

SAVE COLONG bulletin

THE COLONG COMMITTEE • A National Wilderness Society

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LAKE PEDDER

Tasmania's Deputy Premier, Attorney General and Minister for the Environment, Mr. M. G. Everett, O.C., resigned his portfolios on August 1st over the Lake Pedder issue.

"It is clear that a fundamental difference involving issues relating to justice has developed between the majority of Cabinet and myself and the majority of the party and myself", Mr. Everett said.

"I took the view that in those circumstances it would be wrong of me to continue as a member of Cabinet, especially when a matter relating to the Attorney General's personal discretion in relation to the administration of justice was concerned."

"Because I am Attorney General I clearly have a traditional duty to act as protector of the public interest." (Sydney Morning Herald, August 2, 1972).

The Colong Committee forwarded the following telegram to Mr. Everett on August 8:
"Fully support your stand on duty of Attorney General to protect public interest. Congratulations on your high principled action."

Mr. Everett's action arises out of a request by solicitors acting for the Lake Pedder Action Committee. As Attorney General he was requested to take relator action against the Hydro Electric Commission for unauthorised use of the South West National Park. The Tasmanian Parliamentary Labor Party has refused to allow Mr. Everett to agree to this request. In doing so, it is denying the people access to the courts of the land — a right we won at Magna Carta. The Government's proposal to pass validating legislation shows the conservationist case would have won.

Thus the flooding of Lake Pedder is not only uneconomic, unnecessary and outrageous — it is illegal.

BISHOP SLAMS GOVERNMENT

On August 2, the (Anglican) Bishop of Tasmania, the Right Rev. R. E. Davies castigated the Labor Government for blocking the Lake Pedder writ.

The following day the Launceston Examiner said the Bishop's statement was so strong it could be interpreted as a call to citizens generally to protest against the Government's behaviour.

Bishop Davies said, *"I believe that the citizens of this State should see that the Government is not allowed to contravene the principle of justice which Mr. Everett sought to uphold."*

"The issue before us now appears to be a moral one affecting the democratic processes of law and good government."

LABOR'S ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

The intransigence of the Tasmanian Labor Government over Lake Pedder and the failure of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party to take effective action in this national issue brings Federal Labor policies on the environment into question.

Perhaps the fine addresses on environmental issues by Mr. Whitlam and Mr. Uren are only so many empty words.

The Tasmanian Government's refusal of justice must not be condoned by silence from the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party. Indeed, it provides the opportunity that Labor's spokesman on the environment, Mr. Tom Uren, M.P., may have been seeking for some time.

The Federal Labor party now has both an electoral incentive and a moral obligation to come out into the open regarding Lake Pedder. Mr. Whitlam should publicly announce that if successful in the Federal election he will allocate funds to Tasmania to enable it to adopt one of the engineering alternatives which will save Lake Pedder.

The Tasmanian Premier, Mr. Reece, may object to such an announcement. But he would be foolhardy indeed to refuse the expenditure of, say, seven million dollars in his State! Seven million dollars represents a lot of employment.

For Mr. Whitlam, seven million dollars would be a cheap price to pay for garnering the hundreds of thousands of conservationist votes.

And for Australians of this and succeeding generations, seven million dollars is a cheap price for saving our most beautiful lake.

LAKE PEDDER BOOK

"Lake Pedder — why a National Park must be saved" is a landmark in the history of the conservation movement. It is published by the Lake Pedder Action Committee of Victoria and Tasmania and the Australian Union of Students. Printer is The Griffin Press, Adelaide.

With over 90 superb photographs and many diagrams, the book records the beauty and scientific value of the lake and its surroundings. Price only \$1.80

Obtain your copy and bulk orders for your society through The Colong Committee, 18 Argyle St., Sydney, 2000. Phone 27 4714.

TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONSERVATION

We are pleased to report that our call for help in the last issue of the Bulletin was answered by many of our faithful supporters. Our assets (not including our goodwill, which is priceless) now exceed our liabilities, but only just.

The Committee, formed to fight a specific project — the mining of Mount Armour — is now in its fifth year. It has proved itself a durable and effective instrument, and has extended the scope of its activities. At the last Annual General Meeting it formed itself into a national wilderness society which we hope will endure as long as there is a wilderness left to be saved. The amount the Committee can achieve is limited by the time its members contribute (which is considerable) and the funds available. The funds are used for publications, office expenses (not including rent), professional services which we cannot obtain free, and incidental expenses. We have for some time hoped to achieve financial stability to match the sustained impact of our efforts, and enable them to be deployed more effectively.

