

SAVE COLONG bulletin

THE COLONG COMMITTEE • A National Wilderness Society

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MR. WRAN'S TOUR OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

Back in May, 1975 The Colong Committee decided to put the proposed Greater Blue Mountains National Park No. 2 on its list of wilderness priorities. The Committee had, in fact, already spent most of its time fighting for threatened areas of the proposed park, such as Colong Caves, the Boyd Plateau, the Wollongambe Wilderness area and the Cox Valley. Three of these areas had been saved, but developmental pressures on other sections continued to multiply. It was obvious that the first task was to define what we wanted. For this purpose the several organisations working for the preservation of different sections of the Blue Mountains were brought together in August last year.

Meeting the Premier

In October representatives of The Colong Committee were invited to meet the Premier, Mr. Wran, to discuss wilderness preservation. At this meeting the Premier expressed his interest in the Blue Mountains and said he would like to visit them. Unaccustomed as we were to talking to Premiers, let alone taking them on wilderness tours, this suggestion was warmly received. We pushed ahead with our report on the park, and it was published in December in the form of a special 44 page issue of the National Parks Journal. No sooner was the issue printed than the Premier announced that 160,000 hectares in the Southern Blue Mountains would be added to the existing Blue Mountains and Kanangra-Boyd Parks. A week-end was nominated for the visit, and we got down to the spade work of planning the tour.

Organisation

The tour we planned — first a flight over the whole area, then a boat trip up the Warragamba Dam, a four wheel drive trip through the Bindook country, camp at Bats Camp and a tour to Kanangra via Mt. Werong — required a two-engined aeroplane, boats on the dam and 9 four-wheel drive vehicles to accommodate our official party of nearly 50 persons. The aeroplane was provided by Dick Smith, the boats and 5 four-wheel drive vehicles with drivers provided by the Water Board, and three four-wheel drive vehicles provided by Committee members and friends. In addition to this very generous help with equipment, the Committee is specially indebted to Milo Dunphy, Chief Co-ordinator, Helen Rowen and Tamara Steel for catering, Ted Daniels and the N.P.A. for equipment (with help from Paddy Pallin), Peter Maslen for organising transport, Bill Dixon and the Colo Committee for organising the camp, and doing most of the work around it, Bruce Vote (President of Federation of B.W. Clubs), who accompanied the Premier and Mrs. Wran in the plane trip, and Bill Hicks (President of the N.C.C.) who drove Mr. and Mrs. Wran in his Range Rover.

Other guests

Guests included Mr. George Petersen, M.L.A., and Mrs. Petersen, Mr. E.J. Walder, President of the Water Board (on the first leg of the trip), Board members Sutherland and Glebe, Acting Chief Engineer John Collocott, forester Max

Wootton, Alderman Quirk of Katoomba City Council and Mrs. Quirk, John Dorman, President of the N.P.A. and Mrs. Dorman, Dr. Dick Mason, President of the Sydney Branch of the N.P.A., and Mr. Jim Govan, Superintendent of the Blue Mountains National Park.

Aerial inspection.

Came the great day, March 19th, and Bruce Vote awoke at 5.30 a.m. to the sound of pouring rain. This was probably the end, the stone end, but there was nothing for it but to press on. By departure time, 8.30 a.m. the weather had greatly improved. Providence, perhaps recognising our attempt to save a lovely bit of creation so far spared from the ravages of man, was kind. Visibility, apart from a few cumulus clouds which enhanced the scenery, was first rate. The plane flew north to the Hunter section of the park, south to Kanangra, then to Camden.

From there the Premier and Mrs. Wran were transported to Burragorang Lookout, where the Water Board had provided lunch on tables behind a roped-off area. Everyone in the official party tried not to look at the Wrans, while tourists buying ice-blocks at the canteen stared intently. There under the endless sky, segregated from the limitless scenery by the ropes, we ate politely, equipped with both serviettes and place-mats. The Water Board four-wheel drive vehicles were polished and shining. The sky, despite weeks of previous deluge, had turned itself blue in blessing. The drivers were fine in crisp uniforms. People opened doors and smiled.

