

# **SAVE COLONG** **Bulletin**

**THE COLONG COMMITTEE • A National Wilderness Society**

NUMBER 42

JANUARY, 1977

Registered for posting as a periodical category (B)

Price \$1

## **RESOLUTIONS TO THE NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL**

The following resolutions were submitted by the Colong Committee to the Nature Conservation Council Conference in October, 1976, and either passed unanimously or referred to the Executive for action.

### **1. Amendment to Softwood Forestry Agreement**

That the Softwood Forestry Agreement Act be amended to incorporate the following principles:

1. That use of funds be restricted to planting on land now cleared.
2. That the funds be available for any species of both softwood and hardwood.

### **2. The Border Ranges**

- (a) This Conference calls on conservation and environment organisations to increase their representations to the NSW Government calling for the urgent revocation of the Wiangarie, Roseberry and Mt. Lindsay State Forests and dedication of the lands concerned as a Border Ranges National Park.
- (b) This Conference instructs the Nature Conservation Council to express its dissatisfaction with the succession of secret inquiries into the Border Ranges. The conservation movement was critical of the Government Parties Committee set up by the former NSW Liberal Government and it is equally critical of the Interdepartmental Committee recently appointed by the NSW Labor Government. While we are grateful for the NSW Premier's announcement that Levers Plateau (approximately 2000 ha) will not be roaded or logged, we believe that logging should not continue in the remainder of Wiangarie, Roseberry and Mt. Lindsay State Forests (totalling over 40,000 ha). We believe the last sizeable subtropical rainforest in NSW deserves the urgent and fullest protection of the NSW Government.
- (c) This Conference calls on the NSW Government to appoint consultants to report on (1) employment and the economy of the region of which the Border Ranges is part and (2) how employment can be maintained and if possible expanded. Each term of reference is to be viewed in the light that Wiangarie, Roseberry and Mt. Lindsay will be closed to logging and dedicated as a national park.
- (d) This Conference calls on the NSW Government to instruct the National Parks and Wildlife Service to prepare a draft plan of management for the proposed Border Ranges National Park as a matter of urgency, taking the area of the present Wiangarie, Roseberry and Mt. Lindsay State Forests as the basic area of the park for planning purposes. The plan is to include a schedule of employment proposed for the first 5 years.

### **3. Kakadu**

This Conference believes the future of the proposed Kakadu National Park to be a matter of both national and international concern. We nominate it to the Federal Minister for Environment, Planning and Community Development for classification as a World Heritage site. We call on the Federal Government to dedicate it forthwith and to appoint the Federal National Parks and Wildlife Service to manage it. The Conference expresses its deep criticism of both the Liberal and previous Labor Government that the future of this area of such major cultural and natural importance has been allowed to drift into dependence upon the mining and pastoral industries and we call on the Government to make an urgent effort to recover this disgraceful situation.

### **4. Greater Blue Mountains National Park**

This Conference endorses in principle the concept of a Greater Blue Mountains National Park as put forward by the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council in 1932 and as currently proposed by The Colong Committee Ltd; such park to include the Colo wilderness area, the headwaters of the Capertee and Wolgan Rivers, the Nattai River, the Bindook Tableland and the bulk of the Warragamba Catchment together with the intervening Crown lands between these areas, the existing national parks (Blue Mountains National Park and Kanangra-Boyd National Park) and the Hunter National Park proposal of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This Conference commends the concept to the NSW Premier and calls for urgent consideration to be given to dedicating the lands concerned and to protecting them in the interim from the many current threats such as powerlines, new highways, coalmining, pine plantations, trailbikes etc.

### **5. Road to Yerranderie**

This Conference resolves to advise the Minister for Planning and Environment and Wollondilly and Oberon Shire Council that it opposes the proposal for opening of public road access to Yerranderie which conflicts with the need to preserve the centre of the existing Warragamba Catchment Area as a wilderness core to the proposed Greater Blue Mountains National Park. The Conference particularly criticizes the trail bike establishment in Byrnes Gap and the bulldozing of a landing strip at Yerranderie and calls for removal of one and revegetation of the other.

