

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

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

18 Argyle Street, Sydney, 2000

NUMBER 69

NOVEMBER, 1981.

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*A rising tide of world indignation at the HEC's proposals, growing national dismay with Tasmania's politicians, and renewed confidence by thoughtful people everywhere that they CAN change human affairs will inevitably win out.*

(Bob Brown in "Wilderness News" - Oct/Nov 1981.



## **BOOK FAIR**

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Total Environment Centre is a voluntary organisation and this is its major fund raising activity.

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A MESS OF POTTAGE

In our last issue we published a map of Tasmania showing the extent of pulpwood concessions, which covered some 80% of the State. As in New South Wales, pressure from timber interests has prevailed over the policy of sustained yield. Mr. B.B. Walker, Chief Management Officer of the Tasmanian Forestry Commission states that:

*"Politically the industry has been successful in achieving long term rights to Crown Timber for certain recognised mills, in keeping State timber royalties low, and in late years in securing Government assistance in the construction of major forest access."*

*Eucalypt pulpwood cut from private property in the last eight years averaged 1,350,000 tonnes a year. This exceeded the sustainable annual cut of 960,000 tonnes by an average of 390,000 tonnes a year."*

As in N.S.W., forest destruction is heavily subsidised by the taxpayer, the Commission's deficit being \$11 million in 1979/80, while it expects to meet only 50% of its costs from revenue. Employment in the industry continues to decline, over 100 sawmills having been forced to close since 1967/8.

In Tasmania a Legislative Council Select Committee is holding an inquiry into State Forestry. Since members of the Committee have no planning knowledge, and the inquiry will be conducted in secrecy, no acceptable outcome is likely. Previous inquiries commissioned by Parliament have been either suppressed or scrapped before completion.

South-West Tasmania, the only extensive wilderness area remaining, is being reduced by at least 30% by woodchipping and pulping concessions. Shell and B.H.P. have applied for mining exploration licenses over another 1500 sq. km. The Hydro-Electric Scheme will cut the wilderness by at least 30%.

Tasmanian voters are being given no opportunity in the coming referendum to reject the damming of the Franklin. They will have

to choose between a dam above the Oiga junction, or below. They cannot vote for no dams at all. Mr. Lowe, lately replaced as Premier, announced that voters would be given all choices, but was swiftly rebuked by caucus and recently forced out of office by what Alan Reid describes as "the Socialist Left political mafia". On ABC radio prior to his demotion Mr. Lowe admitted that Tasmanians might vote against any dam if given the option. The Tasmanian Wilderness Society is now advising voters to write "no dams" across the ballot paper, a good means of proving the futility of the referendum.

A telephone survey of more than 3,000 Tasmanians conducted this week by the ABC program Nationwide showed that 70% would vote informally as a protest over the Government's refusal to include a "no dams" option. The poll also found that barely 50% of the voters would vote for the pro-dams parties - ie. The A.L.P. together with the Liberals.

It is only too obvious however that the fate of this wilderness area, of national and world significance, is to be decided not by the Australian people or the World Heritage Commission, or even the people of Tasmania, but by a faction-created Government prepared to act on the advice of powerful authorities subservient to industrial interests. There appears to be a substantial case for Federal Labor intervention.

The insularity of Tasmania is not only a matter of geography... What can be done by citizens in the rest of Australia?

The Tasmanian Wilderness Society (129 Bathurst St., Hobart, 7000) is carrying the brunt of the campaign. It has appealed to fellow conservationists to:

\*Ask their Federal member to support its call for an inquiry

\*Write a letter to their local paper

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\*Sign a petition (available at  
18 Argyle St.)

\*Make a donation towards the  
\$3,000 cost of the campaign.

The Colong Committee has written to the Prime Minister (together with 4,229 other correspondents on the same subject) pointing out that the environmental damage being perpetrated in Tasmania is largely dependent on Commonwealth funds. Though not objecting to the subsidisation of a disadvantaged state, it has suggested that funds could just as effectively be applied to the supply of natural gas or electrical power (via Bass Strait) as to the damming of the Franklin. The reply has been that this is a matter for the State Government to decide, a reply inconsistent with Commonwealth action on Fraser Island and the Barrier Reef. We also wrote to Mr. Lowe on similar lines. Believing that the most effective action lies with the Tasmanian Wilderness Society, we have made a donation of \$200. The Federation of Bushwalking Clubs has made a donation of \$1000 and the Sydney Bush Walkers \$200. We hope other organisations will follow their lead.