The flow of funds would no doubt be greatly enhanced if donations were tax-deductible. Some of our generous donors might have given more at no extra cost to themselves, if their donations were tax deductible. But, in common with most other conservation organisations, we have not yet achieved this status in the eyes of the Commonwealth Government.

There is, however, a means whereby tax deductible donations may be made, either to The Colong Committee, or to projects which it supports. In a pamphlet entitled "An Invitation", the Australian Conservation Foundation "invites you to support its special projects". The support which it solicits falls into three sections

A. Specific Donations Accounts. Sub-section 3 (a) of this section is "Ecological Studies of the Boyd Plateau". The management or supervisory body is listed as The Colong Committee in association with the universities, and the amount required \$10,000.

B. Projects in 1972-73 Programme Requiring Assistance. Subsection 6 (b) is "Posters highlighting conservation aims and needs — for mass distribution." The amount sought for this project is \$10,000. Subsection 6 (c) is a Travelling Conservation exhibition. The Foundation has been presented with this exhibit by the National Library, Canberra, and is planning to send it on a tour of major centres. The exhibit contains several photographs supplied by the Colong Committee.

Section C General or Non-Specific Donations to A.C.F. Funds.

Sub-section 8 (b) reads —

"It is now possible for donors to extend assistance to the Australian Conservation Foundation and other conservation organisations with cognate aims where help is needed urgently in respect to important national conservation problems. These must be issues on which the Foundation has announced its policy. The idea is to build up a reserve of funds which can be made available quickly to meet non-budgeted contingencies. In the past the Foundation has assisted

various efforts, such as those against mining proposals at Colong, Bungonia, the Myall Lakes and Cooloola, and from time to time made grants to ad hoc action bodies such as the Lake Pedder Committee.

N.B. Although donations received under this heading are paid into the Foundation's general funds, they may be made available at the discretion of Council to offset grants to assist other organisations."

Donations to all three sections are tax deductible.

As the rain falls on the just and the unjust, so do the dispensations of the Taxation Commissioner fall equally on those who knock down the bush (clearing expenses are deductible) and those who seek to preserve it, but that is the way the game is to be played.

Should any person or firm feel the urge to make a substantial donation to The Colong Committee, we suggest that they ask the Director, Australian Conservation Foundation, P.O. Box 142, Carlton, Victoria, 3053, whether, if they made their donation to the A.C.F., the A.C.F. would make an equivalent amount available to The Colong Committee. If the answer is "yes" their generosity might then extend to adding the tax saving to the gift they had in mind to make.

COLONG COMMITTEE'S METHODS ENDORSED BY MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT CONTROL

We are pleased to report that Mr. Beale's brochure "72 things you can do to reduce pollution and improve your environment" recommends a number of the methods adopted by The Colong Committee since its inception.

In the preface he states that all types of people start pollution, but amongst those singled out for special mention are industrialists, government officials and business men. This is just what we have been saying to the Forestry Commissioner and the directors of A.P.C.M. and of S.P.C. "If you and government and industry all work towards reducing pollution" Mr. Beale says, "an improved environment will result very quickly." How true! — as we know, it's no good just us doing all the work; we need the co-operation of government and industry.

We hope S.P.C. and A.P.C.M. read point 5, which says "Don't dump rubbish on vacant land", just as we have been telling them.

We hope the Forestry Commissioner reads point 6 which is, "Don't burn leaves or rubbish. Better to start a compost heap and return the nutrients to the soil."

Point 21 has special significance for the Main Roads Board. It says "When visiting National and State parks do not spoil them for others by destroying plants." This must surely mean that highways should not be constructed in parks.

Point 43 is "Organise or join a community conference to discuss positive approaches to pollution control. Invite public officials, industry and commerce representatives, other interested groups and individual citizens. Obtain all the facts and then make sure appropriate action groups are initiated." This is exactly what The Colong Committee has done since the first protest meeting of supporters was held in 1968.

Point 47 commences — "Dissuade friends and neighbours from destroying trees." We count the Forestry Commissioner as a friend and neighbour and have been trying to dissuade him from destroying several million trees on the Boyd.

