

Dear Bill and Phil,

After our very candid exchange of letters in Science, I'd like to follow up with a few comments. We are all pushing for a brighter future for Amazonia, and it is very important to me that you understand our approach to these huge issues of governance. Our group went through a very intense period of internal discussions about how best to apply science to the debate about Amazonia's future--about Avanca Brasil. Early on, we decided to avoid presenting critiques of Avanca Brasil without pointing, simultaneously, to places/projects where investments could provide large benefits to Amazon society. This approach has a very important strategic advantage in that government representatives listen to us. They know that we wield both carrot and stick. (Although I must admit that the "stick" of our 99 Nature paper on logging and fire tends to be what many government officials remember. Marcio Santilli sued the government--while at ISA--to suspend the Araguaia-Tocantins Hidrovia--another stick not easily forgotten.) It was this willingness to acknowledge the importance of some projects going through that allowed us to arrange, together with Marina Silva, the two-day seminar in the Senate to discuss Avanca Brasil, and other national and regional events. Jose Silveira (head of Avanca Brasil) spent a day at IPAM with six of his staff after this seminar. It is clear to him that we are an independent group, and that we are available to help the government redesign Avanca Brasil if he starts to play by our rules: Avanca Brasil investments must analyze and address the social and environmental consequences of its projects before moving forward. He knows that we will blast his program if he ignores us.

In discussing this issue with Bill, he mentioned that you both came from a background of confrontational environmentalism. I'm not sure the words he used, but this was the message I got. I, too, was a DC lobbyist for awhile. I think that there are times when there is no choice but to oppose projects and plans head-on, with all of the force of media and scientific results and scientific opinion. You are both brilliant at this. I just think that the Amazon debate is maturing to a point where a new strategy is needed. Otherwise, we run the risk of weakening the emerging elements of governance. And they are many.

Warm wishes,
Dan