

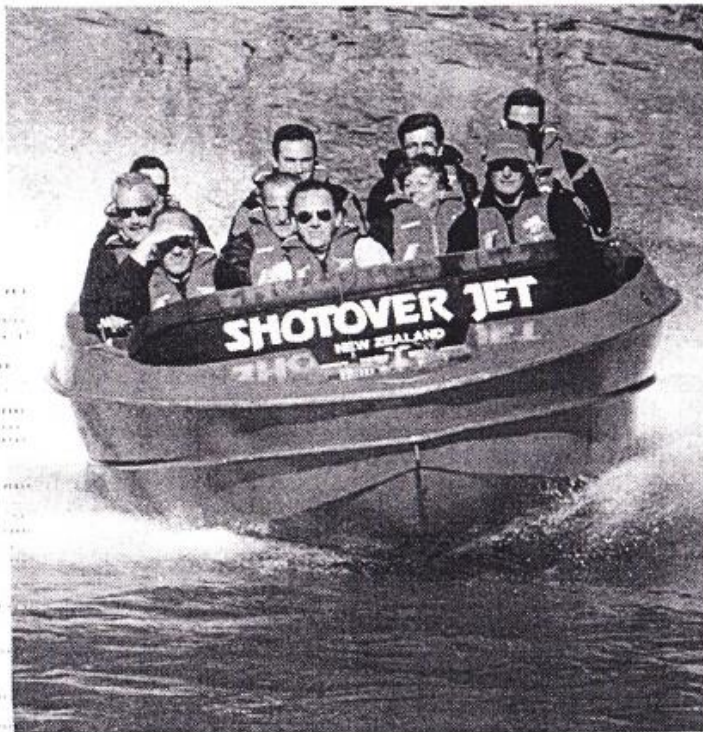


*Nulli inquit non servamus*

# THE PRESS

## Business

### South America beckons NZ firms



The Argentinian delegation jetboating near Queenstown recently

New Zealand adventure tourism companies — led by Queenstown-based jetboat and bungy-jumping firms — seem set to gain a foothold in South America following a tour of this country by an Argentine governmental delegation.

Shotover Jet and the AJ Hackett Bungy company appear likely to be allowed to establish a joint-venture operation near San Carlos de Bariloche, an Andean city considered similar to Queenstown in terms of tourism and scenery.

It is believed the operation would be the first to offer both jetboating and bungy jumping — staples of the Queenstown tourist circuit — on the South American continent.

The delegation, whose five-day tour of New Zealand ended recently, called on Prime Minister Jim Bolger and other political leaders, and inspected many

of the adventure tourism operations in the Southern Lakes area.

Bariloche Mayor Maria de Costa, the Patagonian director of the Argentine Tourism Secretariat, Raul Otero, and a number of other officials were brought to New Zealand by the Shotover Jet company in a bid to quell their concerns over the impact of the firm's spectacular jetboat manoeuvres on the environment.

Senora de Costa, a close political associate of Argentinian President Carlos Menem, told *The Post* that, having looked over the company and taken a ride in one of the boats, she was "ready to support" the company's application for permission to set up a new operation near Bariloche.

Shotover Jet is seeking to offer half-hour rides on the Rio Limay, a river running through

steep gorges about 13km from Bariloche.

Senora de Costa said her concerns about wash from the jetboats, their noise and visual impact, and effect on river life, were largely allayed by her visit to Queenstown. "I couldn't see any effect," she said.

Wellington entrepreneur and Spanish interpreter Tom Manning, who is acting as a middleman to ease the progress of the jetboat-bungy plan, said eight separate planning hurdles involving municipal, provincial and national governments had to be negotiated before operations can start on the Rio Limay.

However Shotover Jet and AJ Hackett had been "greatly heartened" by the positive response of the Argentinian delegation, he said.

All going well, the various planning permissions could be

granted within six months — and the boats could be hitting the river within a year. It is envisaged that the bungy business — to be "launched" off a cliff near the proposed jetboat terminal — would be running in about 18 months.

Bariloche, population about 90,000, is home of the largest skifield in South America. In the centre of a national park, the city is regarded as the most important tourist destination in Argentina — some 700,000 people visit each year.

Mr Manning, however, said "adventure-tourism" attractions are "practically non-existent" around Bariloche.

Senora de Costa added she believed the Shotover Jet-bungy venture "could be a key element in bringing other business from New Zealand and generating more investment between both countries".