

# SAVE COLONG bulletin

THE COLONG COMMITTEE • A National Wilderness Society

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*"Australians today, perhaps more than ever before, care about the physical shape and face of our land. Australia is fortunate in still possessing a range of wilderness areas which contain fragile and complex environments.*

*Australia, too, is the last sanctuary on earth for many natural species. In a real sense we are the custodians of their survival. We want to preserve and protect our natural heritage. We know no person, no organisation, can 'rebuild an island', renew a forest or a swamp, or resurrect an extinct species. No decree of government can turn back the clock and save lost species or a lost wilderness.*

*That is why a Federal Government has a national obligation to make decisions on any issue that affects our heritage. This is a responsibility that our Government has accepted."*

The Rt. Hon. J.M. Fraser, C.H., M.P., Prime Minister of Australia, addressing his electorate on June 9th, 1979.

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## DEEDS AND WORDS

Mr. Fraser supports the above claim by reference to his Government's support for the World Wildlife Fund, the ban on drilling of the Barrier Reef, the ban on whaling, the proclamation of the Kakadu National Park and the stopping of mining on Fraser Island. In another talk (7/11/76) Mr. Fraser repeated his promise to "promote community involvement and responsibility in environmental issues" and to "support the public role of approved voluntary organisations". He also repeated his Government's promise "to assist in establishing a national park of world significance in South West Tasmania".

Inevitably he qualified these promises by saying that "the demands of conservation must be balanced with those of development", the meaningless phrase always used by the great and the good to justify further inroads on the remnants of our natural heritage. Although

action on Fraser Island, the Barrier Reef and whaling was a belated response to long sustained pressure from conservationists, perhaps the Government deserves more credit for it than the conservationists have conceded. As to the remaining issues we will take the advice of Dr. Coombs, quoted in our last Bulletin, and "speak out, even when we know we are going to offend people who have authority, power and are in a position to damage our cause and our institution".

The proclamation of the Kakadu National Park has been "balanced" by approval for an enormous mine 700 metres across and 200 metres deep with a dump 100 metres high and a lake of chemicals covering 125 hectares. This will be situated near the centre of the "park", and two other mines, one twice the size, are under consideration.

Support for voluntary organisations

has been cut, both in money and real terms, even though Mr. Fraser wonders "how the physical face of our nation would look without the efforts of concerned people". No funds ever come the way of the Total Environment Centre or the Colong Committee, which have, to use Mr. Fraser's phrase, "promoted community involvement and responsibility" more successfully than most organisations. By contrast the World Wildlife Fund has been lavishly supported because, we believe, it is concentrating on research rather than the immediate urgent task of habitat protection to which the Colong Committee directs its efforts.

Outlining some of his Government's specific achievements Mr. Fraser starts by saying that "Our concern for the national estate is evidenced by our support for the Australian Heritage Commission". One of the first natural areas listed by the Commission was the Border Ranges, and on Feb. 26th this year Wollemi National Park was registered. Far from "supporting" the Commission, the Government has stood by while logging continues in both areas. There has been no pressure on the N.S.W. Government to discontinue logging, nor any suggestion of funds to compensate workers or sawmillers. The Government could probably save South West Tasmania from hydro-electric development by refusing funds for the scheme and could offer funds for alternative development with the aim of stimulating employment. It is only recently that Australia has nominated an area for the World Heritage List, although Australia was elected a long term member of the World Heritage Convention Council and asked to nominate two areas. Kakadu, as proclaimed, has now been nominated (not the considerably larger Stage 2 park proposed) after the approval of uranium mining.

In response to pressure from the powerful primary industries interests, the effectiveness of the Environmental Protection, National Parks and Wildlife and Australian Heritage Commission Acts have been the subject of at least two major assaults.