**6. Wilderness Act**

This Conference calls on the NSW Government to legislate to protect the few remaining wilderness areas in NSW.

**7. Wild and Scenic Rivers**

This Conference calls on the NSW Government to take such legislative and/or administrative action as is necessary to protect the remaining wild and scenic rivers of this state.

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**THE GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK**

Readers will recall that in June 1975 the Colong Committee adopted the Greater Blue Mountains National Park as one of its three principal objectives. Several organisations, including the N.P.A., the NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, the Colo Committee and the Bindook Committee were then preparing submissions on areas within the Blue Mountains and, under the sponsorship of the Colong Committee, these were brought together in a joint Committee to prepare a submission for the whole of the Blue Mountains.

The N.P.A., using funds provided by the Paddy Pallin Foundation, undertook to publish a special issue covering the Greater Blue Mountains National Park. Five thousand copies of the Journal were printed of which the C.C. and Federation of Bush Walking Clubs have each taken 500 at 50¢ a copy.

A copy of the Journal is enclosed as a supplement to this Bulletin. Some of our members who are also members of the N.P.A. will already have received copies. If so we ask them to hand this copy on to a supporter of the cause of wilderness conservation, a likely convert, or a person who may try to influence the NSW Government.

We are pleased to record that, the day after the Journal issue was published, the Premier, Mr Wran, and the Minister for Lands, Mr Crabtree announced the creation of the Greater Southern Blue Mountains National Park, an area of 160,000 hectares which includes much of the southern section of the proposed Greater Blue Mountains Park. Much of the remainder of our proposals for the Southern Blue Mountains including Nattai and an area south west of Mount Werong is to be investigated.

The Colong Committee congratulates the Government on its prompt decision to create the Southern Blue Mountains National Park. We hope that the areas marked "for investigation" will soon be added and that investigation of our proposals for the addition of the Northern Blue Mountains will take place without delay. This proposal originally came from the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council of which Myles J. Dunphy (father of Milo) was honorary secretary. He has recently been awarded the O.B.E. in recognition of his services to conservation. At a time when most people treated forests and wild-life as things to yield money and boost economies, he knew they were irreplaceable parts of creation, and gave his time to drawing up boundaries, and campaigning in advance of his time, for his visions which now are becoming real. The Colong Committee congratulates him.

It may be timely to remind the Government of the undertaking given by the then Premier, the Hon. James McGirr in April 1947 when he said:

"In keeping with our earlier decision to set aside a vast area of snow country as a National Park — a playing ground for the people for all time — we propose to create other important National Parks. Of these, the one of outstanding interest will embrace the Blue Mountains and link up adjoining areas of Crown Lands within easy reach of the capital, the whole involving an area of more than two million acres. This park will form a green belt running from the Hawkesbury in the North, sweeping westward to the Blue Mountains and extending southward to Port Hacking."

From our knowledge of the State's rapidly shrinking wilderness resources, we believe the Government will experience great difficulty in finding enough potential parkland to achieve its long term goal of 10 million acres of parkland in NSW, and that the dedication of the areas we have designated in the Northern Blue Mountains will be essential if this goal is to be achieved.

Preparations for a visit by the Premier to inspect the proposed park are in hand.

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**THE CONCATENATED ORDER OF HOO HOO**

"What on earth is it?" somebody exclaimed.

The Experienced Conservationist turned purple with ire, at the thought of Hoo Hoo. His eyes bulged. People standing about feared for his liver. "They're like the Klu Klux Klan," he said.

"We're going to have a demonstration against them. Women can't belong, and they wear toilet seats round their necks. You have to be a forester or in a connected industry to become a part of them. If people knew about them, we might be able to stop them threatening our forests. They believe forest resources are there for extraction — they have said so in speeches. They declare that conservation is just a fad, and in some cases even a mania. They say conservationists are trying to slow down the economy and obstruct industry through limiting the harvest of timber.