Point 53 says "Seek the help of your local newspaper, radio and television stations in pollution control efforts. State your aims clearly and enlist strong editorial support." With our limited resources we have been conspicuously successful in doing this.

Point 56 is "Ask State and National environment organisations and bodies for information and assistance." This is something we are very keen to carry out. We have, in fact, asked Mr. Beale's Department to initiate environmental impact studies on both the Boyd Plateau and Bungonia Gorge.

Point 61 is addressed to "Business". It says — "You are required to assess the impact of any development on the environment while the development is still at planning stage. See you do it conscientiously. Don't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." We have been telling S.P.C. and A.P.C.M. for some time not to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

Point 72 puts The Colong Committee's activities in a nutshell. It says "Be constantly involved in improving our environment. If you cannot rectify a pollution problem yourself, notify the responsible organisation, e.g. the Department of Environment." If we could have stopped mining at Mount Armour, mullock dumping in Barber's Creek and Bungonia Gorge, and bulldozing on the Boyd ourselves, we would have done so, but we couldn't, so we notified the Minister

for Mines, Conservation and the Environment.

For a more serious view, Mr. Beale is to be congratulated on much of this pamphlet. It provides a number of salutary points for all of us. For example "Car exhaust is a pollutant. Don't drive a car unnecessarily. Walk, bicycle, use public transport if possible." Brave words these being addressed, as they are, to a voting population which sacrifices lives, money, health and even the air it breathes, to the Great God Car.

Nevertheless we reject the theme that "we" not "they" create pollution. This is the current public relations soft sell of at least one major oil company. We have no responsibility for the pollution at Bungonia or Barbers Creek, or the proposed pollution at the Boyd or Colong. Many of us have objected for years that the Government has allowed public transport systems to fall apart and assisted the motor vehicle industry in a hundred unnecessary ways.

To include government officials and business in the term "we", and to exhort people to be involved in community action, is an attitude which conservationists will support. But in the field of wilderness conservation the action which "We" can take is limited to giving a reasoned and researched case for preservation and creating, or mobilising, public opinion behind it — activities which Mr. Beale strongly recommends. Only the Government, however, can grant or withhold mining leases, resume land, or designate reserves, which is the kind of action to which our efforts are directed. We are doing our part. We have proved the need for wilderness preservation and mobilised public opinion. Now we want to see some action from Mr. Beale's Government.

ARE YOUR PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES CONSERVATIONISTS ?

The approach of the Federal elections gives Colong supporters an opportunity of making their presence felt in their electorate and winning the support of candidates.

This can be done by organising deputations to the candidates and asking them their policy on specific wilderness preservation issues which can be influenced or resolved by Federal action. Some of these issues are:

The Boyd Plateau: The Boyd is to be cleared with money provided by the Commonwealth under the Softwoods Agreement Act. The Commonwealth, in making money available to the States for pine plantations, can stipulate how the money is to be spent. It could ensure that N.S.W. didn't receive any money if the bulldozing of the Boyd is to go on.

The Top End national park: Whether or not uranium miners are to despoil this area is a decision for the Federal Government, since it administers the Northern Territory.

Get your candidates to declare themselves on these, and any other conservation issues in which you have an interest, and which the Federal Government can influence. If they won't declare themselves, publicise the fact. If they do publicise their views, make them known to the electorate. Those who support our projects will undoubtedly gain votes.

Committee member Noelene Bearns, phone 53-9812 (home), will be pleased to hear from you if you are prepared to organise or participate in a deputation to your candidates.

PETITION ON THE TOP END NATIONAL PARK

A form for a petition to the House of Representatives on the Top End National Park is enclosed with the Bulletin. Completed petition should be returned to Pat Thompson at the address shown at the end of the sheet.

THE BOYD

Although there has been no recent publicity for The Colong Committee's campaign to save the Boyd Plateau from becoming a pine plantation, this is not because of lack of action, but because the Committee, in view of assurances it has received, has not sought publicity.

Action has been taken on several fronts.