In accord with his policy of federalism, Mr. Fraser points out in a letter dated 12th March that "land usage and management are essentially matters for the State Governments". Nor is there any good reason why his Government should interfere so long as State policy is not detrimental to the national interest. But the essence of federalism is that matters of national concern, such as defence, trade policy and postal services should be managed by the Federal Government. In another federation, the United States of America, upon which much of our constitution is modelled, wilderness too is rated a national concern. On Feb. 11th the Secretary of the Interior, Cecil Andrus, signed 17 Public Land Orders that withdrew and reserved 40.12 million acres in Alaska. "Mark Feb. 11th down as one of our most important conservation anniversaries" said Sierra Club Task Force Chairman, Dr. Edgar Wayburn. "Secretary Andrus has again taken bold and courageous action to carry out the administration's commitment to preserve our wilderness heritage in Alaska."

The Border Ranges, South West Tasmania and Kakadu should not be exploited simply for the sake of the New South Welshman, the Tasmanians and the Northern Territorians. If preserved, these areas will be enjoyed not only by people from all over Australia, but by many from overseas. As the extracts from "Ambio" quoted below show, wilderness in Asia and the South Pacific is rapidly being destroyed. By reason of our sparse population and enormous natural resources we can afford, better than any nation on earth, to preserve our natural remnants, and, if we take our international obligations seriously, we should do so.

#### FOREST DESTRUCTION IN ASIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

The forested slopes are usually covered with shallow soil. When treecover is removed this soil is exposed to the torrential rains and quickly eroded. According to P.F. Burgess, extraction of a mere 10 per cent of the trees results in a loss of 55 per cent of the canopy. Recent surveys have shown, further-

more, that selective logging and the removal of the logs from the forest can leave one-third to two-thirds of the remaining trees effectively wrecked.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization or the United Nations (FAO) approximately five million hectares of forest are "lost" annually in Asia. Some eight million hectares are burnt and temporarily cultivated every year by approximately 200 million shifting cultivators, affecting about 300 million hectares of forest areas.

Deforestation and improper land-use have already had an impact upon the economic and social life of the people. Twenty million hectares in India are susceptible to flooding, and erosion is believed to cause a displacement of around 6000 million tons of topsoil each year. In the floods during the 1978 rainy season, 65712 villages were flooded, more than 2000 people drowned and about 40000 cattle washed away.

M.K. RANJITSINH - "AMBIO" Vol. VIII No. 5, 1979. Published by Swedish Academy of Science

#### THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL FORESTERS AND THE NEED TO AMEND THE FORESTRY ACT

*Submission to the Terania Creek Inquiry by Dr. L.J. Webb*

Since the 1960's the use of Australian forests and their administration by government forestry departments have come under increasingly critical scrutiny by sections of the public discontented with the primary emphasis on wood production at the expense of conserving and enhancing other forest values. Relevant formal inquiries include those of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Wildlife Conservation in 1970, Rural Policy in Australia in 1973, the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate which published its report in 1974, the House of Representatives Standing

Committee on Environment and Conservation in 1974 on the operation of the Softwood Forestry Agreements Act of 1967 and 1972; and the Senate Standing Committee on Science and the Environment in 1974 into the impact on the Australian environment of the woodchip industry programme. Most recently, a series of Public Lectures given at the Australian National University during August 1979 by members of the Department of Forestry examined "Australia's Forests: A Perspective on Environmental Management" (Australian Forestry, Vol. 42, No.2, 1979). L.T. Carron noted that "given the historical background I have described, it is easy to understand why the Forest Services suffered a shock, and had their sense of dedicated professional mission profoundly disturbed, when the blasts of the 'environmental explosion' were directed towards them". The resulting "siege mentality" is freely acknowledged by foresters and others, and it seems clear that the time has arrived for foresters to update their social philosophy. Carron believes that "they have been guided by attitudes which have developed along with the role which they interpreted society wished them to play. I am amongst those who think the role should be changed and for this the attitudes need to be changed". Dealing with more specific issues, R.G. Florence noted the dilemma of government in the case of the Border Ranges rainforest logging:

*"... a classic example of the way Government, no matter how motivated it may be to the cause of environmental quality, is unable to reverse well-established patterns of resource use which would produce a powerful political reaction at the local level. Nevertheless, I would be very surprised if more than a small minority of State parliamentarians and Forestry Commission personnel would see continuing rainforest logging in itself as a sound use of natural resources. If this is the case, the N.S.W. rainforest is being placed in the category of a purely local resource for short term local community benefit, something which the State recognises as being beyond its political and financial capacity to change."*

Florence suggests that continuing conflicts of this kind reflect the lack of an Australian outlook or ethic on significant resources - "One can only speculate what effects there might have been on the Border Ranges decision had the N.S.W. Government the moral support of an Australian ethic on the role of the remaining rainforest, and the encouragement to seek freely the help of the Australian Government in making the Border Ranges decision".

As the National Estate Report (1974) pointed out, foresters in Australia now acknowledge the importance of the public role in the use of forests e.g. Forwood Conference, Canberra, 1-5 April 1974, Panel 1, p.35:

*"There is clearly a changing role of forests in Australia of which all of us must be acutely aware. While some of this new emphasis is sometimes characterised by extreme emotion the change is very real: it had depth, and it has permanence. The importance of natural land in this context will continue to increase - it is not an ephemeral phase. Industry, forest managers and individuals alike must realise and accept this, yet so often it is said that the environmental movement is of a tiresome 'outer fringe' nature, or that people will forget about in a few years. There is no semblance of evidence to support these latter views here or elsewhere."*

At the international level, in the Final Declaration of the Seventh World Congress, Buenos Aires, 1972, it was noted that "Foresters recognise that forestry is concerned not with trees, but with how trees can serve people". The theme of the Eighth World Forestry Congress, Jakarta, 1978, was "Forests for People". The urgency of the problems was stressed as the result of seventy million extra people in world population each year and sixteen million fewer hectares of tropical forest. "translated into more understandable terms . . . the increase in population would fill the conference hall every fifteen minutes, and an area of forest equal to the area covered by the hall was being cleared for agriculture every two seconds" (J.

Forest Ecology and Management 2: 67, 1979). The Congress Declaration covered 26 points and dealt mainly with forest resource and food problems of the developing countries. Of relevance to the Terania issue was the injunction under point 5: . . . "Moreover, foresters should look beyond their forest reserves to areas where the planting of trees can be of major benefit to people and to agriculture other than for the direct harvesting of timber". This stresses the importance of reafforestation, and the responsibility of foresters towards forested lands now cleared and degraded.

In the 30 November 1979 issue of the "Far Eastern Economic Review", the problems of future wood supplies in the South-East Asian region were discussed, and apply equally well to Australia and especially the rainforests remaining along the eastern coast:

*"Tropical hardwood, for so long plentiful and cheap, is moving towards a period of chronic shortage. Years of forestry mis-management are catching up with the timber industry . . . Hardwood is becoming a rare commodity . . . Eventually all of the tropical hardwoods will be harvested . . . Little re-afforestation is occurring, and of that mostly of softwood or lower quality hardwood. No one is replanting the dipterocarp hardwood, for instance, meranti, the mainstay of the world plywood industries through the late 1970's".*

It is recognised that the rainforests have for long been overcut, but "although government and industry men recognise the problem, they seem unable or unwilling to do much about it".

The "Indigenous Forest Policy", 1976, N.S.W., recognises the extremely limited capacity of remaining rainforests to produce speciality timbers by low intensity periodic logging operations, and notes that "special attention should be paid to their value in providing non-material community benefits".

However, as emphasised in the Statement on "Proposed Logging of Terania Creek" by the N.S.W. Forestry Commission, 14 December 1979, (p.1), the Commission is bound under the Forestry Act, 1916, to provide timber, and management of the forests for other values (e.g. wildlife habitat, recreation) receives extremely low priority under the Act.