#### BOTANIC GARDENS FOR THE CHOP

On October 25th a party of loggers, members of SPROUT arrived at the Botanic Gardens, complete with chain saws, axes, an E.I.S. and a management plan, determined to utilise the resources "locked up" in that hitherto useless reservation. Before commencing operations Miss Penny Figgis, spokeswoman for the organisation, addressed those wasting their time in the Gardens. As far as we could hear, above the roar of machinery, her words were as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I represent a new organisation called SPROUT which stands for Sensible, Practical Residents' Organisation for the Utilisation of Trees.

It developed as an off-shoot or splinter group of the timber industry. As they seem to be busy logging rainforests we've stepped in to fill the gap.

We formed because we could no longer stand by and watch the Botanic Gardens remain as unproductive land. What is the use of it if it doesn't produce anything? In fact a valuable timber resource is simply being locked up by a minority group of selfish recreationists!

I may be going out on a limb here, but many of these trees are actually more than one hundred years old, and therefore clearly over-mature, even decadent. Surely good sense dictates that they should be replaced by smart young saplings with vigor and rather more self-discipline? Surely we don't want the Botanic Gardens to become a cemetery for trees?

What is needed is a balanced approach. The Gardens should be managed to allow multiple abuse. Everyone should have a stake in the garden!

SPROUT has established that the logging of these trees could bring in at least a few hundred dollars, which is not a bad return for the mere \$50,000 of public money we shall spend on building and maintaining logging roads.

And while speaking of logging roads, it is very important to realise that these logging roads will open up this locked-up area to the car-borne public, who have previously been denied their democratic right to total access to absolutely everywhere!

No longer will it be the preserve of elitist family picnickers.

Now, lest any extremist, communist paid agitators ask any emotional, irrational and naturally ill-informed questions about the wisdom of our plan, I

want to assure you that in the interests of balance we have followed accepted procedures.

We have prepared an Environmental Impact Statement and a Management Plan.

First the E.I.S.

- \* Intensive, extensive and thorough research taken over the last week has proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that, within the Botanic Gardens Management area, the 8 kilometres of logging roads and snigtracks, the 5 hectares of logging dumps and the logging camp will have no detrimental environmental impact. We have proved for example that grass will regenerate on logging dumps in 8-10 years and that lantana, a most attractive species, will clothe the area in all its glory in an even shorter time.
- \* Logging will be strictly controlled in accordance with the selective logging procedures - that is we'll select a tree then we'll log it.
- \* We feel confident that in 40 years the ordinary person will not be able to tell that logging has taken place (well anyone who remembers what it was like with any luck will have snuffed off).

Now to management. - Let it not be said that we do not respect the non-wood values of the garden. - Adequate recreation areas will be set aside.

Here - an excellent area, quite pleasant for picnics and very handy to the toilet block. This lovely reserve will provide for panoramic views of the entire logging operation.

So there you are - at last a responsible, balanced, sensible approach to a public resource. I'm sure you'll agree its time we were rational about these matters and stopped rabbiting on about emotional things like ecology, national

heritage, even beauty! So lets get on with the logging and hope that little SPROUTS will flourish and grow in every town in Australia.

