

SAVE COLONG BULLETIN

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THE COLONG COMMITTEE

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THE GEORGES RIVER BY ELECTION

On the eve of the By election, the Sutherland Nature Conservation Council in co-operation with the Colong Committee printed 10,000 copies of a leaflet and distributed them in parts of the electorate. The leaflet attacked the State Government on the Colong mining lease, destruction of Boyd Plateau, beachmining along the North Coast, and Proposed Myall Lakes National Park. It cited mineral exploration licences granted over four parks, the 85,000 acres removed from Kosciusko National Park, 1,000 acres taken from Blue Mountains National Park and compared the Government's addition of 95,000 acres of new parkland last financial year with its revocation of over 105,000 acres of existing parklands in five years.

In response to queries from the Colong Committee, the Liberal candidate, Mr. Tonkin, issued the following statement:

"The Minister for Mines, the Hon. Wal. Fife, M.L.A., is endeavouring to find a practical alternative. A re-appraisal of the Murruin deposits has been undertaken by the Government and it is co-operating with the Cement Company in regard to a reappraisal of the Marulan deposits. Mr. Fife has said publicly on a number of occasions that IF either of these proves a viable alternative he will personally negotiate the surrender of the Mt. Armour lease and arrange for a new lease to be issued for the chosen alternative site."

"I support strongly the moves made by the Government to investigate these alternative sites and I sincerely HOPE that one will prove a practical alternative to Mt. Armour."

"In any event I feel I must point out, the main caves known as "Colong Caves" are not situated within the present lease area and in fact lie within the boundary of the National Park and of course there is no proposal for these to be mined whatever the decision is of the actual site."

Although asked to do so, Mr. Tonkin provided no statement regarding the Boyd Plateau.

For comparison, we repeat in part the written statement by Mr. P.D. Hills, Leader of the N.S.W. Labour Party:

"The N.S.W. Parliamentary Labour Party has unanimously decided that a future Labor Government will extend the Kanangra-Boyd National Park to include ... Colong Caves Area and ... that part of the Konangaroo State Forest of approximately 15,000 acres as described in the

Government Gazette of 30.1.70. The Labor Party demands that the present Government refuse permission for mining in the Colong Caves Area".

This statement was verbally endorsed to the Colong Committee by the Labor candidate at the By election, Mr. Frank Walker.

When asked in a public meeting at Oyster Bay on 10.9.70 whether his statement committed Labor to revoke the Colong Mining lease, Mr. Hills answered "Yes".

The Colong Committee believes that public exasperation over the Colong lease was a factor in loss of the Georges River Seat by the Liberal Party to Labor's Frank Walker. The Liberal Party says it hopes to be able to end the lease and adds the old double-talk about the actual Colong Caves not being in the lease. Labor says it will revoke the lease. There is a difference and we think a section of the Georges River electorate acted on it - particularly the many members of Sutherland Nature Conservation Society, Otley Fauna and Flora Conservation Society and their friends.

N.S.W. STATE ELECTIONS

On October 13th the Colong Committee decided to appoint organisers and working parties in N.S.W. electorates for the purpose of publicising our cause at the State Election, which will probably be held between March and May next year. It is hoped to utilise the help of all our supporting organisations in different localities.

No attempt will be made to make Colong a party issue, as we do not want to alienate our supporters on either side of the House. We will provide voters with full information on Colong and the Boyd and make known the view of candidates.

The Committee believes that petitions to candidates seeking re-election would be a very effective activity, which could be undertaken by local supporting organisations

COMMITTEE OF STATE COUNCILLORS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY TO REPORT ON COLONG AND THE BOYD PLATEAU

On three occasions in recent years the State Council of the Liberal Party has carried unanimous resolutions opposing the Colong Mining Lease.

We understand that as a result of further resolutions on Colong and the Boyd coming before the Council, the Ministers for Lands, Mines and Conservation invited a party of delegates from State Council to inspect the areas concerned.

State Council of the Liberal Party accordingly elected a Committee of 15 State Councillors to report on Colong and the Boyd Plateau.

