

# SAVE COLONG bulletin

## THE COLONG COMMITTEE • A National Wilderness Society

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**SAWMILLERS' CLAIMS ON COLO-HUNTER REFUTED.** On April 16th Haydn Washington (Vice-President of the Colong Committee & Hon. Secretary Colo Committee) wrote a letter to the S.M.H. refuting sawmillers' claims. It was published by the Herald, which has favoured the northern Blue Mountains park proposal with a good deal of space recently, but was somewhat abbreviated. The full text was as follows:

*Graham Tomkin's letter (5/4/79) brings up many points that are of dubious accuracy. Contrary to his statements, a park in the area would not be a disaster, for the following reasons:*

1. The best estimate of logging time available (from the Forestry Commission) if the whole of the wilderness park was logged would be 8 years. After this all sawmilling jobs would disappear. Meanwhile the largest wilderness in the State, and one of the most prolific wildlife areas near Sydney, would have been destroyed.

2. The Colo area, even though it is the largest tract of continuously forested area in the State, is very poor timber country. This is why the timber quota for the area is only 10,000 cubic metres, a tiny fraction of the State's total cut.

3. Good sawlogs are found only in the valley bottoms, and take hundreds of years to grow. Sawmilling in the area is really mining of timber, as it is a "once only" exploitation.

4. Money from tourists will come to the area from a national park. This will create jobs. Some jobs will also be created by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. These will be jobs that last as long as the park, not just for 5-8 years, the life span of sawmilling

5. Private land is not needed to dedicate the park. There will be no compulsory acquisition of land. I believe the Service is interested in purchasing only a handful of properties for car parks and facilities. Farmers will thus not be forced off their land.

6. Coal deposits will not be lost to development. Coal can be mined under the park from the edges for up to 8 miles if strict safeguards are observed. Coal in much of the area is not an economic proposition in any case.

7. Bushfire risk will be no more than at present, possibly less. Fire protection measures will be taken on the boundaries.

8. The park will not be "locked up". Such a statement is a common one by those interested solely in opposing a park for monetary reasons. Half the park would have road access, as far as the wilderness core. Two to three million people could use the park, mostly in the management zone.

Thousands yearly go into the wilderness core, even now. It would be the State's largest wilderness park, situated only 70 km. from Sydney, the largest city in N.S.W. and in Australia.

As Australians we must ask ourselves if we are going to leave any bush heritage to future Australians. Conflicts are really few for the Colo/Hunter wilderness, compared to other park proposals. The State Government's policy is for 5% of the State's area to be parks. Putting in the Colo/Hunter will only bring the figure to 3.3.

In one thing I agree with Mr Tomkins - the Government should hurry up and do something. It should meet its electoral promises on conservation. If the largest sandstone gorge in N.S.W., the biggest clean river near Sydney, and N.S.W.'s largest wilderness are to be saved from the increasing threats of unplanned exploitation, action must be taken soon.

## KANANGRA-BOYD MANAGEMENT PLAN

On March 10th Milo Dunphy and Alex Colley spent two hours presenting to the Blue Mountains National Park Advisory Committee the Colong Committee's management plan for the Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

After briefly recapitulating the long campaign waged by the Colong Committee to preserve Kanangra-Boyd from mining and a pine plantation, the Committee's representatives emphasised the importance of this area by reason of its geographical position, its scenic and recreational value, and as the second largest of the State's dwindling wilderness tracts. It was also pointed out that the area had the advantage, from the viewpoint of wilderness management, that vehicular access could be restricted to one point.

Although there should be no roads in a wilderness, it seemed impractical to expect the road to the Walls to be abandoned. The central feature of the Colong Committee's proposals was, therefore, that this road be closed to private vehicles and access to the Walls be provided by a bus service. Although it was anticipated that this service would operate at a loss, it was considered that such loss would be more than covered by economies in supervision, since it is mainly vehicles which cause supervisory problems.

The main recommendations of the Colong Committee were:

1. The park centre should be located just outside the northern end of the Park.
2. All private vehicles should be parked under supervision, at the park centre.
3. All public access to the park should be by park buses travelling the Kanangra Walls road from the park centre.
4. Upgrading of the Kanangra Road should be discontinued and where possible it should be reduced in width.