*It is therefore urged that the Act be amended to provide for the management of the forests to supply all values that are relevant to community needs. The new legislation would rescue the professional forester from what has now become an intolerable situation, in which he finds himself sandwiched between the criticism of conservationists and the pressures of industry.*

An Australian ethic on the role of the remaining rainforests is now ready for birth, and the Terania conflict and the present public inquiry provide an opportune time for its delivery. In any case, it is high time that Australia got in step with international thinking and action on these issues. Recent statements by concerned international authorities on the need to conserve the world's remaining rainforests are multiplying, e.g.:

*"The Use of Ecological Guidelines for Development in Tropical Forest Areas of South-East Asia", IUCN Publications New Series, No.32, 1975.*

*"The Use of Ecological Guidelines for Development in the American Humid Tropics", IUCN Publications New Series, No.31, 1975.*

*"Regional meeting on integrated ecological research and the training needs in the South-East Asian region", Kuala Lumpur, 19-22 August 1974. UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Report No.26, 1975, Paris.*

*"MAB-IUFRO International Workshop on Tropical Rainforest Ecosystems". Hamburg-Reinbek Workshop, 12-17 May 1977. UNESCO MAB Report No.44 1979, Paris.*

*"Draft of Research Priorities in Tropical Biology", 2 September 1979. A report of a committee of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences National Research Council.*

*"World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Development". IUCN-UNEP-WWF, Gland, Switzerland. 1980.*

*"Poore (1980). Tropical rainforests and moist deciduous forests. Source-book for a World Conservation Strategy. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.*

#### TERANIA CREEK INQUIRY

The Colong Committee has combined with the Nature Conservation Council, the Total Environment Centre, the South-East Conservation Association, and Ecology Action to present a joint submission to the Inquiry. Contributors include Dr. Len Webb and Dr. J.G. Tracey of C.S.I.R.O., Mr. Jim Somerville, Vice-President of the Colong Committee and Hon. Treasurer of N.C.C., Mr. Ray Hammond, Treasurer, S.E.C.A., Mr. Peter Phibbs, B.A., Economic Impact Consultant, and Mr. Dick Thompson, B.A., Secretary, Ecology Action. The submission is edited by Elizabeth Elenius, B.A., member of the Colong Committee and Project Officer of the N.C.C.

The submission goes beyond the immediate issue of Terania Creek, which it treats as a case study of the larger issue of rainforest preservation. Much of the Colong Committee's contribution was published in the last Bulletin, and Dr. Len Webb's contribution is given above. The recommendations of the submission are:

- A. The forests of Terania Creek should not be logged because of their intrinsic scientific, floral, faunal and recreational value.
- B. The Terania Creek basin should be dedicated as national park within a larger Nightcap National Park as recommended by the National Parks Association of N.S.W.
- C. The Forestry Commission should encourage local residents and sawmillers to participate in a large reafforestation programme in the Northern Rivers Region which should be funded in part by a substantial increase in royalty rates. The Government should ensure that any timber industry workers whose jobs are



lost as a result of diminution of the rainforest resource should be offered continuing employment in such reafforestation schemes.

- D. The Commission of Inquiry is urged to recommend the amendment of the Forestry Act to provide for the management of the forests to supply all values that are relevant to community needs.
- E. The Inquiry should recommend to the Government that there be no logging of other rainforest areas in N.S.W. without thorough investigation involving public participation.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE MACDONALD VALLEY

The above will be the subject of an Inquiry to be held in the valley on April 18-20.

Inquiries: Allen Strom, Gosford  
District 043 60 1024.

#### ZURUCK ZUR ERDE (Down to Earth)

Doreen Grossmann, who lives in Switzerland, but spent some time in Australia with her husband, Werner, has sent us a copy of Werner Grossmann's book with the above title. It is written in German, but he has made a precis in English as follows:

*"In our attempts to unveil the deepest secrets of Nature we have forfeited one of the most precious things life has to offer: the experience of the overwhelming diversity of our natural environment. In our research into natural phenomena we have become accustomed to picking out especially what is of general validity. Under the overbearing dominance of such abstraction our sensitivity has declined. We attach small value to what is specific in each phenomenon, what is fragile and delicate in nature. There are no inner limits to our penetrating understanding. We can carry it to the dissolution of our basis, our biosphere on this planet. The increasing destruction of our natural environment and the threat of radioactive pollution make this obvious. Our power of*

