

SAVE COLONG bulletin

THE COLONG COMMITTEE • A National Wilderness Society

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IS THE S.P.C.C. BORDER RANGES INQUIRY REALLY NECESSARY?

In an aside in the musical "My Fair Lady", Professor Higgins observes "The French don't care what they do actually as long as they pronounce it properly". Had he heard the objections of the Leader of the Country Party in N.S.W. to the creation of national parks the Professor might well have said "The Australians don't care what they do actually as long as they get paid for it". Mr. Punch is opposed to the creation of any national park anywhere on the grounds that property owners within the proposed parks will make less money than they would otherwise have made, firms that are damaging the environment will not make profits, and workers will not have jobs. Fortunately Mr. Punch's attitude is not shared by either the Australian or N.S.W. Governments which have, in at least two instances - the preservation of Fraser Island and of Myall Lakes placed the National Estate first and provided for alternative employment for any workers displaced.

GREATER UNEMPLOYMENT BY OVERCUTTING

The State Government has not taken similar action to preserve the Border Ranges because of its concern for employment for approximately 150 timber workers whose jobs are threatened by the cessation of brushwood supplies from Wiangarie and Roseberry. In the long term much greater unemployment caused by overcutting the northern forests must be faced. In the timber industry this can only be avoided by reduction in the rate

of logging to a sustained yield basis and a reafforestation programme. The main hope of forestalling unemployment by fostering other industrial growth lies in the tourist industry, which has brought great prosperity to many North Coast centres despite the decline in rural industry.

The proposed park would be a notable tourist attraction, but neither the State Government, the Country Party, nor for that matter anybody but the conservationists, have shown any concern for the unemployment which must affect the far north coast in a few years time as one forest after another is cut out.

The opponents of the park are solely concerned with immediate employment. The Colong Committee has therefore proposed, on the basis of the research work by Dr. Schaefer and his team, a means of ensuring that employment of timber workers at Kyogle and Murwillumbah continues for a number of years after the park is created. This would allow ample time to implement a programme of reafforestation and stimulation of the tourist industry should those who profess concern for employment have any foresight beyond the next few years. The small amount of compensation which might have to be paid could come out of the recently announced \$113 m. sale of State owned land.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Should the Colong Committee's proposal for continued employment of timber workers be acceptable to the Government, there is only one further question to be

STOP PRESS ** STOP PRESS ** STOP PRESS ** STOP PRESS ** STOP PRESS **

At long last the S.P.C.C. is about to conduct a public inquiry into the proposal for a Border Ranges National Park. If you want to preserve the last major rainforest in New South Wales write immediately to: The Director, State Pollution Control Commission, 323 Castlereagh Street, Sydney 2000 and say so loud and clear.

resolved. This is whether continued logging of the proposed park will destroy the principal reason for its creation, the magnificent flora and fauna.

The opponents of the park support the Forestry Commission line on "selective logging". The logs "selected" are, of course, the best trees in the most accessible places. By reason of their accessibility these places are the prime viewing areas in the proposed park. To assert that trees, in an area now listed on the interim register of the National Estate, can be destroyed without damaging the park, or the National Estate, is sheer nonsense, if only for the reason that many of them are hundreds of years old. Nor can they be removed without extensive damage to surrounding flora, bulldozing of roads, tracks, etc. and admission of sunlight, which completely alters the microclimate of the forest.

YEARS OF CONTROVERSY

These facts are obvious and easily verified. The Government would save a great deal of its own time, the time of the S.P.P.C. and that of numerous departments, if it simply accepted these obvious facts and created the park. The time of the conservationists does not rate of course.

However, this is not the customary procedure. The Colong Committee is seldom believed until its views are supported by an impartial inquiry, as usually happens after years of controversy. Let the S.P.C.C. Inquiry be held therefore before damage to the forests goes any further, and let the timber interests, and the opposition parties, do their best to prove that the trees can be felled without damaging the National Estate. The Colong Committee is confident of the outcome.