Within the Liberal Party, Committee member Mrs. Elizabeth Elenius directed the following question to Mr. Jack Beale at the State Council meeting of the Party on 19th May:

"A report of a special sub-committee of State Council in late 1970 recommended that no more than 20% of the 24,000 acre state forest on the Boyd Plateau surrounded by Kanangra-Boyd National Park, which is south of Jenolan Caves, be cleared for pine culture. Will Mr. Beale enquire of the present Minister for Conservation, Mr. Fife, whether he intends to follow the recommendations of the sub-committee in deciding the future of the Boyd Plateau and forward a reply to the next meeting of State Council? Also has Mr. Beale's Department of Environment Control asked for the submission of an environmental

impact study by the Forestry Commission as has been announced will be required before any development project is allowed to proceed?

Mr. Beale answered in the affirmative on both questions.

In a letter to Mr. Max Ruddock, M.L.A. dated 19th June, the (then) Minister for Conservation, Mr. Fife confirmed his statement made on 3rd August 1971 that he would review the future use of the Boyd. He said that Mr. Dunphy's fears that clearing of the Boyd might start in the meantime were not justified and that he had given an undertaking that no further logging and no clearing or similar operations would be carried out on the State Forest pending this review, and that The Colong Committee would be given fair notice of the results of the review. "This undertaking," he wrote, "has been, and will be, scrupulously honoured."

In a letter dated July 4th addressed to Mr. Neil Mackerras, Mr. G. F. Freudenstein, Mr. Fife's successor as Minister for Conservation, assured Mr. Mackerras that the undertakings previously given by Mr. Fife would be honoured.

In reply to the Committee's request for an environmental impact study on the Boyd, Mr. Fife wrote to Milo Dunphy on June 19th, as follows:

"The Premier, Sir Robert Askin, on 18th January, 1972, announced the adoption of a thirteen point Environmental Impact Policy which requires the preparation of an environmental impact report on all major development projects, government and non-government in nature. You may be assured that the review the Forestry Commission is conducting will cover the environmental, social and economic aspects of pine establishment on Kanangaroo State Forest."

Mr. Fife does not say whether the Forestry Commission's environment impact report will include an ecological survey, though an impact report which covers the environmental aspect could not possibly be complete without such a survey. The statement of Principles of the N.S.W. Government's Environmental Impact Policy states, "That every environmental impact study for a major project must include a statement of the characteristics and conditions of the existing environment prior to implementing the project." In view of the Forestry Commission's rigid insistence that pine culture is the appropriate form of land use on the Boyd, the ecological study, which it is presumably making, may carry no conviction to conservationists. The most satisfactory solution would be for the Commission to contribute to an independent, University supervised, survey.

In the Federal sphere Colong Committee member, Mr. Neil Mackerras, acting upon suggestions made by our Boyd sub-committee, interviewed Senator Gair's private secretary, his press secretary, and Senator Kane and suggested amendments to the Softwoods Forestry Agreements Bill 1972. As a result Senator Kane gave notice of his intention to move an amendment to the Bill which would add the word "environmental" in clause 9 of the agreement which is a schedule to the Bill. This clause would then read:

"The State shall ensure that planting during each year is carried out efficiently and in conformity with sound forestry, environmental and financial practices."

The amendment also proposed a new clause, 9A to read:

"The State shall ensure that natural forests shall not be cleared for planting softwoods unless the particular proposed clearing has beforehand been the subject of an environmental impact study made by an independent expert on behalf of the Australian Forestry Council and that the Council after considering the report of the said study has approved the particular clearing."

Senator Robert Cotton, leading the Government in the Senate, tried to dissuade Senator Kane from moving this amendment. Senator Kane would not do so, and the Government then decided to defer the Bill until the next session. (Readers will remember that Senator Cotton's family Company is Timber Industries Ltd. of Oberon).

Following a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald in which he called attention to the Forestry Commission's failure to provide a cost-benefit study on the Boyd, Jim Sommerville received an invitation from the Commissioner for Forests, Mr. Jack Henry, to visit his office and examine the Commission's cost-benefit assessment. This he did, and, after seeing the evidence, concluded that the analysis justified a pine plantation on the Boyd only if no value was imputed to the land if it were used as a park. In support of his contention that the parkland did have value he quoted Mr. Justice Hope, who, in a judgment in the equity court concerning the destruction of angophora and rain forest in the Entrance North area said: "Without doubt, the forests in these lands add greatly to the beauty of the area and the evidence also establishes that, apart from their aesthetic value they are of great public value for educational and scientific purposes.."