Launch across the Lake

We were driven down to the Nattai landing where the Premier departed first by fast launch across the lake. The cliffs looked as though people had run coloured pencils along them, to make them stained. If the Water Board had not taken into its possession this enormous lake, access to wilderness behind would not have been blocked, and roads would have been built into it, and houses, but because vehicles had become legs for many people, places where cars could not venture were often still preserved. People tended to think, if they could not drive there, it was dangerous, and wild.

4WD transport

At Byrnes Bay the party alighted. They stood around waiting to be allotted to their particular vehicle, smiling and talking. Then we drove through spaces so generous you wondered how people have ever survived in rooms.

At Nyanga Mountain we saw holes in rocks. Now they were just filled with tadpoles and algae, but once Aborigines had sharpened stones there. When they had stared out at the ranges, perhaps old witchdoctors dreamed how overnments would come, and lobbyists, how laws would be written so people could wrangle over them.

Bats Camp presentation

At Bats Camp there were tents of all sizes and blends on the grassy flats beneath the trees beside the creek. Here the Premier was presented with a book comprising original prints of photographs of the Blue Mountains and the text

of the combined report of the conservation organisations represented at the camp. Alex Colley, who made the presentation, said that the week-end had been arranged so as to give the Premier and his wife the best possible overall view of the mountains in two days. In the morning he had flown over the Colo wilderness which was the largest in Eastern N.S.W. and probably the largest in the State. Then he had seen the Kanangra-Boyd wilderness, the second largest, and perhaps he had realised that but for the efforts of The Colong Committee and its supporting societies the heart of this wilderness would have been occupied by a limestone quarry and a bull-dozed Boyd Plateau. We realised, however, that he would only get a distant view of much of the area and we had therefore done what experience had told us was most effective — sent Henry Gold out with his camera and produced a photographic record of different sections of the park. He said that the presentation was being made for three reasons. Firstly, as a mark of our appreciation of Mr. Wran's interest in the proposal and his willingness to see us and talk with us. This had inspired us to complete our report, and if it had not been for his expressed desire to see the mountains this week end tour would not have come about. Secondly we hoped he would show the book to his colleagues involved in decision making so that they too would appreciate the beauty of the area. Thirdly, we simply wanted him to know what a magnificent scenic area Sydney had at its back door and what a complete contrast it was to the spreading urban complex which would soon be lapping the edges of the Cumberland Plain. If his Government succeeded in preserving this area for posterity, it would be remembered long after others had been forgotten.

Mr. Wran and his wife, stood in their jeans, smiling. Everyone was smiling. Alex handed him the book, there among the trees, in the dusk, with birds as background.

Premier replies.

"Well, Thank you for this book", the Premier replied, his hand resting on his wife's shoulder. "I will most certainly show it to my colleagues if I can tear them away from the latest issue of the Colong Bulletin. And I must thank you for having us along on this visit, even if it was at my suggestion. But you're all hardened campaigners, and you'll know that everything you ask for is not always granted. Conservationists both in and out of parliament are often cooked like a dinner, but then, I remind those colleagues of mine who criticise the movement, that back in the old days, if people had been more stringent, places like Silverwater and Chester Hill wouldn't have all that smog and all those chemical factories now".

"I think I'd better get on with dedicating this park now, having seen it, as quickly as possible. I'm reminded of the old adage that there's many a slip twixt cup and lip".

"Today, I've been in wagons, and an aeroplane, and a launch, and now, if you'll excuse us, as we're in this great air lung, my wife and I, are going off to take a look at some trees".

Then they went off hand in hand into the forest.

At night after dinner, which appeared and vanished from tables as though it was the Chevron, and not pits over coals in drums, the people sat round a camp fire, and were entertained by our musicians. Mr. Wran and his wife retired early to their tent which had been discreetly erected in an area as private as possible.

In the morning, after breakfast, the party climbed Mt. Moorain behind the camp. We stood on a lookout, at a stop in a wilderness, a small, brightly coloured group crowded into a tiny space, while beyond forests of abundance and generosity so enormous spread in profusion. Milo Dunphy balanced on the edge of a precipice to the concern of all who were watching, and while in total oblivion of his near demise, which could have occurred at any moment should the wind have increased only slightly in pressure, spoke into the microphone for the television crew from Channel 10.