PROPOSED SOLUTION TO BORDER RANGES CONTROVERSY

Following the publication in November 1977 of a research study by Dr. Neville Schaefer of the University of N.S.W. concerning economic aspects of the proposal to create a rainforest national park on the NSW/QLD border, together with further study by members of the Colong Committee, it is now possible to

offer a solution which should satisfy all parties and enable the dedication of a Border Ranges National Park to proceed forthwith.

The solution, like the problem, only becomes apparent when the major elements are divided into two parts, viz.:

TWO STATE FORESTS	Wiangarie (logged), Roseberry (unlogged)
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TWO MAIN SAWMILLS	Munro and Lever (Grevillia), Standards (Murwillumbah)
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TWO TYPES OF TIMBER	Brushwood (scarce), Hardwoods (plentiful)
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TWO USES FOR BRUSHWOOD	Ply and Veneer (M & L), "Stablebeam" (Std's)
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TWO NATIONAL PARK ZONES	Wiangarie (Recreation) Roseberry (Natural)
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TWO GROUPS OF EMPLOYEES	
M & L (Brushwoods 75 Hardwoods 92 <u>167</u>)	Standards (Brush. 80 Hard. 95 <u>175</u>)

The reason for the Border Ranges National Park is the preservation of the brushwoods in the last major rainforest in NSW. The hardwoods, which are mainly on the lower slopes, present no problem as they would be largely outside the park proposal.

Forestry Commission licences do not stipulate types of logs, but the present annual volume of brushwoods being taken by Munro and Lever is 6200 cum. and Standards 9600 cum. (T.A. Hurford and Mal Hogan have small brushwood quotas but these can be disregarded for the purposes of this overall summary.)

PREWAR POLICY

The allocation of logs to sawmills by the Forestry Commission is by means of annual licences, which by convention, are automatically renewed (although often for lower quotas) and saleable, having regard to the volume of the resource in the areas covered by the license. This right of sale of a public resource granted by the Crown is a carryover from the prewar policy whereby sawmillers were allowed to take whatever logs they wished.

The key to the present problem is finding an alternate source of supply of brushwoods as the 100 to 300 year regrowth

cycle precludes application of the policy of "sustained yield" as used with hardwoods. The Forestry Commission has consistently claimed that all remaining brushwoods in the Casino Forest District were fully allocated and on a literal interpretation of present procedures, this is correct. However, it conceals one very important factor, i.e. the period covered by the allocation.

Thus Urbenville Sub District, immediately to the west of Kyogle S.D., contains, according to the Forestry Commission, 150,000 cum. of brushwoods enough to keep the two fortunate licencees in timber for 23 years, while supplies in the Kyogle S.D., mainly Wiangarie and Roseberry State Forests, will only last for 9 years. The two licencees and their present annual cut of brushwood in the Urbenville Sub District are:-

Munro and Lever 3800 cum. Constitutes 38% of total used at Grevillia Mill.

Robb and Brown 2750 cum. Half sold to Standards, Murwillumbah.

Obviously Robb and Brown do not perceive any long term problem, otherwise they would not be selling to Standards. If no problem is likely in the Urbenville S.D. brushwood supplies until the year 2000, it is difficult to understand why it is necessary to log the rainforest in Roseberry State forest now.

It would seem therefore, that the first move towards a solution should be to allow Munro and Lever to double their present 3800 cum. annual cut of brushwoods in Urbenville S.D., bringing the estimated life of this area back to 15 years by which time the pine plantations in Beaury (130,000 cum.) and Koorelah (53,000 cum.) will be available for veneer and ply manufacture. The second move should be for Munro and Lever to bring 2,400 cum. (the balance necessary to maintain present quotas) from areas which they control in Queensland. This is altogether appropriate as the firm is a wholly owned subsidiary of a wealthy Brisbane company (Carricks Limited) and should be asked to contribute to the solution by using some of their resources. To do so it would be necessary to spray for ticks and carry a certificate to this effect, but this is quite feasible once Carricks and the Forestry Commission are convinced that the hoop pine in Roseberry State Forest is not available.

SUPPLIES OF BRUSHWOOD

These two initiatives would assure Munro and Lever of adequate supplies of brushwood for their veneer mill at Grevillia and hence stability for their 75 employees engaged on this work. Indeed, these initiatives would ensure that the veneer factory would continue production for much longer than the nine years which the Forestry Commission state is the present life.

