

# SAVE COLONG BULLETIN

THE COLONG COMMITTEE

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"We have conservationists in England too. We have the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. But they're nothing like these chaps. I'm amazed at their spirit here. I respect them for it."

Sir John Reiss, quoted in "The Australian" of 5/11/70.

"Government and industry have a responsibility to protect Australia's natural environment."

The Hon. W. C. Fife, M.L.A.,  
addressing the annual conference  
of the Institute of Quarrying on  
3/11/70.

## MEETING WITH SIR JOHN REISS

On Wednesday 4th November, representatives of The Colong Committee met the Chairman of the Blue Circle Cement Combine, Sir John Reiss.

The meeting took place at the Hotel Australia at Sir John's invitation. The Company was also represented by Sir Grant Ferrier, Chairman of the Australian Subsidiary A.P.C.M.(A) and by its Managing Director, Mr F. E. Taylor.

The Colong Committee's deputation consisted of Professor R. N. Johnson, Rev. James Tierney, Councillor Brian Walker and Milo Dunphy.

In summary the Committee's case was:

- (1) The Company is going to lose the Colong lease whatever it does, and we will not consider any possibility of mining there.
- (2) The Labor Party has unequivocally stated its intention of revoking the lease (through its spokesmen Hills, Einfeld, McCartney, Earl, Petersen, Walker, etc). APCM'S directors should take care that they do not, through an intransigent attitude, lose 50 million tons of limestone at the next election without any substitute lease. Based on Labor's stand, it is highly doubtful whether Union labour would be available for construction and destruction at Colong.
- (3) The Company should, as a gesture of good faith with the N.S.W. Public, voluntarily resign the lease now.

- (4) If the Company desires additional accommodation at Marulan, it should state its case. We understand it already has 34 years supply there, at the increased rate of demand.
- (5) The Committee is most disturbed that the Company's Marulan survey has taken two years instead of the estimated one year. However, though the Company may feel that delay till after the election may be an advantage for it, each month that passes sees an increase in the degree of public concern for conservation. The rising tide of conservation debate in the N.S.W. Parliament is illustrated in Hansard - a dozen speeches in a month. Of 50 questions on notice, eleven deal with conservation issues. Of these, three deal with the Colong issue and, of these, two name the Company.

In summary the Company's reply was:

- (1) Unless it is given acceptable additional accommodation at Marulan, it will go ahead with its plan to mine at Colong.
- (2) The Company does not believe in playing politics.
- (3) The Company will not voluntarily resign the Colong lease at this stage, but it is hopeful that the current investigation of the Marulan deposit will enable it to exchange leases.
- (4) The Company does not know how much limestone it has in its existing leases at Marulan. Until this is revealed by the current investigation, it is unable to state how much more is required. It only knows it needs more.
- (5) The investigation of Marulan has been delayed by the Company's difficulty, in common with other mining companies, of retaining geologists. In addition drilling has revealed unusually complicated geological structures.

APCM's representatives think they would need a lot of water if Marulan was to be a viable alternative, and that would be achieved by bore water.

Mr Taylor hastened to add that this did not mean a dam on the Kowmung would be needed at Mt. Armour - so he must have great faith in the volume of water in the Colong Swamp.

During discussion the Committee remonstrated with Sir John Reiss for the inaccuracy of his briefing, as illustrated by his letters to Admiral Sir Christopher Bonham-Cater, and to Mr Peter Scott (see this Bulletin).

For Sir John Reiss' benefit we drew attention to the drilling operation which recently took place in a public reserve at Bungonia, without proper approval. This drilling operation was described by Mr Taylor as "accidental".

At the conclusion of the meeting the following three sentences were agreed by the Company's representatives:

- (1) "If Marulan is economically feasible and if negotiations with the Government for extended leases at Marulan are successful the Company would give up Colong."

- (2) "We are hopeful that we will find an alternative".
- (3) "We have made no moves at Colong and do not intend to unless investigations at Marulan are unsuccessful."