The Colong Committee received a request to make a written submission to the Party Committee, as did several other conservation Societies and two individuals (A. Strom and M.J. Dunphy).

Our submission of 19 pages plus 9 pages of attachments was as comprehensive as time would allow.

We offered to send representatives to speak to the report but this offer was declined.

We were not invited to send representatives to the 2 day site visit on 5th and 6th September. However, this visit was attended on both days by the Ministers for Lands, Mines and Conservation and by approx. 20 public servants, some of Under Secretary rank. The party was taken on a tour of selected areas of the Boyd Plateau and to Mt. Armour in Forestry Landrovers driven by Forestry Officers.

At Mt. Armour the Liberal inspection party met a group of Speleologists who happened to have a supply of maps of the lease showing the known cave entrances. Would the party have been shown these entrances if the Speleologists had not been there?

The party was addressed by several representatives of the National Parks and Wild Life Service. It was announced on ABC news that the Minister for Lands visited Kanangra as well during the previous weekend.

The Colong Committee, at the request of the Liberal Committee provided a list of Colong Committee members but the Liberal Committee refuses to provide us with a list of its members.

The Colong Committee asked also for copies of the Ministers' written submissions to the Liberal Committee for comment. Our request was refused.

Thus to the long history of secret reports, interdepartmental committees with sub-judice rulings and reports which Ministers refuse to table, even in Parliament, is added another secret report.

It is obvious that the site visit was a major attempt by the three Ministers to "sell" their proposals to the Committees.

The Liberal Party Committee is NOT the public enquiry into the Colong Scandal and the Boyd Plateau ecodisaster which we were elected to promote.

The Liberal Committee is faced with a task which would daunt any group of rank and file party members. It could decide to endorse the Party's previous resolutions, and to support the widespread and growing discontent over the two issues in the Party's Branches. But to do so is tantamount to a vote of no confidence in a leading triumvirate of Ministers. The extensive preparations made by the Ministers and the unprecedented site visit show that they are well aware of their position. On the other hand the Liberal Committee may decide to contradict the Party's previous resolutions and endorse the Ministers' actions. This will infuriate some Liberal Branches and arouse significant sections of the electorate.

There is a third course - a muddling hopeless compromise - in which the "safeguards" of mining at Colong would be "strengthened" and the "buffer strips" of eucalypts, between the compartments of pines on the Boyd, widened to allow for an occasional kangaroo and a wombat or two.

Conservationists know such a compromise means disaster for Kanangra - Boyd. And we know that the only way to stop it is to stir up an already concerned electorate. If we cannot preserve the most highly dedicated public reserve in the State, at the focal point of our best national park, together with the hub and catchment of that park - we cannot preserve anything.

DISCUSSION WITH MR. FIFE

On September 16th Mr. Fife afforded several of the Liberal Party members of the Colong Committee an opportunity to discuss the Caves issue by inviting them to dinner at Parliament House. The informal discussion was of mutual benefit, and will be followed at a later date, when more is known of the Marulan deposits, by a meeting with representatives of the Colong Committee.

STRONG SUPPORT FROM THE SYDNEY UNIVERSITY LIBERAL CLUB

On October 7th, the Sydney University Liberal Club, after keen debate, unanimously passed the following resolution and forwarded it to the Premier :

3. That this Club request the Premier to take immediate and effective action to :
 - i) Initiate a public enquiry, with results to be tabled before Parliament, to investigate the alternatives to mining in the Colong Caves Reserve;
 - ii) revoke special mining lease 444 in and adjacent to the Colong Caves Reserve;
 - iii) reincorporate all of the Reserve within the boundaries of the Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

PARLIAMENT

In State Parliament our supporters continue to press for the preservation of the Boyd Plateau.