Standards Sawmills at Murwillumbah employ 80 staff on the manufacture of a laminated "stableframe" from brushwoods and brushbox mostly for house building on the Gold Coast. Realising that supplies of brushwood were limited, they have been experimenting with imports from New Guinea and Samoa. Even after Wiangarie is cut out, there is still available 30,000 cum. in Murwillumbah Working Circle, so that Standards have a reasonable period in which to increase their imports. However, as these will be considerably dearer, because freight costs and double handling more than offset lower overseas labour costs, some form of compensation is both desirable and logical.

This could take the form of a onetime capital sum which might possibly be contributed by:

E.H.C.D. Canberra contribution towards preservation of area listed on the National Estate Heritage Register.

N.P.W. Foundation contributions from the general public.

Forestry Commission savings by not building Levers Plateau Road \$200,000

Dr.Schaefer's final report containing detailed recommendations (including 10% reduction in all commitments in the Casino Forest District), will be available in January 1978.

MORE NONSENSE FROM THE REGIONAL PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSIONS OF AUSTRALIA (O.Moriarty, Research Sec.)

Mr.Moriarty, who wants National Parks for timberfelling, Market gardens, mining, quarrying, grazing and practically everything else, is reported in the

"Examiner" of 14th Nov. to have flown to Precipitous Bluff with representatives of Mineral Holdings and to be keen to see the Bluff mined.

Claiming to be a conservationist he accuses "some conservationists" of being emotion-rousing, imaginative and misguided". If he means his remarks to apply to the Colong Committee he is two thirds right. Our aim is to make people care for the natural environment. We can only do this by arousing some emotion. We are very imaginative. We imagined what a quarry and a pine forest in Kanangra Boyd would be like. We can imagine what a quarry at Precipitous Blugg would look like. But we are not misguided. We are not guided by the timber, mining and grazing interest. In fact, worse still, we are not guided at all. We make up our own minds.

If mining went ahead, said Mr. Moriarty "man would only be speeding up the erosional forces of nature". Right again. In a few million years time Precipitous Bluff will be weathered away.

As a result of mining "the bluff would become much more visible and much more pleasing to look at". Certainly it would be more visible. The quarry might easily be seen from 50 miles away. And more pleasing to look at if you happen to be a miner.

"Mining or quarrying would make it look beautiful, where at present it is depressing with tangled impregnable scrub". It just depends whether you like the look of quarries and dislike all that horrible flora and fauna we like to call our "heritage".

"It was a waste", he said "for major companies to import millions of tonnes (of limestone) each year from Japan". Much better from his viewpoint to let the ore carriers return empty and wreck another wilderness area at home.

Alex Colley.

YURAGIR NATIONAL PARK

The Colong Committee congratulates Mr. Crabtree for refusing to abandon plans to dedicate this park despite strong local protests and opposition from Mr. Day. It will connect the existing Angourie and Red Rock National Parks thereby providing a continuity of reserve so that species of flora and fauna have greater changes of survival. It is good to see the rights of other species considered and the Labor Government is to be congratulated for its strong moves to regain control of nearly 50% of the North Coastal Strip for the public.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION PROPOSALS

In a letter to the Colong Committee, the Minister for Planning and Environment Mr. Landa said, in reference to the considerations of the Electricity Commission to build power developments affecting the proposed Greater Blue Mountains National Park:

"...particular emphasis should be placed on the need to explore the area in question and adequate grounds should be provided for justifying its selection. The Commission's recommendations are currently being examined by the Government. However, I consider that there is a need to establish effective machinery to ensure all interested land use authorities have the opportunity to review exploration proposals in environmentally sensitive areas before they are commenced, to enable their recommendations to be taken into account in the formulation of conditions for exploration, and to provide for some form of independent determination for resolving any matters pertaining to the environment that are in dispute. I would only see an environmental impact study being required where a dispute arises or where significant controversy is generated.

In the case of Electricity Commission exploration activities in the Colo Wilderness, I believe that an environmental impact study would be premature at this stage".