Pines.

After this the convoy set out for Mount Werong, where Milo Dunphy showed the Premier a forest on the road to destruction. All millable timber — timber for pit props for the Broken Hill mines — had been removed, leaving a scraggly mess of old trees, knocked down trees, saplings and severed branches. At this stage of its management routine it is usual for the Forestry Commission to declare the forest "useless" and set out to "improve" it by bulldozing the remaining vegetation into windrows, burning it and then planting pines. Further on in the Gurnang State forest we passed miles of "improved" forest consisting mainly of bare soil and windrows of uprooted trees. This is all part of the Tuglow-Kowmung catchment.

Then on to Kanangra Walls, where, as Milo said, and the Premier agreed, "The vista speaks for itself". Back to the Boyd crossing where our ace caterers had prepared a slap up chicken salad lunch in three quarters of an hour. Thanks, hand shakes and congratulations all round, and so home, each to our own little compartment in the urban labyrinth.

All in all a remarkable week-end. So many things could have gone wrong, but nothing did. The sun shone, the machinery all worked, and the timing was near perfect. Providence was certainly on our side.

DESTRUCTION OF RAINFORESTS

The present wholesale destruction of the rainforests of South East Asia can be traced to two main causes; massive population growth and the developed world's insatiable demand for timber.

The unprecedented population increase has resulted in a serious imbalance between the needs of the rural people and the availability of natural resources.

Shifting cultivation, though endemic to the region, has now reached serious proportions. In Thailand, the lowland populations are being forced to compete with hill people. In Sarawak, Sabah and Papua New Guinea, primary forests are being cleared at an accelerated rate by this form of land-use. Even protected areas are not spared this and other forms of encroachment.

To aggravate the situation, the industrialized countries in the temperate region are encouraging the rapid depletion of the rainforests to satisfy the needs of their luxury markets. FAO has reported a dramatic increase in recent years of import of logs into Japan from the Philippines and Indonesia. A small but rapidly growing recent development is the increase of pulpwood exports in the form of chips.

— *I.U.C.N. Bulletin, Vol.8. No.1. January 1977.*

WOODCHIP — THE THREAT TO QUEENSLAND

Most Queenslanders would be indeed surprised to learn that there is a very real possibility of a woodchip industry being established in the South-East of this state in the near future.

In 1975, a company by the name of Standard Sawmillers submitted an Environmental Impact Study to the Queensland Government outlining its case for the establishment of a woodchip industry in South-East Queensland and North-East N.S.W. The proposal involved an agreement between existing sawmills and the woodchippers whereby the latter can utilise wastes and residues from the mills for the production of woodchips and their export through the port of Brisbane to Japan.

Clearfelling for woodchips is one of the most destructive threats to the remaining natural environment in Australia.

Wildlife is totally destroyed in the clearfelling process and cannot, contrary to popular opinion, conveniently move into adjacent forest.

A significant loss of soil nutrients is caused by woodchipping with a resultant reduction in soil fertility. Soil erosion is severe and results in increased salinity and

turbidity in watercourses, thus seriously affecting water quality.

The spread of the root fungus disease, *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, responsible for the destruction of large areas of forest in southern Australia, and recently discovered in Queensland, is facilitated by intensive forestry activities, including woodchipping.

Economically, the public pays heavily for the woodchip industry which is based entirely on the Japanese export market. The Australian taxpayer pays for such costs as the regeneration of the forest after chipping, port facilities, roads and road maintenance, and they pay for those industries which suffer indirectly, from chipping, such as fishing and tourism.

Act Now. The Australian Government has a responsibility to refuse licence to export woodchips from this project until it has considered the recommendations of a public environmental inquiry which can be set up under the Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act. The Prime Minister and the Federal Minister for the Environment should be urged to act along these lines.