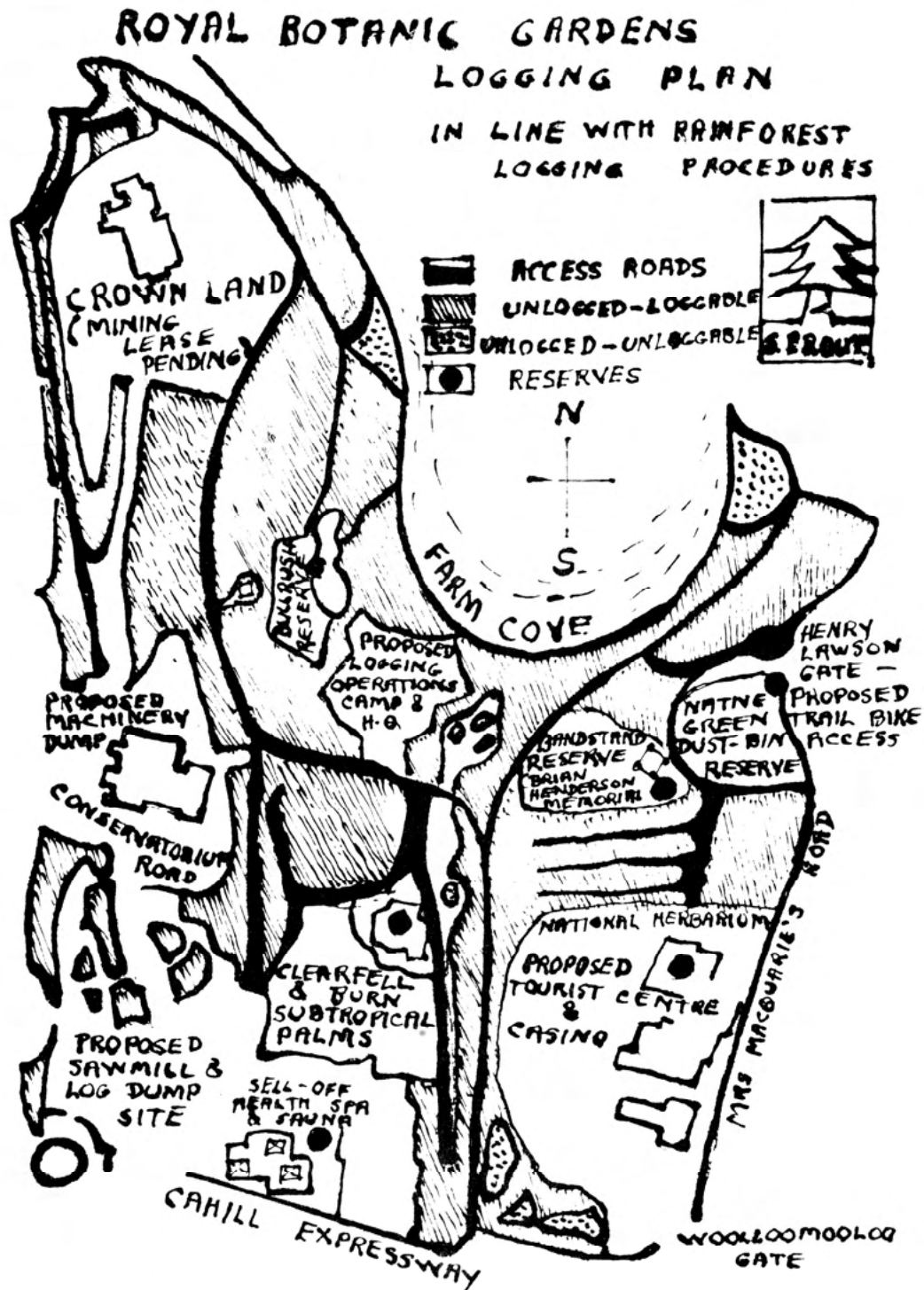
#### CONSERVATION PROGRESS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

In Bulletin no. 67 we described the impressions of a party of Colong Committee members and supporters which visited North Queensland in June. Since then environmentalists raised the funds to employ Milo Dunphy for a month as consultant to the new Cairns Environment Centre. Milo has now returned from this assignment, having helped to establish the centre and stimulate much favourable publicity in the local press.