5. The bus schedule should be carefully considered in co-operation with user groups such as the NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs and widely advertised.

6. Boyd Crossing and other campsites should be redesigned for walkers only.

7. All other roads on Boyd Plateau should be closed and revegetated.

8. The main planning emphasis should be on a few major cross country tracks such as the Boyd, Gingra and Paralyser tracks.

9. A walkers track from the park headquarters to Kanagra is required.

10. Fire control and prevention operations should be planned on adjoining lands rather than within the park.

11. The Blue Mountains National Park Local Committee should recommend to the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation inclusion of funding for acquisition of the inholdings on Boyd Plateau in its next public appeal.

12. The dingo population within the park should be actively conserved.

Enlarging upon recommendation 5, it was pointed out that to function successfully the bus service must take account of the needs of the various groups using the park, such as bushwalkers, family campers, scientific groups, sightseers and tours. The bushwalkers' main need was described as being for appropriate bus schedules at the beginning and end of weekends including long weekends. It was recommended that the bus schedule should be carefully considered in co-operation with the NSW FBC

Mr Paul Barnes, a member of the Advisory Council, suggested that it would be more rational to prepare a plan covering not only Kanangra-Boyd, but in addition the 95,000 ha. recently added to the park. This introduces a new planning dimension, since the Water Board catchment area to the north and east could well provide an excellent "buffer" zone. The Colong Committee will prepare a proposal for the enlarged park.

## DEUA AND WADBILLIGA PARKS.

The Colong Committee has written to the Premier, congratulating his government on the creation of these parks which will bring a substantial measure of protection to the Deua-Tuross Wilderness. We have on numerous occasions drawn attention to the delay in the proclamation

of a park in this area, and we are very appreciative of the effective action taken by the Hon. Paul Landa during the short time he has been responsible for the NP & WS. The Colong Committee has some reservations concerning the boundaries of the proposed parks, pending availability of a detailed map, but wholeheartedly approves of the reservation of a substantial part of this great wilderness area before any further inroads are made upon it.

#### OFF-ROAD VEHICLE USE SUBMISSION

The Colong Committee assisted in the preparation of a joint submission to the S.P.C.C. Inquiry into the Off-Road Use of vehicles for Recreational Purposes. The other participating organisations were the N.P.A., the A.C.F., The National Trust, the N.C.C., T.E.C., the Federation of Bushwalkers, F.O.E., and the Bicycle Institute. The difficult task of co-ordinating the material from these diverse sources, editing, and supervising printing, was ably handled by Peter Prineas, Executive Secretary of the N.P.A.

In the Introduction to the submission it is stated that:

*The fundamental principle of a democratic society is that all should be free to pursue their own ends up to the point where such pursuits impinge on the welfare of others. We submit that the use of ORVs can impinge on the welfare of others by spoiling their enjoyment of the natural environment and inflicting damage on that environment.*

The physical impact of ORVs is described under the headings of Soils, Vegetation, Animals, Aboriginal and other Historic Sites, Hydrological Effects, Danger to Humans and Pollution. The social impact is described as Auditory, Visual/Olfactory and Psychological. It is pointed out that the noise of a single vehicle can effectively destroy the very things that the passive recreationist seeks.

The generalised description is supported by a number of reports. These include press reports with

the following headings: HDWB HIRES GUARD FOR GULLY (Hiring of a guard by the Hunter District Water Board to stop damage) BEACH DANGER (Four people injured on beach by hit-run driver) BEACH BUGGIES OUT (Appointment by Port Stephens Shire of an officer to stop abuse of beaches and dunes by ORVs) and VALUABLE SAND DUNES ERODED (Joseph Glascott's description of destruction at Kurnell). Two S.M.H. articles on damage by ORVs in the U.S. are also included. These are headed PARKS FOR PEOPLE A NATURAL DISASTER and RIDING THE TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION.

Fifty letters and comments recorded by the N.P.A. are then quoted, together with accurately recorded observations made by Mr A. Shepherd, Senior Lecturer in Geography University of N.S.W. The reports, letters and comments were supported by 6 photographs of badly churned dirt tracks.