The meeting was well covered in the press - The Financial Review, The Sun, The Herald, The Newcastle Herald, The Australian, Goulburn Evening Post, and Telegraph all carried reports. The Australian gave the most space with 16 column inches, the Herald gave the least with 4-1/2 column inches.

The meeting revealed two matters: Firstly, Sir John Reiss has now reached the position which Mr F. E. Taylor had reached at the meeting at the National Trust on June 24, 1969, but from which he was forced to retreat by Sir John's categorical denial a few weeks later. Sir John Reiss is now better acquainted with the facts and now he too hopes it will be possible to expand mining at Marulan rather than mine Colong.

Secondly, APCM is likely to use a threat to mine the Colong lease to acquire a maximum possible amount of Marulan limestone.

How many public reserves must be violated to provide cheap limestone for an uneconomically located cement works?

#### A SOLUTION TO THE COLONG CONTROVERSY

It is now well over twelve months since APCM commenced its investigation of Marulan limestone deposits as an alternative to its Mt. Armour lease. It is probable that within the next few months an announcement will be made concerning extension of the company's Marulan leases in exchange for Mt. Armour.

The Colong Committee has repeatedly questioned the validity of granting additional reserves of limestone to APCM.

Extension of the Marulan leases may jeopardize existing reserves vital to the dramatic scenery of the Shoalhaven and Bungonia Gorges. Whilst we believe that adequate deposits are available at Marulan we do not concede, on the facts available, that it is in the public interest that APCM's reserves be increased. From a conservation point of view the Minister should be wary of making the same mistake at Marulan as was made at Colong.

The necessary steps in the solution of the Colong controversy are simple:

- (1) The Colong lease must be revoked by the Government or voluntarily resigned by the Company, forthwith.
- (2) If the Company feels it needs more limestone it should submit its case in detail for Departmental check. This case should include a calculation of the Company's total reserves in N.S.W. for Departmental check.
- (3) The Government should review the possibility of alternative assistance to the Company in the form perhaps of nominal charges for use of the southern railway line as an easement for a slurry pipe line from Marulan to Maldon. Such incentives could be used to induce joint mining by Southern Portland and APCM(A) of their adjoining leases at Marulan. Conservation should not be thrown aside because two companies have so far failed to agree. It should be Government policy to induce them to agree.

- (4) The Government should also review the case for refusing all further aid to the badly located Maldon factory.
- (5) When all the above information is available the Government should issue a White Paper to inform the interested public. Many questions deserve an answer. For instance: with such extensive deposits at Marulan why is mining taking place on the scenic edges? After due public discussion the Government should make its decision.
- (6) If the Government wishes to divorce itself from the necessary reviews it should appoint a Select Parliamentary Committee or Judicial Commission to report on the whole matter.
- (7) In the meantime nothing should be done at Marulan which might prejudice an acceptable solution there.

COLONG NOW A MATTER FOR BRITISH COMMONWEALTH CONCERN

"Whatever the outcome of this afternoon's meeting between the conservationists and Sir John, it represents a battle, no matter how civilized, between big business, whose responsibility is to its mainly U.K. based shareholders, and the conservationists, who believe their responsibility is to the people of Australia.

The view from London will not be marred by the quarry and its accompanying scars, but what of the people who prefer natural bushland to dust and 'progress'?"

Sydney "Sun", 4/11/70.

Although Sir John denied suggestions that his visit was a result of conservationist pressure in the U.K., he did devote a gratifying amount of his time and attention to Colong, and we believe this was due largely, if not wholly, to letters he, and other directors of APCM(England), received from Mr Peter Scott, First Vice President and Chairman of the World Wildlife Fund.

On July 9, 1970, Mr P. Keeble of APCM assured Mr Scott that the result of the Company's workings on the district would be minimal. In reply Mr Scott expressed doubts as to the meaning of 'minimal' and pointed out that the Reserve had been set aside for the preservation of the caves, was a part of the Warragamba Wildlife Refuge and was included in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park. "It seems extraordinary", he wrote, "that the combination of these three designations should be inadequate to protect it from any quarrying operations, even those of a minimal kind. I am also much concerned that the furore which has been created in Australia appears to have created a public relations position which reflects very unhappily on this country. I wonder whether all the Blue Circle Directors are aware of the extraordinarily wide-spreading repercussions of the controversy, and whether, if they knew, they might not wish to put the matter right with a gesture of goodwill by declaring that they do not intend to quarry limestone in the Colong Reserve."