"But it's a fact that things like clear-felling which Hoo Hoo encourage, destroy the environment. In woodchipping, every idiot knows that it increases fire-hazard, adds to erosion, results in loss of top soil, and leaching, and all the trees grow the same when they regenerate, increasing hazards of disease and insects. Furthermore, the wildlife's destroyed."

People about sighed and murmured at the implications of Hoo Hoo. The environment centre was very busy. One group was folding news sheets in envelopes, and another was huddled round a table plotting counter moves. Phones were ringing, and crowds were surging through doorways, blocking passages and rummaging in files. It was like a whole counter-government, but more active. People were wiping their brows from the energy generated.

It was true, the Hoo Hoo were like children who put on batman capes. They had propaganda which even toilet tissue commercials could not equal. Sparky the koala was their symbol. They copyrighted him, hoping he would bring about greater public awareness of the importance of forestry. They made up messages for Sparky, such as "Please tidy up after use. Multiple use forestry needs good housekeeping".

When you read their publicity you had to laugh. "To fill with credit the sphere in which we are placed without interfering with the rights of others." "To establish the spoken word on the basis of the written bond." "To consider our vocation worthy and to be worthy of our vocation as the Nation's homebuilders." What did it all mean?

The games they made up were as mad. They had delved into Egyptian lore for titles and ritualistic suggestions. The black cat with its tail curved as the figure nine was selected as the emblem. The head of the Jurisdiction IV was designated "Deputy Snark". State representatives were termed "Viceregent Snarks". They were better than Enid Blyton at making up secret clubs.

Next day, I went to the demonstration. I walked up the hill in the sun.

On the pavement, at the meeting place, organisers were distributing posters to be waved. "Forestry is bad enough without Hoo Hoo," one said, and another one had written on it in red, "Hoo Hoo smash forests for fun." I sat down on a rock beside a landscaped garden, outside the hotel. Soon some forestry men arrived. One had on a suit and the other wore red trousers plus other highly patterned additions. They smiled amicably, and laughed.

"You've got your facts wrong," one of them said as he read a poster.

"Tell us about the Border Ranges then," the E.C. shouted. "The Forestry Commission itself says there's only seventeen years supply of timber left there."

The Hoo Hoo man coughed, and walked away.

"I hope you come back as a tree," a girl with black hair shouted after him. He pretended to laugh. "You'd be over-matured," she screamed. "Wood-chipping for you." He vanished into the lobby.

Soon some other foresters appeared, curious to witness the demonstrators. "Get a picture of that bird," one of them said to his wife.

"I am not a bird," the demonstrator yelled. "I'm a woman. And why don't you let your wives belong?"

"We don't want to," the wife said, and went across the road with her Kodak.

"The best thing we timber people ever did for you was to fill up Lake Pedder in Tasmania," the Hoo Hoo man said.

"Boo Hoo Hoo," a girl yelled at him. "You won't get my Tasmanian tourist dollar, mate."

Another forester came down, and smiled amiably. "I think we should all be friends," he said.

"Go away," the demonstrators shouted. He did go away.

"Why couldn't we be friends?" I asked.

"That's just the approach of big business," the girl said. "They want to keep us quiet. But do you think they'd ever listen to us?"

Some slight rain began to fall. The camphorlaurel prevented it from streaking the colours on the posters. Somebody phoned the press to see why they had not arrived.

I talked to a girl who wore a Yak cardigan. "In Europe," she said, "I saw the black, dead rivers and I knew then how wonderful this country is. I came back, and I had to join the fight to prevent it from ever becoming like those places. There the people just walk in soot all day. The rivers are black and dead. You hardly see it after a while."

We talked about India where they had to put fences round remaining trees to stop them from being stripped, where they had been forced to open up last reserves for the villagers' starving cattle to trample and turn to dust. You could never take for granted the miracle of this country's forests where wood lay next to the fire, and you did not have to scrape buffalo droppings off the foad, for fuel. In India, every corner was cultivated, and rubbed bare by endless feet. And yet, in this place here, culverts were still thick with grass, and nobody needed to pick the sunflowers self-sown from the passing trucks.