In the section on "Clubs, Industry and Publications" the ORV users claim to be "motorised bushwalkers" is examined. The selling and servicing of 24,000 4WD vehicles ranging in price from \$4,800 to \$17,790 (excluding extras), 40,000 trail bikes and 9,000 mini-bikes for recreational use (L.N.C. estimate) is a lucrative business, and it is not surprising that several glossy publications on recreational use carry substantial advertising. From these publications the submission quotes a number of examples of expeditions, sorties and stunts which caused damage to vegetation, stream banks, lake beds and swamps, dunes, etc. The submission suggests that a test of the illogical term "motorised bushwalker" is to take out of the trip reports in these magazines any reference to motoring and see what is left - "In almost every case little or nothing; the writers do not dwell much on experiences savoured by bushwalkers, such as pleasant camp sites, uplifting views, the excitement of wildlife sightings, identification of flora, appreciation of geology, weather, physical effort, tranquillity and harmony with the bush. It seems extremely unlikely that the people who made the trip reports would ever have made the effort to go into the areas if they had to do so on foot."

There appears to be a lack of industry sensitivity to criticisms of irresponsible advertising. Advertisements stress "go anywhere", and brute strength and frequently show vehicles in off-road situations. A number of photostated examples are given.

The recreational use of ORVs is directly opposed to the fitness campaigns being promoted by both State and Commonwealth Governments. It is one of the more wasteful uses of our limited petroleum reserves.

The principal ORV control proposed by the

submission is the limitation of all vehicles to public roads (or private property with owners' permission). The implementation of this recommendation requires definition of public roads, uniform mapping practice and roadside markers to distinguish public roads in natural areas. It is recommended that approved areas for recreational ORV activities should be established (the Colong Committee favours use of pine plantations and wood chipping areas).

It is pointed out that closure of roads in natural areas does not constitute a denial of public access. "A person capable of coaxing an ORV along many such tracks could equally well walk, as could their small children... Within areas controlled by the NP & WS, management should aim at the separation of visitors from their vehicles in order to maximise the particular benefits to be gained from recreation in high quality natural environments."

#### THE SIERRA CLUB SHOWS THE WAY

Brock Evans, director of the Sierra Club's Washington office, describing the achievements of 95th Congress which closed last October, writes:

*"Nearly 5.5 million acres were added to the National Wilderness Preservation System - the largest single set of additions since the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964. The national parks record is just as excellent. The Santa Monica Mountains in Los Angeles, the famous Mineral King Valley in the Sierra Nevada and the Pine Barrens of New Jersey were all protected by the "Omnibus Parks" legislation. In separate legislation, Redwood National Park was finally expanded. Eight rivers, from Pennsylvania to California, were added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and seventeen designated for study.*

*The Alaska bill died in the last hours, but it proved to be only a temporary setback. President Carter took action to preserve much of the Alaska Public Interest Lands."*

Meanwhile in Australia:

The Prime Minister proclaimed the Ranger "go ahead", which authorises an enormous uranium mine in the centre of the Kakadu National Park as a major achievement of his government.

Funding of voluntary conservation organisations was again reduced.

The Queensland Government renewed pressure for oil drilling on the Barrier Reef and the proposed marine park is yet to be created.

No nominations were made for the World Heritage list. The Heritage Commission Act is under "review".

Opportunities for public inquiries into projects of major national impact were wiped out. The Environment Protection Act is threatened.

Logging continues in our last substantial sub-tropical rainforest (comparable to the U.S. Redwood remnant).

Exploitation of Australia's forests for woodchipping was approved while at the same time reforestation aid was given to Thailand.

The W.A. Government approved the further destruction of its dwindling forests for bauxite mining.

The Council of Nature Conservation Ministers recommended that the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service withdraw from all land holding activities.