On September 16th the Hon. Graham Pratten, M.L.C. asked

"Has the Minister's attention been invited to a letter, or has he received a copy of it, headed "Letter from Sunny Corner", written to the Colong Committee by a person named C.C. Wilkinson of Sunny Corner. Is it a fact that the Forestry Commission is carrying on a large-scale programme of pine planting in this area, as claimed? Is it a fact that where a creek passes through an area to be planted, fallen trees and debris are deliberately bulldozed into it? Is it a fact that two major creeks in this area have already been ruined for miles? Is it a fact that both these creeks supplied reservoirs which provided auxiliary water supplies to Bathurst and Portland? Is it a fact

one of these streams was a famous trout stream? Is the destruction of these creeks necessary for the establishment of the pine plantations? Are public reserves included in this project on the Boyd Plateau? With the cleaning up and burning of standing timber, will not all fauna, robbed of their natural habitat, be doomed? Was this area selected for a pine forest because of the availability of prison labour nearby? Would there not be thousands of acres of suitable country nearby that could be used, without destroying this beautiful and historical spot with all its natural surroundings? Is it contemplated to commence work on this project in November this year?"

In reply the Hon. J.B. Fuller, M.L.C. said that it was the practice of the Forestry Commission to protect flowing creeks, but not "natural drainage" lines. Turbidity was caused, not by pine plantations, but by wash from fire trails. Fish had been caught in both Mitchell's Creek and Dark Corner Creek in another planting area. The Vulcan State Forest at the headwaters of the Fish River had caused no turbidity despite 4 inches of rain and 12 inches of snow. Kangaroos, wallabies and certain types of native birds, were just as happy in the pine forest habitat as in the Eucalyptus habitat of the Blue Mountains. This area in the Tablelands was ideal for pine forests and this was the reason why prison labour camps had been established there.

On September 30th, Mr. J.G. Coates, M.L.A. (Blue Mountains) presented a petition for the revocation of 15,000 acres of the Kanangaroo State Forest and its inclusion in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

On October 7th, Mr. C.J. Earl, M.L.A. (Bass Hill), addressed the following question to the Minister for Conservation :

"Have the Forestry Commission and the Minister issued two statements claiming that pine plantations were not biological deserts and accusing conservationists of being "desirous of hiding the real facts from their supporters" and of "using half truths and distortions". Is it a fact that Prof. A. O'Gower, of the school of zoology, Dr. E. Sharp, of the Department of Entomology, and Mr. G. Gordon, Ph.D, all of the University of Sydney, and Dr. Joyce Vickery and Dr. Alec Costin have strongly and definitely condemned the Minister's contention, and supported the view that pine plantations are biological deserts? Is it a fact that the Minister plans to begin bulldozing operations on the Boyd Plateau in November, thus completing the worst act of conservation vandalism in Australia's history? Will the Minister agree, even at this late stage, to call off the destroying bulldozers and preserve this priceless section of the Boyd Plateau in its natural state instead of exploiting the area, for soft-wood production?"

In reply Mr. Beale said that, though the ecology of a pine forest was different, it was not a biological desert. Birds nested in pine forests and kangaroos loved them. It was impossible to control insect infestation in the eucalyptus forest, but pine forests were not affected. If man was to live he had to "cut into the countryside" to build roads and dams. Houses and factories had to be built on some lovely land around Sydney. Mr. Beale twice called for a balance, and left no doubt that one was needed, because his estimate of the area added to "national parks reserves and so on" created by the present Government

(twice the amount existing when it came to office) was 986,744 acres larger than the amount given by Mr. Lewis on 4/11/69 (1,843,391 in 1965 plus 856,647 acres).

PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT :

Save Colong supporters have already made some well publicised petitions to State Parliament. These petitions have been notable, not so much because of the number of signatories, but because they have come from highly responsible citizens, such as doctors and priests. Any number of persons can unite in a petition and this is a form of protest that could easily be arranged within the organisations supporting our campaign, without going beyond the organisation concerned for signatures.

The campaign to save the kangaroo from extinction has used this method extensively. Petitions are the first business of the day in the House of Representatives, and hardly a day passes without at least one petition on kangaroos. For example, on September 1st, four petitions were presented, and on the three succeeding days there were two petitions on each day.

In order to ensure that the petition will be presented to Parliament the following format should be rigidly followed :

"To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales in Parliament assembled.

The petition of ...(name of group)...respectfully sheweth...(disapproval of boundaries etc.)