It was a land the Hoo Hoo should have been honouring, with its own shapes and adjusted temperature. They should have been on their knees worshipping, grovelling at the foot of mountains instead of scheming how they could plough them down. Because this continent still had wide scenes, the Hoo Hoo thought they would remain forever. They could not conceive that things ended if you did not protect them. They could not imagine, except in terms of shares and portfolios.

After the demonstration, I went down to the quay. There young people, and bearded men, and girls with messy hair and crushed skirts were shouting that uranium mining should not be allowed. Policemen marched beside them in the gutters, looking coy. Newsmen ran behind taking footage. Behind the harbour was blue. Ferries were there, and spacing.

Despite Hoo Hoo, everywhere people were beginning to care. They were prepared to take in their arms the scoopings of their responsibilities. Even policemen tolerated it. It was buddings and beginnings. It was attempts at real government, by real people.

#### SUBMISSIONS TO THE AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

In response to the Commission's invitation to submit proposals for listing on the Interim Register of the National Estate, the Colong Committee lost no time in submitting its Border Ranges proposal. The submission was supported by the N.P.A. publication "Save the Border Ranges", the issue of "Habitat" and photographs by Henry Gold. We have been reliably informed that this application was the first received by the Commission. It is our hope that it is also the first considered and that it will appear second on the list after Fraser Island (already listed), where we believe it belongs. Much of the existing forest is many times older than our oldest historic buildings. Buildings can be reconstructed, eucalyptus forests will regenerate within a century or two, but rain forests evolve over many centuries and, once logged, may never fully recover.



The Committee also wrote to the Premier, requesting that the State Government should set a precedent by applying for the listing of the Border Ranges. It was pointed out that the Border Ranges were not merely of State, or even national significance, but of world heritage standard and therefore merited Commonwealth assistance for the purpose of preservation. Expenditure on alternative employment, and possibly compensation, would be considerably less than that promised for Fraser Island. It is regrettable that so many of our few wilderness remnants are in process of development, but this is a fact that must be faced if they are to be preserved.

The Committee has also submitted the Greater Blue Mountains National Park for listing, using the N.P.A. special Journal issue in support.

We understand that the A.C.F. will submit Kakadu, so that all three wilderness objectives of the Committee should be listed in the Interim Register.

#### 19th CENTURY WILDERNESS ADVOCATE

"There is room in the world, no doubt, and even in old countries, for an immense increase of population, supposing the arts of life to go on improving and capital to increase. But although it may be innocuous, I confess I see very little reason for desiring it. The density of population necessary to enable mankind to obtain, in the greatest degree, all the advantages both of co-operation and of social intercourse, has, in all the more populous countries, been attained. A population may be too crowded, though all be amply supplied with food and raiment. It is not good for man to be kept perforce at all times in the presence of his species. A world from which solitude is extirpated is a very poor ideal. Solitude, in the sense of being often alone, is essential to any depth of meditation or of character; and solitude in the presence of natural beauty and grandeur is the cradle of thoughts and aspiration which are not only good for the individual, but which society could ill do without. Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture ploughed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man's use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture. If the earth must lose that great portion of its pleasantness which it owes to things that the unlimited increase of wealth and population would extirpate from it, for the mere purpose of enabling it to support a larger, but not a better or a happier population, I sincerely hope, for the sake of posterity, that they will be content to be stationary, long before necessity compels them to it."

John Stuart Mill

*Principles of Political Economy*

#### FORESTRY COMMISSION FUNDS IN JEOPARDY

The Hon. Ian Sinclair, Minister for Primary Industry, has written to the Colong Committee telling it that:

When making its offer of financial assistance (for softwood planting) the Commonwealth asked the States that they, to the greatest extent practicable, plant cleared land in the extension year and follow the guidelines for management procedures contained in the report on softwood planting of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation.

Recommendation (xiv) of the House of Representatives Committee is that:

Plans for the plantation of exotic softwoods should be made available for public scrutiny. Full consultation and discussions should be made with interested parties before they are implemented.

Plans of the Mount Werong plantation have not been made available for public scrutiny, nor has there been any consultation or discussion with an interested party, the Colong Committee.