If the Hon. Wal Fife, the Hon. G. F. Freudenstein, the Hon. Jack Beale, and Mr. Henry may have any doubts about the value of wilderness, we refer them to the New York Times News Service report appearing under the title "Goodbye Wilderness" in the Financial Review of 6th July 1972. The report states:

"Rationing has come to America's famous Appalachian Trail in its 50th year For expanding population and leisure time have combined to put so many urban dwellers on the trail that its most accessible sections have become overcrowded Permits must now be obtained to camp on the trail. The limit is one night at a campsite."

The Appalachian Trail is within a day's drive of 125 million Americans. The Boyd is within half a day's drive of some 3 million Australians. But whereas the Appalachian Trail is 2,000 miles long, the Boyd is only 10 miles long.

MT. WERONG STATE FOREST

Mt. Werong State Forest lies on the southern catchment of the Kowmung River. It contains some majestic pure and near pure stands of messmate stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*). These stands are among the last of such quality in the State. At present the Forestry Commission proposes to preserve a totally inadequate area of only a few acres and some insignificant strips near fire roads.

Meanwhile Mt. Werong State Forest is being logged more heavily and savagely than the Boyd plateau.

RESIGNATION OF FATHER TIERNEY

The Committee has reluctantly accepted the resignation of Father James Tierney, Chairman since the early days, whose sustained enthusiasm, good humour and organising ability have been an inspiration to us all. He explained that this step was forced upon him by the extent of his duties in the Parish, and the increasing work placed upon him in religious education in the Archdiocese. Should these circumstances change, however, he would be happy to be nominated again to membership, or Chairmanship, of the Committee. Meanwhile, our thanks go to him for the great job he has done.

At its meeting of July 5th the Committee elected Mr. Jim Somerville, long-time conservationist and consistent worker for the Committee, to carry on the good work.

COLONG COMMITTEE WILDERNESS WALKS — THE LATEST THING

Escorted weekend bushwalks

Since becoming a nation-wide wilderness society, the Colong Committee has been planning to widen the scope of its activities.

Among our first new projects are Wilderness Walks — pre-arranged, escorted weekend bushwalks led by experienced members of the committee, for people interested in wilderness. Three Walks have been arranged for the last half of 1972:

1. **Kanangra Walls/Cambage Spire/Kowmung River/Church Creek Caves** — a three day walk of moderate difficulty through the heart of "Colong Country" set for the long weekend on Saturday 30th September, Sunday 1st October and Monday 2nd. For experienced bushwalkers only.
2. **Kanangra Walls/Box Creek/Dangalla Cascades** — an easy 2-day walk on Saturday 4th November and Sunday 5th. Starters should be reasonably fit but no experience is required.
3. **Bungonia Caves Reserve/Bungonia Creek/Shoalhaven River** — an easy 2-day walk with packs on Saturday December 2nd and Sunday 3rd.

Bring your friends. Whether experienced bushman or complete novice, any and everyone is welcome, though the Committee's trip leaders reserve the right to approve participants in each walk. Charge per head for each walk is approximately \$2.50 for a 2-day weekend, and walkers supply their own gear, food and return transport from Sydney.

The Colong Committee supplies party leaders, plus a detailed itinerary, sketch map, gear list (including where to buy or hire), suggested menu, and general bushcraft information, and, where possible, notes on the environment, local history, geology, fauna and flora, to each individual walker for each separate walk.

Parties leave Sydney on Friday nights by private transport. Walkers without their own transport can usually be accommodated in other private cars.

For organised groups, clubs, societies, schools etc. the Committee can also organise charter bus transport leaving Sydney early Saturday mornings. Charges, where bus transport is supplied, are slightly higher. For example, cost per head for Kanangra walks, including bus transport, is approximately \$6.

You can book now for any or all of the three weekends listed. Ring Miss Noelene Bearns (539 812) or Miss Sue Jenkins (337 2653) for firm bookings for more information.

TOP END NATIONAL PARK PETITION

This humble petition of interested citizens of the Commonwealth respectfully sheweth:

- And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

(Full name and address in BLOCK LETTERS:)

[illegible]

This petition has been duplicated by Patrick James Thompson, 77 Billyard Avenue, Wahroonga, 2076, for The Colong Committee, a national wilderness Society. Please return to the above address.