Brock Evans continues:

*"We have much to be proud of in this Congress. We are grateful to the many representatives and senators who stood up for environmental bills.... But we can also be proud of ourselves. For while it is the members of Congress who must actually do the voting and propose the amendments, we are the foot soldiers. Environmental bills do not pass in any Congress without massive support from the people. No bill would see the light of day without thousands of letters and expressions of support; neither could it succeed without accurate and timely information supplied by environmental groups. The great successes of the 95th Congress are due as much as anything to the unique interaction between conservation groups staff and volunteers.*

*The future is more uncertain... The central fact of lobbying in Washington has been the enormous*



*concentration of wealth and power of our opponents."*

#### A.C.F. CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT ACTS

In a letter to the Colong Committee the President, Dr H.C. Coombs urges support for the Foundation's campaign of urgency to counter the pressure of the mining companies for the destruction of Federal environment legislation.

The Acts in danger are:

- \* The Australian Heritage Commission Act, 1975 which has wide powers to conserve, improve and present the National Estate;
- \* The Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act, 1974, which provides logical environmental procedures for developments coming under Federal Government control;
- \* The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act, 1975 which provides a mechanism for protecting the Great Barrier Reef and establishing parts of it as a Marine Park;
- \* The National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975, which established a professional service to acquire and manage national parks for the Federal Government.
- \* The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, 1976, which restores some measure of land ownership to dispossessed Aboriginal people.

The Australian Mining Industry Council (AMIC) has given clear statements of its intent to have these Acts destroyed or emasculated. The September 1976 issue of the AMIC's "Mining Review" said that:

*"Substantial amendment is necessary to eliminate the many problems and divisions the Environment Protection Act has created. The Existing Act cannot be left as it is"*

It says the Heritage Commission Act has the potential to cause even greater conflict than the Environment Protection Act where developments in the States are concerned.

The A.C.F. appeals to the Colong

Committee to ask its members to write as soon as possible to their local members of Parliament and the Prime Minister seeking the retention of the Acts as they stand until they can be upgraded.

Further information on the endangered legislation is available from the A.C.F. C/- 399 Pitt Street, Sydney, phone (02) 233 5388.

#### REDWOOD AND THE BORDER RANGES

The campaign for the Redwood National Park in California bears many similarities to the campaign for the preservation of the Border Ranges, together with a salutary lesson in the dangers of procrastination and, finally, an example which should be followed.

The campaign for the Border Ranges was started by Robert Collins a hundred years ago. The campaign for Redwood extended over 80 years. Both areas contained the last substantial remnant of an irreplaceable floral association. The redwoods, like the Antarctic beeches, were up to 2000 years or more old. Twenty five million years ago they extended right around the northern hemisphere, but have since contracted to a few areas, of which the largest was on the California coast.

Increasing logging spurred the formation in 1918 of the Save-the-Redwoods league, which succeeded in having a string of small state parks established, a result not very different to the narrow strip of the Border Ranges we have so far succeeded in saving. However, in the words of Larry E. Moss (Sierra, Feb. 1979):

*"The state parks did not encompass enough land upslope from the preserved groves, and destruction of old-growth trees within the parks has resulted. A combination of destructive logging and attempted conversion of the land to grassland denuded many slopes and relentless winter rains sent countless tons of exposed soil and rock down the streams."*

This is an illustration of the fact, stressed in several scientific submissions to the S.P.C.C., that parks need to be extensive and compact if all species are to be adequately protected.

In the post war housing boom logging was accelerated and widespread public concern was expressed, but it was not until 1968

that Congress approved a national park, which included three state parks. Our Federal Government could not do this because it will not recognise the national significance of national parks. The park remained inadequate because of clearcutting outside it, a quarter of a mile upstream from the best stand of timber.

The fight for an adequate park continued. In 1978 the area was expanded by 48,000 acres and in addition a park protection zone of 30,000 acres established. Less than 10,000 acres of the new parkland was unlogged. To rehabilitate the remainder, which consisted of stumps, buried streams and erosion, the sum of \$33 million was allocated. Whether rehabilitation will be achieved remains to be seen. No amount of expenditure could restore the Border Ranges forests, which have evolved over many centuries. The companies now logging the Redwood Park area will be compensated and those who lose jobs or suffer reduced earnings because of the park expansion will receive compensation, retraining and relocation payment. Such outlays would have been unnecessary to protect the forest had action been taken early enough.