— *From the Queensland Conservation Council, P.O. Box 238 North Quay.*

SUCCESS AFTER 40 YEARS FOR PIONEER CONSERVATIONIST

Myles Dunphy in a recent letter described some of his conservation work to the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, and we reprint an extract here:

"After thirty years of self-supporting work in the public interest, including investigations in the field, research and design work, organising support, conducting campaigns, and finally submitting schemes for national and other major parks, the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council disbanded in 1962.

"The work was interrupted by World War II, and for this and other reasons it became a test of endurance and patience; but as it led to the creation of six national and state parks eventually the team effort, based primarily on accurate knowledge of the rugged scenic territory of each scheme, was well worth while.

"Notwithstanding the fact that all the proposed schemes for major public parklands in terms of regional design were suitable, of sound design, avoided the resumption of alienated lands, and were strongly supported by recreation, conservation, and scientific societies, the conservation movement was faced with the conservative attitude of authorities. On principle they were opposed to the reservation and dedication of major parklands in the public interest, or, rather, for the public; they were large areas, were unproductive, yielded no rents, fees and rates, and their maintenance would be a charge upon the public funds. Only when each demand became clamorous were the authorities stirred to perform a service of the smallest possible extent; they dealt with present situations and had no policy for planning 50 years ahead. They favoured a multi-use basis.

The authorities had to be educated to consider the concept of the conservation of wilderness — or primitive areas, as a national necessity. They considered such areas as non-productive and a waste of land, even when a scheme concerned first-class, scenic, rugged territory whose best ultimate use was obviously scenic, recreational and wildlife parkland.

"However, the weight of opinion of most scientific bodies concerned with conservation gradually supported the conservation societies, in unison they later made the general claim; that all residual scenic Crown lands should be set apart as human environment for the future needs of large populations; or as examples of type habitat, in the form of nature reserves, appropriately planned, before it becomes too late to do so in this State.

"The following facts became evident to me years ago:

1. Fine scenery, once discovered, cannot be overlooked, it will continue to draw attention to itself until its qualities are preserved or destroyed.
2. The conscious endeavour to preserve the natural physical character of the scenic areas of our country is strongly opposed to unplanned despoliation for commercial profit, and to senseless vandalism by the anti-social element.
3. When deprived of indigenous wildlife the bushland and littoral environments are poor places for human enjoyment."

SOUTH WEST TASMANIA. BOUNDARIES?

The second stage of an Inquiry into the future of the South-West, and the boundaries of a National Park, is well underway, and will be concluded by May.

Of the area proposed by the A.C.F. for national park status, only one third is presently protected. Within the A.C.F.'s proposed boundary bulldozers forge ahead unchecked. H.E.C. investigations continue in the Lower Gordon, and Franklin Rivers; Forestry roads surge westwards in the southern forests. All this would make the Government's Inquiry seem farcical.

As the South-West has been nominated for recognition as Australia's foremost World Heritage Area, a wilderness of international standing, it is imperative that pressure be brought to bear on the Tasmanian Government. That pressure must be national. All Australian conservationists must participate.

Representations to the South-West Advisory Committee may still be made at this stage, and you are urged to express your views in writing to:

The Secretary,
The South-West Advisory Committee,
C/- Parliament House,
HOBART.

As it is a matter of national import, Federal parliamentarians ought to be reminded of pre-election promises of an enlarged South-West National Park. If the decision is left to the Tasmanian State Government, the past record will be repeated — Federal intervention to save Lake Pedder came just too late.

For up to date information on the state of play in Tasmania you are referred to the Tasmanian Wilderness Society Journal. It can be obtained from T.E.C., 102 Bathurst St., Hobart, 7000.

The Preliminary Report of the South-West Advisory Committee may be perused in the Total Environment Centre Library, 18 Argyle Street, Sydney: Tasmanian Wilderness Society Journals are there also.

— *Helen Gee, Tasmanian Environment Centre, Hobart.*

STATE GOVERNMENT INQUIRIES ON THE BORDER RANGES

As previously recorded, the Colong Committee wrote to the Premier on Nov. 26th, requesting the Government to make a submission for inclusion of the Border Ranges on the Interim Register of the National Estate.

The following reply has been received from the Premier:

"Dear Mr. Colley,

"I am writing in reference to your letter on behalf of the Colong Committee seeking the Government's support for the proposal that certain land in the Border Ranges area be recommended for inclusion on the Interim Register of the National Estate.