Recommendation (xvii) is that:

Stringent conditions should be imposed upon the lending of Federal money to ensure that forestry management procedures designed to protect the environment are strictly observed.

There has been no "stringently supervised independent research program," as stipulated in recommendation (vi). Since the Commission is not "to the greatest extent practicable" planting cleared land in the extension year (1976/7) the provisions of recommendation (vi) must apply. This recommendation is that:

Money should not be loaned to the States for the planting of softwoods in areas where native forest is to be clear-felled, except where a thorough and stringently supervised independent research program has been conducted into the flora and fauna of that area, as well as its soil quality, and where the planting plan allows for their protection.

From the above it is clear that the Commonwealth should immediately cease providing Softwood Agreement funds to New South Wales. The Commission could avoid this financial disaster by stopping its bulldozing at Werong and using the funds for re-forestation in the Richmond River catchment, a project which entirely accords with the recommendations of the House of Reps. Committee.

**AMERICA SETS AN EXAMPLE**

After a year-long struggle between conservationists and the timber industry and unions, U.S. Congress produced a Forestry Reform Bill. An important feature is the marginal lands provision stating that logging cannot be a management goal on lands where irreversible soil erosion will result from cutting, or where trees cannot be regrown within five years. Environmentalists hope that this will eliminate sensitive lands in the Rockies and elsewhere from cutting. Another provision limits cutting near stream banks and shorelines if it will damage fish habitat. Guidelines are set for clear-cutting which require the Forest Service to go through justification procedures before the practice can be continued.

Another Bill, the Omnibus Forest and Refuge Wilderness Bill, designates 19 areas in 13 states as instant wilderness, and an additional 8 units as wilderness study areas. In total, approximately 388,000 acres are being designated instant wilderness with an additional 587,364 acres to be studied. Australians' plea for 80,000 acres for the Border Ranges National Park seem very modest in comparison.

—*Sierra Club National News Report. Vol. 8, No. 35 & Vol. 8, No. 33*

**SCIENTISTS ASK WRAN FOR LOGGING MORATORIUM**

Two scientists from the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education in Lismore have made a submission to the Premier for a moratorium on further logging in the Border Ranges forests.

They are Dr Peter Den Exter and Dr Norm Mackay, who have studied the issue from the timber industry and conservationists' viewpoint, and their submission is the result of six months' consideration.

Dr Den Exter said the Border Ranges forests were a national resource, and there was scientific concern Australia-wide. It was not just a local conflict.

The report asks the Premier to relax present import tariffs on unmilled timber, so that this may be used to ensure timber industry employment is maintained while the promotion of farm forestry using native species is explored as an alternative use of land unsuited to economic agricultural production and as a means of rehabilitating degraded and weed infested abandoned farmland.

The two scientists want all proposed logging in rainforests to be postponed to allow an inventory to be made of flora and fauna and the ecology and hydrology to be more fully understood.

Even with logging of rainforest areas the number of mills in the Kyogle Shire would decline to zero by the 1990's, the submission said. "Solution to the economic problems of the region clearly does not lie with the short term exploitation of timber from remaining forests, as would occur under the present management policies."

Clearing the forest cover, particularly the Big Scrub, reduced soil fertility. Pastures degraded and became weed infested.

—*Lismore Northern Star, 2nd August, 1976*

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In addition to Bulletin Subscriptions the following people gave donations during October, November and December, 1976. In some cases these are monies originally subscribed for Carricks shares. Thank you for your continuing support.

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**VICE-PRESIDENT APPOINTED TO STATE POLLUTION CONTROL COMMISSION**

On December 16 Jim Somerville, Vice-President of the Colong Committee, was appointed to represent recreational interests on the 12 member State Pollution Control Commission. The appointment, although only for the expected remaining six months of the Commission's life is a recognition of Jim's able espousal of the cause of the conservation of natural areas. Len Willan, Past Chairman of the Nature Conservation Council, was appointed to represent conservation on June 16, 1976. Prior to this there were no Commissioners with any intimate knowledge of the need for conserving natural areas for recreation and other purposes. When the Commission was considering the Boyd issue, C.C. members went to a good deal of trouble to canvass individual members of the Commission so that they would understand the wilderness concept involved. Such action should no longer be necessary now that the interests of conservation and recreation are represented by C.C. members.

**LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND TO THE COLONG COMMITTEE**

"We came to Australia to see the flora and fauna. Our first afternoon we went for a short walk in the rainforest and soon realised we had come to the right place.

Coming direct from Europe what struck us most was the size and variety of the trees. We have nothing to compare in size with your red cedars, brush box and stinging trees, to mention the giants among giants. We do not really know what a European forest that has never at some time or other been exploited for timber would look like. A silver fir is said to have reached a height of 68 metres and there are tales of oaks in the Middle Ages that were big enough to house Robin Hood and his merry men. You in Australia have done well to preserve a piece of true virgin forest before it became too late. We were told that in the rainforest there are some 120 species. Switzerland has 43 tree species all told."

—Doreen and Werner Grossmann

**REPORT ON WOODCHIP INDUSTRY**

The Senate Standing Committee on Science and the Environment has published an interim report on the Impact on the Australian Environment of the Current Woodchip Industry Programme.

It is a fairly typical Committee report, well-hedged to embrace conflicting opinions, but the keynote is conclusion No. 1, which states that "curtailment of the existing woodchip industry programme is not warranted on environmental grounds at this time". Since the existing programme requires clear-felling for its fulfilment the Committee cannot escape its commitment to this practice. It admits that clear-felling "poses a number of threats to the environment" some of which "can be acceptably minimised by application of appropriate management techniques", while others "notably those relating to soil nutrients, wildlife preservation and conservation of genetic characteristics, are less well understood and require further research." To conservationists clear-felling is almost complete destruction of the environment — i.e. the flora and fauna together with loss of soil in the consequent erosion. (What is "the environment" beyond flora, fauna and soil?) These are facts to be seen by all who care to look and no amount of research will alter them.

Some crumbs are thrown to conservationists. Environmental protection measures are described as "inadequate in some respects" and "requirements recognising the full range of ecological factors needed for adequate conservation of viable populations of Australian fauna and flora in national parks and reserves, as well as in multi-purpose managed forests, are at present inadequately met." Also "detailed examination is required of the need to set aside areas of forest for wilderness, intensive forestry and a complete range of community purposes between." More specifically "the Merrica River and Nadgee River flowing through the Nadgee Nature Reserve have potential as valuable wildlife conservation and scientific reference areas, provided their waters are securely protected from alteration arising from woodchip operations in their respective watersheds."

These concessions are highly significant. They acknowledge that woodchipping extensively damages the natural environment, the corollary being that only within parks and reserves will any of the original environment be preserved. If clear-felling for woodchips is accepted, it means that all accessible forests outside reserves will be destroyed as world demand for cellulose rises and forests diminish. Except within reserves, the Australian forest environment as we know it will be replaced by wastes of mud, weeds, saplings and suckers, or cohorts of mono-synchronous growth within each "coup", according to the time which has elapsed since clear-felling.

The Committee "strongly advocates urgent consideration" should be given to transferring sufficient forest land to Nadgee Reserve so that the watershed of the Merrica and Nadgee Rivers is protected. This is an important point, which the Colong Committee hopes to see immediately implemented, especially considering the Merrica River already runs turbid since construction by the Forestry Commission of logging roads in the catchment. Furthermore the extra lands required to enclose the two complete catchments only comprise some 1.5% of the total area for wood-chipping.

However, addition of the Nadgee and Merrica River catchment is a relatively minor matter compared with the need to review the whole land-use allocation in the Eden region. Some years ago Messrs Jack Beale and Tom Lewis as Ministers for Conservation and Minister for Lands respectively, made a joint decision to allocate the bulk of the remaining forested lands in this region to forestry. Approximately 1000 square miles of the remaining forests of this State were thus given, without parliamentary debate or public discussion, to forestry exploitation. As it turned out the prime user of these forests is a wholly owned Japanese company, Harris-Daishowa.