On July 20th Sir John Reiss wrote to Mr Scott saying that he quite appreciated his anxiety, "which was apparently expressed in no uncertain terms to the Duke of Edinburgh (the Duke is President of the World Wildlife Fund - Ed.) when he was in Australia recently." He enclosed a copy of

a letter written to Admiral Sir Christopher Bonham-Carter to enable the Admiral to reply to Mr Somerville on behalf of the Duke. He also drew attention to two points. The first was that the area to be worked covered 185 acres on the edge of the Park out of a total area of 800,000 acres. (The correct figures are 585 acres and 98,000 acres) The second point was an assurance that "our people who have been there can confirm that it is a complete wilderness and that, in fact, no pleasure-seeker, other than our geologists (sic) have ever set foot upon it!" This statement was further embellished in his letter to Sir Christopher, in which the National Park was described as "a pretty good wilderness of rocks and shrubs and I am sure no pleasure-seeker has ever set foot on the site of our proposed quarry at Colong because there is no access of any kind, and that last seven or eight miles have to be done on foot over very difficult terrain."

Other statements in Sir John's letter to the Admiral fully confirmed the Colong Committee's contention that the granting of limestone leases from a reserve is merely a means of publicly subsidising an uneconomically located cement works. Sir John said that N.S.W. was "very short of limestone", but that the use of Colong limestone "would lower our costs and enable us to compete in Sydney with seaborne cement that is coming in at the rate of over 100,000 tons a year from Tasmania..... It could be that the Cement Industry in N.S.W. may be gradually killed by imports from both Tasmania and, possibly, Southern Australia, where the limestone deposits are close by the sea and where shipping - although over a much greater distance - is infinitely cheaper than sending 150 miles by rail." This point was taken up by Mr Peter Scott who replied "surely it cannot be right to start quarrying in the Colong Caves Reserve (in a wildlife area, as well as in a National Park) in order to bolster the Cement Industry in New South Wales."

Had Sir John, or his geologists, gone to the trouble of studying Mines Department reports, he would have known that N.S.W. far from being "very short" of limestone, has enormous, in fact inexhaustible, reserves. The only shortage of limestone is within 35 miles of Maldon. Why was the works placed there in the first place? Why did APCM take it over in 1961 knowing that, due to its uneconomic location, it had already incurred losses of four million dollars in ten years?

#### BUNGONIA RESERVES THREATENED

Mr Warwick Counsell has reported several incidents which indicate that the disregard of reserves by cement companies is not confined to Colong.

During recent assessment of limestone reserves at South Marulan, Commonwealth Portland Cement Limited bulldozed roads more than 700 feet off its leases and into the surrounding reserves. Drill sites, earthworks and felled trees are visible from many points within the Bungonia Caves Reserve, notably Adams Lookout. It is interesting to note that when the Reserve, R2755, was notified on 31/8/62 it was for the express purpose of protecting the view from this lookout.

While complaints about this road and associated operations were being investigated by the Mines Department, another part of Reserve R2755 was withdrawn (on 18/9/70) and Commonwealth Portland Cement Limited applied for it as a mineral lease (Application 533 Goulburn) on the same day. The application

went uncontested, as no-one knew about it, and this area just north east of Bungonia Gorge became ML32, a lease so close to the precipitous drops on the north side of the Bungonia Creek as to present a very real danger to the hundreds of walkers who use Bungonia Creek each year.

The Southern Portland Cement Company has made an application (Application 532 Goulburn) for 400 acres for the purpose of dumping overburden, etc, from their vast quarry a little to the north of Bungonia. The area comprises most of the region of Barber's Creek west of Long Point Lookout. It includes both sides of the valley. Luckily objection was lodged in time, and those interested in this very beautiful area will get a chance to fight in court for its preservation.

These matters are under consideration by the Colong Committee which will inspect Bungonia on December 13, 1970.