WE DANGEROUS EXTREMISTS AND EGO FREAKS

Fresh from the green meadows of Old England, where the last wilderness disappeared centuries ago, Professor Mellanby regaled the Association for Regional Parks and Countryside Comm-issions with a spate of unsubstantiated generalities on Australian conservationists. They were, he said, "dangerous extremists", and many appeared to be "ego freaks". He assured the Association that "when governments took over grazing and farming land for inclusion in national parks, there was no chance that they could revert to natural areas". Asked the extent and location of such areas the Professor was unable to answer.

The attendance at the day session of this 13 hour marathon must have been a supreme disappointment to the promoters. After eliminating 15 conservationists who were opposed to Mellanby's views, and 12 public servants who presumably sat on the fence, there were only 12 who supported Moriarty's mercenaries.

PRINTING OF COLONG BULLETIN

The printing of the Colong Bulletin is now being carried out by Eco-Press so that the minimal profits earned are returned to the environment movement. Eco-Press is owned by the Environment Centre which is managed by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW consisting of 55 conservation bodies throughout the State representing a total of more than 100,000 people. Our thanks to Seymour Office Services who have done such a good job in the past.

MR. CRABTREE ON LAND RESUMPTIONS

There has been some confusion from landowners whose properties are involved in the dedication of new national parks. In the following extract from Hansard (10th November, 1977 p. 9523) Mr. Crabtree explains the situation concerning a Mr. and Mrs. Jensen whose property will become part of the Greater Southern Blue Mountains National Park.

"I informed them then (the Jensens) and I do so again, that when it becomes necessary to obtain their land and their home - that is a long way off and many alternatives have yet to be examined if they wish they will be paid the market value of the property before it becomes part of the national park. I went further and said to Mr. and Mrs. Jensen that if they desired I would look specially into their case with a view to paying them for their property now and entering into a leaseback arrangement which would guarantee that for the rest of their lives they could live on that property. Those offers were made."

"The Government accepts the responsibility for deciding that in the interests of the State this property will be included within the proposed national park".

CONSERVATION NEWS FROM THE U.S. (from Sierra Club National News Report).

President Carter's \$500 billion budget sent to Congress last week had some good news for environmentalists, and appeared to be an effort to fulfill his campaign promises in this field. Here are some highlights:

- . A major increase, to \$725 million from \$600 million, for the Land & Water Conservation Fund to purchase new areas.

- . A new National Heritage program, to help states preserve local sites, at a cost of \$63.7 million.

HOUSE-SENATE CONFEREES AGREE ON ENDANGERED WILDERNESS BILL

In their fifth and final meeting on 25 January, the House-Senate conference committee on the Endangered American Wilderness Act agreed on a compromise version. Final approval of this important measure is now virtually assured; it includes 17 areas in 10 western states and adds a total of 1.3 million acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

**TIMBER INDUSTRY POLL SHOWS
PUBLIC LIKES WILDERNESS**

A poll sponsored by the American Forest Institute and the National Forest Products Association found that the public is heavily opposed to increased timber sales on national forest. The study, conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, also concluded that only 7 per cent of the public said there is "too much" wilderness, while 32 per cent said there was "too little". (Males in the 18 to 29 age group agreed by a 51 per cent majority that there was "too little" wilderness.)

CHIEF BUTHELESI SPEAKS

"More and more of my people who with me belong to the wilderness of Africa see my enthusiasm for the wilderness getting less and less relevant to the major issue of sheer survival. I still pursue my dream of preserving our wilderness in spite of all because I am convinced that once we stop being wilderness oriented we are likely to feel caged, with the resultant desperation that overcomes all caged animals even if they belong to the species HOMO SAPIENS..... it is obvious to me that the present Zululand game reserves are becoming overdeveloped. I believe their chance of survival lies in their retention in the most primitive state possible, i.e. WILDERNESS, and to this end I will do all I can to see that the new management practises peripheral development... .. Our historical areas have been sadly neglected I want them to be living monuments, not something recorded in concrete and stone".

Extract from a speech by the Hon. Chief Buthelesi at the First World Wilderness Congress, Johannesburg, October 1977.