*understanding has a double nature. If it is unchecked, it turns from an organizing into a disintegrative power. Our exaggerated faith in our own discernment reaches grotesque proportions in our belief in the possibility of grasping the beginnings of life, of the world, and of the universe. We must counter the disintegrative power of our intelligence with a new force - the strength which grows out of the enjoyment and appreciation of the limitless natural diversity of this magnificent earth of ours."*

Werner and Doreen Grossman have been generous supporters of the Colong Committee. They realise that wilderness had disappeared in most of Europe, but it can still be saved here. It is most gratifying to the Colong Committee to know that this fact is recognised beyond our shores. There are several references to Australia, and the Colong Committee in the book and, if any of our readers know German, we would be glad of a translation of these passages.

#### ONE WORLD

*"Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and ailing environments? . . . The world is now a fragile and interlocking system, whether for its people, its ecology or its resources . . . The world . . . can become stronger by becoming a just and humane society. If it fails in this it will move towards its own destruction."*

Herr Willy Brandt, Chancellor of West Germany in "North-South: a Program for Survival".

#### GIVE NOTHING - THEY MIGHT ASK FOR MORE

The N.S.W. Minister for Conservation, Mr. Gordon, has continued to express opposition to our proposals for this segment of the Rim, (West of Mount Lindesay) even though the proposed National Park here only involves re-designation of three Flora Reserves, and declaration of

300-400 m. strip to protect the south side of the border crest itself. He maintains management of these areas is best left in the hands of the Forestry Commission and *that creation of a National Park would only provoke other bodies to campaign for its enlargement.* (!) He has however said that the Forestry Commission will consider a no-logging strip along the crest. Further enquiries will be made of the Minister concerning this arrangement, which is at least a short-term protection, until it is realised that the Scenic Rim Park system should be managed as a whole.

Scenic Rim Association Annual Report, 1978/79

#### SUGGESTED READING FOR THE NSW FORESTRY COMMISSION

##### Statement on Wilderness

By the Institute of Foresters of Australia, July 1979

An area of wilderness is a large tract of primitive country with its land and waters and its natural plant and animal communities ideally unmodified by humans and their works.

This tract must be large enough to survive as wilderness, and ideally must be extensive enough to require more than one day's walk to traverse.

The Institute of Foresters of Australia advocates that:

1. Wilderness is of value to man and its conservation is a form of land use which deserves full consideration along with other uses.
2. There is an urgent need to identify existing wilderness areas with a view to reservation.
3. The conservation of wilderness requires far sighted, comprehensive, co-ordinated policies - together with the resources and organisations to implement them.
4. To improve management there is a need for study to define more closely the important characteristics and benefits of wilderness, to evaluate these in socio-

economic terms, and to learn how wilderness is best supplied and conserved.

#### CURRENT ACTIVITIES

These include:

Letter to Mr. Wran asking for Government direction that there be no prospecting or new mining in national parks, or potential parks.

Letter to Mr. Wran protesting against Forestry Commission policy of roading wilderness areas without an environmental impact study, then using cost of road as argument against wilderness reservation.

Support of T.E.C. application to World Wildlife Fund and Heritage Commission for grant to enable rainforest study.

Delineation of rainforest remnants on Forestry Commission maps. In view of the spread of protest against logging from the Border Ranges to the Black Scrub, Terania Creek, Washpool, the Forbes River and other areas, this is a timely exercise.

Stepping up of Border Ranges campaign. Coloured rainforest poster and pamphlets in preparation.

Protest to Heritage Commission on decision not to list Beardy River.

Letter to World Wildlife Fund regretting lack of allocation of funds for habitat preservation.

Letter congratulating Mr. Fraser on declaration of Kakadu National Park.

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#### PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE BY THE COLONG COMMITTEE (Price Includes Postage)

Save Colong Bulletin, P.A.....	\$5.00
Kakadu Coloured Poster.....	\$1.50
Border Ranges Poster.....	\$1.50
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