"As your Committee knows the Government has established an inter-departmental committee to investigate

a management policy for the Border Ranges area. The State Pollution Control Commission will be asked to seek public comment and convene public round-table discussions as part of an independent review by the Commission of proposals arising from the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee.

"At this stage, therefore, I feel that it would be premature for the Government to give consideration to the question of supporting a recommendation for all or any part of the Border Ranges area for inclusion on the Interim Register.

"However, your Committee has my assurance that the claims of this area for conservation will be taken fully into account by the Government in its deliberations."

EXTRACT FROM HANSARD OF NSW LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. CRABTREE (Kogarah), Minister for Lands: I am glad that not all honourable members of the Opposition who have been Ministers for Lands have risen in the debate. I am not challenging them to do so. Some of them have had rather chequered careers. There are five Ministers for Lands in the Chamber out of about ten members present.

Mr. Lewis: The worst one is at the table.

Mr. CRABTREE: My word it is. He will fight rabid left-wingers and right-wingers who want to destroy this country.

Mr. Fisher: The Colong Committee does not think much of you.

Mr. CRABTREE: I do not think much of the Colong Committee, most of whom are members of the Liberal Party. I know that those people have been lobbying members of your party. They have been seen in the House lobbying members of the Opposition. Do not try to load me with the Colong Committee. I know them. I know there are organizers of the Liberal Party who are members of the Colong Committee. I shall return to the bill

(page 4957, No. 48, 9.3.1977)

Comment: If the Colong Committee is dominated by Liberal supporters (untrue) then how come Mr. Lewis, when Minister for Lands, consistently, over a number of years, refused to meet a deputation from the Committee?

DECISION ON WOODCHIP STUNS CONSERVATIONIST

Leading North Coast conservationist, Mr. Russ Maslen said yesterday that he was amazed the State Government was intending to base a woodchip industry on a declining resource.

Mr. Maslen was replying to a statement by the Minister for Decentralisation and Development, Mr. Day, that conservationists had adopted an extreme view.

He said Mr. Day had stated at a Grevillia meeting of timber industry representatives that the log supply from the Border Ranges area would cease in 10 years.

"If it will cease in 10 years how do they intend getting waste material for wood-chipping?" Mr. Maslen said.

"Nobody — neither politician nor woodchip proposer — has answered that question for me yet.

"In relation to resource availability, the way I put it is this: if the community requires flour, we grow wheat; if we require woodchips, we should grow trees."

— From *Northern Star*. 23.3.77.

MUST WE FIGHT THE OPPOSITION TOO?

In the last issue of the "Colong Bulletin" we reviewed the Wran Government's conservation record in the light of its election record and asked the question "must we fight the Wran Government?"

Recent announcements by the opposition parties leave us no choice but to fight them, because their policies are directly contrary to our aims.

With a few individual exceptions such as Mr. Peter Wright the Country Party has always been opposed to conservation. It is largely due to the development activities of its supporters, past and present, that most of the natural environment has been removed by clearing, burning, bulldozing, overstocking, mining and other practices which increase profits at the expense of the environment. This could be described as "progress and development" when large areas of wilderness remained to be exploited and the concept of conservation was unborn. Today the Party's unqualified support of the destruction of our last remaining extensive stand of sub-tropical rainforest on the Border Ranges, the mining of our last extensive area of relatively unspoilt coast at Myall Lakes, and the destruction of our already depleted forests to supply the Japanese woodchip market, are nothing short of vandalism. This is the Country Party's policy as recently reaffirmed by the State Leader, Mr. Punch.

The March issue of the "Australian Liberal" leaves no doubt that the Liberal Party fully endorses the Country Party's policy. Sir Eric Willis slates the State Government for its indecision on "A woodchip mill, based on the use of sawmill waste and forest residues on the north coast" which he states, "would inject an additional \$8m a year into the regional economy", and describes continuation of sand mining in the Myall Lakes areas as being "necessary to underpin the regional economy." In the same issue Suzi Berger, N.S.W. State Editor describes the cancellation of sandmining leases in the Myall Lakes area as "threatening the jobs of employees of two major companies." There has been no announcement of policy on the Border Ranges, but we have grounds for believing that continuation of "selective logging" is supported.