In Australia the establishment attitude is that destruction of natural areas (e.g. logging in the Border Ranges and woodchipping) is justified provided somebody gets paid for doing it. If we are to save anything except the areas that are barren or totally useless, compensation to both employers and employees will be necessary. Nor should this responsibility be left to the States, since national parks are not created simply for the enjoyment of the residents of any one State. The longer exploitation is allowed to continue the greater the costs of rehabilitation and compensation.

#### IT DOESN'T HAPPEN IN WILDERNESS AREAS

The first report of the Commonwealth and State Government collaborative soil conservation study finds that half the area in agricultural or pastoral use requires treatment for land degradation.

#### NO CHEERS ON AUSTRALIA DAY

*"There's nothing for us to celebrate. It's a crying shame to see what they have done to our country."*

Mr Jesse Barker, aboriginal gas worker, reported in "Sun-Herald" of 28th January.

#### SHADES OF COLONG

In one of his papers Professor Sol Encel, referring to the bureaucratic habit of spending 18 cents (now 20c) to collect five-cent bill remarked:

*"I can testify from personal experience private companies do not behave any differently. Some years ago I purchased a single share in a cement company so that I could...protest against its attempt to dig up the Blue Mountains...since then I have regularly received dividends on my share at the rate of three cents..."*

*Recently the company sent me a form asking me whether I wished to take up additional shares... the form also informs me that I am not entitled to any new shares..."*

*This non-information leaves me precisely where I was and benefits the Australian Postal Commission to the extent of 18 cents."*

from The Bulletin Jan.16th 1979.

#### THE JUGGERNAUT GOVERNMENT

In his book "Green Bans" the American author, Richard J. Roddewig, describing the Askin Government, writes:

*"It picked a direction and plodded slowly along. When it bumped into criticism it did not respond but halted and pulled in its head, secure in the knowledge that its party members formed a shell around it. When it had weathered the media storms it cautiously emerged and plodded on in the same direction as before. Although the parliamentary opposition may have continued the attack, the public had, by then, usually lost interest."*

We should know. It took seven years of constant pressure to save Colong and the Boyd.

#### NO PLACE ELSE

*The greater man's knowledge of the earth, the greater becomes his respect for this unique planet on which alone life as we know it exists.*

*There is no future for mankind on any other planet, however successful developments in space travel may become. Man is earth-bound, and if he destroys the life-giving properties of the surface or atmosphere he, and all other living creatures, will perish.*

Sir Mark Oliphant - S.M.H. 20/3/79

#### RAIN FORESTS - 8 YEARS TO THE END

The rain forests of the world are being cut down at the rate of 25 hectares a minute. If this rate continues the forests will be cleared within the next 8 years.

Sir Peter Scott, speaking at the launching of the Australian Branch of the World Wildlife Fund.

#### STOP PRESS - BLUE MOUNTAINS PRESERVED FOR ALL TIME

The State Government's action in creating the Wollemi National Park has virtually fulfilled the Colong Committee's objective, adopted in 1975, of creating a Greater Blue Mountains National Park.

We congratulate Mr Wran and his Government on this far sighted land use decision. Mr Landa in particular has earned the gratitude of the conservation movement. Within 6 months of assuming responsibility for the National Parks & Wildlife Service he has secured the reservation of Deua-Wadbilliga, first proposed 14 years ago, and the northern Blue Mountains, as proposed by Myles J. Dunphy, O.B.E., nearly 50 years ago.

The Blue Mountains, once the impassable barrier to the expansion of the infant colony of New South Wales has now become a magnificent scenic recreation area for its 4 million inhabitants.

#### PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE BY THE COLONG COMMITTEE

(Price includes postage)

The Save Colong Bulletin, per annum	\$5.00
Wilderness in Danger - Michael Bell & Associates	\$5.60
Kakadu coloured poster	\$1.50
Border Ranges poster	\$1.50
Habitat - Border Ranges issue	\$1.00
Forest Ecosystems - F.C.Bell	\$4.60
Rainforests - NP & WS	\$3.00
Wilderness in Australia - Helman et al	\$5.00
Colo Wilderness - Henry Gold & Peter Prineas	\$7.50