#### STATE PARLIAMENT

Mr Earl, Bass Hill, on 13th October:

"The areas that the Government has preserved for national parks are useless for primary industry: when an area of land is uneconomic for primary industry and will not carry a rabbit or sheep, the Government steps in and declares it a national park. Conservationists are most concerned at this policy, and also with the Government's policy of allowing industry to operate within national parks.....The Minister boasts about what he has done in the interests of parklands. I give him due credit for his efforts, though he has failed in vital areas such as Colong Caves, where he proposes to allow mining interests to intrude and to destroy some of the most valuable caves and other ecological features in New South Wales, including the Boyd Plateau."

#### Estimates Debate

During the debate on the estimates, on October 14, the following exchange took place:

Mr Petersen, Kembla:

"I have had occasion to raise in this House previously the greatest of all the Government's crimes, namely, the failure to add the Boyd Plateau to the Kanangra-Boyd National Park, allowing the Minister for Conservation without any publicity, apart from formal notification in the Government Gazette, to dedicate 15,000 acres of land on the Boyd Plateau, the major part of which was in reserve No R.67062, dedicated for the preservation of flora and fauna. It is all very well for the Minister for Conservation to say that most of this area was subject to phasmid infestation. That is simply untrue. Persons who have seen the leaflet published by the Colong Committee will remember the picture on its cover showing the sort of timber on the Boyd Plateau. I have seen that timber. It is now being bulldozed, removed, cut down, taken away. It is good timber that has never had fire through it or been subject to phasmid infestation. This is the timber that is being removed by bulldozers and timber jinkers. This is the timber that is confidently expected will be levelled. The levelling process is to take place in November.

Mr Petersen, Kembla (continued)

"This is a serious matter. It is well known that the leader of my party has promised that, in the event of the election of a Labor government next year, he will see that Colong is saved from mining. The Opposition will see that the 15,000 acres, mostly of reserves, which was incorporated into the forestry reserve in January of this year, becomes part of the Kanangra-Boyd National Park. This is a mighty good reason why the Labor Party should be returned to office next year. There are 3,000,000 acres of land in New South Wales suitable for pine forests. The primary reason why this area, which was previously reserve No R.67062 is being destroyed and the timber demolished and taken away is to enable radiata pine to be planted. As the honourable member for Bathurst pointed out, this is being done solely because it would cost \$1,000,000 to buy equivalent land for softwood plantings elsewhere. I am talking now about what was done in January, 1970. I am pointing out that the Minister for Conservation has given the reason plainly and clearly. He has said that it would cost \$1,250,000 to buy equivalent land. The Government therefore is willing to destroy this area that was previously No R. 67062."

Mr Lewis:

"That was arranged when the Labor Party was in government."

Mr Petersen:

"I am speaking about what is happening now. This Government apparently works on the assumption that it will include in national parks only land that has no economic value. That is true not only of the Boyd Plateau. It applied equally to Myall Lakes....."

"In particular I draw attention to the necessity for restoring the whole of the Boyd Plateau, including the area dedicated as a forest in January, 1970, to the Kanangra-Boyd National Park. I emphasize also the necessity to incorporate the Colong Caves area in the same national park. We should not destroy the heart of the park by allowing limestone mining there."

Mr Lewis: (in reply

"The honourable member for Bass Hill, the honourable member for Kembla and the honourable member for Hamilton complained about nature conservation in general and Myall Lakes in particular. They are obviously acting as dummies for groups that are expert in their field; they get little catchcries, and stories from those groups, then stand up in Parliament and try to make a big name for themselves by asking why the Government is not doing more..... Labor members referred to Kanangra-Boyd National Park. Surely the honourable member for Kembla knows what is going on there, he ought to know. Not one of the Opposition members who spoke in this debate has remained to listen to my reply: this shows their lack of interest in the subject. They make their way here to speak, but when the Minister replies they depart for a cup of tea or something stronger. Many people are satisfied with the record of the Government. I am sure the honourable member for Wentworthville is satisfied; he has told me."