In another article in the Australian Liberal Mr. Allan Viney, Liberal Spokesman on Transport and Highways attacks the Government for its cancellation of sections of the freeway network. "Regretfully," he states "the Wran Government got hooked on the emotive words bandied around by a section of the environmental lobby." Mr. Viney, of course is not emotive, in other words he doesn't care what happens to the urban environment. The Colong Committee as such expresses no views on the freeway system, but it is aware that the cost of the completed system, as estimated by the Sydney Area Transportation Study, was over two thousand million dollars. It is also obvious that the system will be largely ineffective until it nears completion in 25 years time, because improvements in some sections of the system will attract more traffic to the "bottlenecks" created by unimproved roads. The point of interest to the Colong Committee is that the Liberal Party is prepared to spend over two thousand million dollars on a project that whatever its merits must downgrade the environment by the pollution of additional vehicles attracted to the improved system and the disruptive effect of the swatches cut through the suburbs. It is not prepared to find a few million to compensate employers and find alternative employment for workers in the Border Ranges and Myall Lakes.

It is also obvious that the Country Party has no interest in the city freeway system. The Country Party's silence on this issue is probably being traded for the Liberal Party's support of sand mining, logging and woodchipping policy.

The deal with the Country Party may well seal the Liberal Party's fate at the next election. The so-called "environmental lobby" is now more numerous and active than the Liberal Party itself. Much of its strength is in the Liberal areas north of the harbour, and many of its members are members of the Liberal Party, some are Party officials. Resignations may be anticipated, together with substantial loss of electoral support.

WILDERNESS IN AUSTRALIA

This study, the first detailed survey of wilderness in Australia, represents a systematic attempt to identify and describe areas of wilderness along the southeast margin of the continent. Stimulus for the project came from concern expressed in many quarters about the adequacy of existing systems of national parks and reserves in this country and the dearth of information on the extent, status and role of wilderness in such systems.

It is interesting that the young bushwalker/canoeist/surveyor/author, Peter Helman, lived for many years in a house directly across the road from veteran bushwalker/canoeist/mapmaker, Myles Dunphy. Peter's wife, Carol, shares the same interests and is the daughter of bushwalker/yachtsman/antarctic explorer, Harry Black of CSIRO, Canberra. Peter Helman was assisted by Alan D. Jones, John J. Pigram, and Jeremy M.B. Smith in the writing of the book, which is priced at \$5.00, and \$6.00 for foreign orders. Books can be obtained from the Secretary, Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale. 2351.

The application for the Australian Government grant which funded the research for the book was made by the Colong Committee.

FORCING COMPANIES INTO THE OPEN

The Friends of the Earth would do everything in their power to put Mary Kathleen Uranium Ltd. out of business, according to one member of the movement during the heated MKU meeting this week . . .

Whatever one's attitude towards uranium mining, the FOE is quite within its rights in pressing the board of MKU to justify its action.

The FOE also chose the right venue.

A company's chairman must be held accountable as to whether his organisation's activities are socially desirable and he should be prepared to defend them in the full glare of public debate . . .

Such protests have become more common in recent years in the U.S.A.

There are also precedents in Australia, the most notable recently being the environmentalists' protest over the proposed mining of Colong Caves in New South Wales.

In 1974, 1,250 environmentalists bought one share each in Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers (Aust) Ltd. (an exercise which caused considerable trouble and expense when the dividend cheques were mailed), and attended the annual meeting.

The Colong mining plan was shelved and there is still no plan to mine the caves. (The area is now included in the Kanangra Boyd National Park — Ed.)

— *Financial Review*, April 22, 1977.

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The Secretary
The Colong Committee Ltd.
18 Argyle Street
SYDNEY. 2000

Dear Sir,

I enclose \$2.00 being my subscription to the Save Colong Bulletin to Dec. 1977.

I enclose \$ being a donation to the Colong Committee's Fighting Fund.

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