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your Honourable House will...(action requested of House) and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.
(followed by list of signatures (including clear printing of names))

Signatures must appear on a copy of the petition, and should be accompanied by the name of the signatory clearly printed.

An M.L.A. should then be approached and asked to present the petition to the Legislative Assembly.

REPORT ON VISIT TO SUNNY CORNER, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 1970

SUNNY CORNER - FORESTRY MISMANAGEMENT

One aim of the joint Colong Committee - N.P.A. trip to the Boyd Plateau and Sunny Corner was to investigate pine-planting. From what we saw, we concluded that we shall lose more than just the Boyd Plateau if it is planted to pines.

Our Department of Conservation cannot be trusted. Pine planting by the Forestry Commission is not carried out with conservation principles in mind. Their aim is to plant pines, as many as possible.

When pines were first planted at Sunny Corner by the Forestry Commission, they bulldozed trees indiscriminately into creeks. This ruined a good trout-fishing stream. The stream is still turbid with silt, is still blocked by massive logs and is still useless for fishing. Now, with "conservation" in mind, all pine forest streams are turbid with silt, blocked by massive logs and useless for fishing - despite local protests and action from trout fishermen.

If you think this is exaggerated, go to Sunny Corner and see for yourself how a pine forest is managed.

When the trees have been bulldozed into windrows, whole paddocks and hillsides are set alight at once. There is not a lot of wildlife to eat the pine seedlings after this. To make sure, 1080 poison is laid out. The party found a recently dead fox, presumably poisoned from eating 1080 in rabbits.

The local scene is disregarded when the Foresters move in. Trees are work and work is votes. So before one election 500 acres were planted on the only available cleared land, which was the Sunny Corner common. The racecourse has gone the same way. The residents also have their livelihood in jeopardy as leasehold is not renewed for grazing. Their properties are threatened by eight miles of pines with no internal fire-breaks. Despite an experienced fire-fighting force, the Forestry Commission has an unenviable record at Sunny Corner.

The preference of Australian birds for Australian trees has important consequences for the man on the land. They look nice, they sound nice, and they pollinate pastures and they eat insects. You have to be up early to save a bit of native forest at Sunny Corner however. Despite protests months beforehand, one four acre stand of magnificent blackbutts was saved minutes before bulldozers were to move in. Apparently four acres of blackbutts in 500 acres of Monterey pine is almost too much!

There will be no end of promises, assurances and undertakings if the Forestry Commission wants the Boyd Plateau. But the details will be left to the bulldozer drivers. What guarantees can the Department of Conservation offer us that all will be well? Will the pine forest be removed when it turns out that our fears were right?

Despite promises, despite protests, if the Boyd is planted to pines this will happen :

Trees will choke the creeks and sub-alpine swamps.

The creeks will be turbid, the waterfalls will turn grey.

This muddy run-off will worsen the already increasing silt load of Kowmung River in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

Stream life will be drastically altered.

Bushfires in the Park will increase. As pine forests are highly susceptible to fire damage there are already plans for intensive control burns and fire-road network in the Park. "Control" burns can get out of hand, as at Sunny Corner.

Fertilizers and biocides (e.g. hormone-type weedkillers or defoliants) will be used. The persistence of such weedkillers has been shown in Western Australia where manure, from stock which had been fed on cereals from sprayed paddocks, killed nursery plants.

Poisons such as 1080 will be used and introduced into the biological food chain. Ever heard of 1080 labelled "Rabbits only"?

People who are generally interested to see the wise use of our resources for long term benefit should take a long hard look at the narrow-minded, often irresponsible approach the Forestry Commission has to our resources and landscape.

Forestry mismanagement is the natural outcome of political expediency. The number of acres of pines plantations that were created during a Government's reign is used in election boasting. What was bulldozed for these acres, and how the operations were carried out, is a very different story.

Will YOU allow the Askin Government to be proud to boast that 25,000 acres of prime National Parkland, The Boyd Plateau, was bulldozed for a pine plantation?

ACT NOW - VISIT THESE AREAS AND SEE FOR YOURSELF

From: Malle and David Eden.

For further details contact the above at 22 Fairmount St., Dulwich Hill. Tel. No. 5607714 (H).

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