Mr Quinn:

"No one is listening to you. Mr Speaker, I call attention to the state of the House." (Quorum formed)

Mr Lewis:

"Before the quorum bells rang I was commenting upon the remarks by the honourable member for Kembla concerning Kanangra-Boyd National Park. I suppose he does not realize that it is hypocritical for him to speak as he has in this Chamber, for in 1963, when Labor was in office, the Labor Minister for Lands, Mr Compton, was chairman of a committee that was established to decide upon the rationalization of Crown land in the Kanangra-Boyd area. That committee agreed to do certain things, one of which was to set aside the whole of Kanangra-Boyd area as a state forest for the growing of pines. The Labor Party also agreed to the issue of leases in respect of the coast of New South Wales, and when we came to office the leases had been issued. The Labor Party agreed to the issue of leases in respect of the Mt. Armour or Colong area in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park, but as a result of my negotiations with the Minister for Mines and the Minister for Conservation we were able to reduce that to the minimum without repudiating the previous agreement made by a responsible Minister of the Labor Government. I cannot see how the honourable member for Kembla can complain about this."

Mr F. J. Walker (George's River) on October 21:

"I have no doubt in my mind that the period of this administration will go down in history as the dark ages for conservation in New South Wales. Honourable members need only recall the Government's prevarications and procrastinations about the destruction of the Colong Caves, and the sacrifice of this State's meagre resources of native forests at the altar of the pine and pulp industry which is about to occur on the Boyd Plateau, at Sunny Corner and elsewhere."

Petitions:

(from "Parliamentary Debates" 29th October 1970)

Mr Coates presented a petition from certain citizens of New South Wales praying that the dedication as a state forest of that part of the Konangaroo State Forest of approximately 15,000 acres, as described in the Government Gazette of 30th January 1970, be revoked, and that the same area be included in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

Mr Coates presented similar petitions from members of the Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife Conservation Society, the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Blue Mountains Historical Society, Katoomba and District.

Petitions received on motion of Mr Coates.



SAVE COLONG - OFFER TO HELP

I am willing to help in organizing conservation publicity  
for The Colong Committee prior to the next State Elections.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Post  
Code

STATE ELECTORATE: \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

DEGREES, TITLES \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP OF  
COMMUNITY BODIES \_\_\_\_\_

I can carry out the following tasks:  
(tick where appropriate)

Handing out leaflets in peak hours \_\_\_\_\_

Distributing leaflets to postboxes \_\_\_\_\_

Obtaining signatures for petition \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewing Parliamentary candidates \_\_\_\_\_

Designing posters or leaflets \_\_\_\_\_

Lecturing on conservation \_\_\_\_\_

Other tasks (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to The Secretary,  
The Colong Committee,  
18 Argyle Street,  
SYDNEY, N.S.W. 2000.

INVITATION TO MARULAN STUDY TOUR

## ATTENTION: SUPPORTING SOCIETIES

SHAREHOLDERS

SPELEOLOGISTS and all

SUBSCRIBERS!

As you probably know the fight to save Colong has reached the stage where attention is being turned towards Marulan as an alternative source of limestone to Mt. Armour. Worldwide opinion among conservationists is pressing A.P.C.M.(A) to relinquish its leases to quarry Mt. Armour. The Company does not consider Murruin Creek is an acceptable alternative. However, the Company seems to consider that Marulan is the only other "economically viable" source of limestone to supply the Company's needs at Maldon.

The Colong Committee would like more knowledge of the Marulan leases and how they affect caves and scenery in the Bungonia Caves area. A site visit is being arranged for Sunday December 13th and supporting societies are invited to send delegates. All interested people are welcome to join the study tour. At this stage we would like any information and views on the Marulan limestone situation. If you can assist in any way please write to The Secretary, The Colong Committee, 18 Argyle Street, Sydney 2000.

DETAILS: for meeting place

TIME: Sunday 13th December at 10 am.

PLACE: Bungonia Caves turn-off -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Marulan along the Hume Highway. (This is a  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hour drive from Sydney.)

PLEASE NOTE: If transport is required or offered please ring Mrs M.Eden at 5607714 after hours or 3990111 ext. 2784 during business hours.