascribed to pressures on Dave Brower resulting in his book projects being shoved around. Now it appears there has been, perhaps still is, considerable deceit afoot. For quite a time I've worked on an Oregon Cascades book with full knowledge of Ken Brower who reviewed and held material and who assured me that no one else, particularly Phil Hyde, was working on the idea or had had it. However just before the disastrous election Ken suggested ~~a~~ Jim Rose might collaborate with me on the book.

Too, the first book I suggested to the club was a water-cycle book, the first half of which was shoreline photos with Rachel Carson quotes. They thought it a fine idea and kept a trial ms and photos over a year. It wasn't until much later I learned anything of your project and its attendant difficulties. Why I wasn't told the straight of these and others I've no idea. Certainly if I were in the conservation business I'd want to encourage potential photographers and authors, get maximum coverage and utilization from them and avoid having several of them duplicating each other's work ~~futility~~. In spite of several inquiries, never could I learn who was working on what, where. Nor did I receive any but the foggiest response to my offers to photograph, for possible books, Lake Tahoe, the Olympic peninsula, the Inside Passage, redwoods, Washington's Cascades and others. I asked for no legal commitment whatsoever; only assurance the club was interested, might eventually be in a position to consider use of my work providing it met their standards. A fairer proposition I can't conceive of, and it didn't seem too much to ask of a publisher dedicated to their principles of concern for the land. (My success in placing my work with other publishers seems to suggest it would have been worth considering). In any case, I wonder whether I wasted a good deal of time and effort trying to work with people who may never have cared and apparently still don't.

As for your offering encouragement, your books were largely instrumental in changing my personal direction and I'm deeply grateful. And I suspect--only an opinion mind you--that those books have exercised as much leverage on as many people as anything in conservation, or its literature, ever. By no means am I discouraged with photography; only disappointed with a publisher who appears to have booted unparalleled opportunity.

My best wishes to you on all your future projects. May they all be grand successes.

Dennis Baker