A further outcome of the tour has been the grant of \$5,000 by the A.C.F. for the purpose of formulating a Greater Daintree National Park proposal, an essential preliminary to the saving of rainforest areas along the Daintree River and on the Windsor Tableland. At the request of the A.C.F., Senator Colin Mason, acting leader of the Australian Democrats during the absence of Mr. Chipp, visited the area. He is believed to be the first member of Federal Parliament to do so. On his return he said:

*"This is the last remaining significant area of virgin rainforest of its type in the world. Present plans are to mill all of it over the next five years. Milling is proceeding at ten times the natural rate of regeneration. Five major sawmillers are taking out as many as 400 logs a week. Their main targets are magnificent trees which range from several hundred to thousand year old and which are virtually irreplaceable.*

*Next year is the International Year of the Tree and it would be an absurd irony if Queensland continued this mass destruction of trees which would be a source of wonder and pleasure to all succeeding generations."*



Senator Mason said the most valuable trees environmentally were being destroyed only to provide ornamental veneers.

*"This will not add a single square metre to housing anywhere or provide a single additional hour*

*of work for the building industry."*

Senator Mason said he was confident that when Mr. Bjelke-Petersen realised the true importance of the Windsor Tableland he would act. The whole region had never been evaluated, but it was known already it had

unique flora and fauna and was perhaps one of the world's more important wilderness regions.

*"We are most anxious that unemployment would not result from declaration of the region as a national park", he said. "Timber workers ought to be employed in reforestation so the industry can be provided for into the future, not collapse in five years time as is the present plan."*

Present plans are for a reduction of rainforest milling to 55% after all virgin rainforest has been milled by 1986.

Senator Mason said areas already milled were not regenerating but were infested with weeds, especially nettle-like Gympie bush, the sting of which affected people for weeks afterwards.

*"This place of great natural beauty will so be turned into an unpleasant environment which everyone shuns."*

Recently the logging road to the Tableland has been picketed by conservationists. Senator Mason spent some hours with the protestors, and reports that both loggers and protestors have respected each other's rights. Veteran conservationist Percy Trezise flew media representatives over the picket. Subsequently 14 protestors were arrested by the police.

The Colong Committee has written to Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, expressing its appreciation of the natural features of his state, particularly the Windsor Tableland, and urging his Government to preserve the forest, probably the largest and perhaps the most scenic of our rapidly disappearing rainforest remnants.

As much rainforest timber is taken from Mt. Windsor Tableland per year as the annual rainforest cut from the whole of northern N.S.W. Mt. Windsor will be completely logged by 1987.

#### WOODWORKERS BACK RAINFOREST CONSERVATION

During October the Woodworkers Group of N.S.W. held an exhibition at the O.T.C. Building in Martin Place. Expressing its "serious concern" about the continuing loss of many of Australia's unique and decorative timbers, the group advocated the following:

1. *"Cessation of uncontrolled logging of many of the unique and decorative woods for commonplace use,*
2. *Extension of the list of restricted species,*
3. *Stricter surveillance to ensure the compatibility of marketing of timbers, considering their rarity, with their optimum end-use,*
4. *More concentrated re-afforestation with these same selected species,*
5. *Establishment of a Wood Resource Centre.*

*By these actions we conserve and increase our unique timber resources and ensure a continued supply of fine Australian woods to enrich the culture of this and future generations."*

Though the above policy has not been spelled out by the Colong Committee, its adoption could well accord with our aims. The optimum end use of rainforest timbers is undoubtedly high class furniture and fittings, a labour intensive use. There are substitutes for nearly every use of these timbers whether in the form of other materials such as bricks, cement, laminex steel etc. or non-rainforest timbers such as hardwood, pine or even poplar. If these substitutes were used, our major unlogged rainforests could be saved.

CONSERVATION OF WHOLE FLORISTIC ELEMENTS

In the introductory volume of "Flora of Australia" published by the Bureau of Flora and Fauna, Canberra, B.A. Barlow, Curator Herbarium Australiense, C.S.I.R.O., expresses the need for the conservation of whole floristic communities, which are "relicts with slender tenure on survival", rather than selected communities in selected locations. A "whole floristic community" is of course, a wilderness. He writes:

*The need for this action can be illustrated by example. The temperate and sub-tropical rainforests of eastern Australia survive today in a number of isolated pockets scattered along the coast and ranges, and their total area has been considerably reduced both by logging and by clearing for pastoral activity. According to our former view of Australian biogeography, these communities would have been seen as modern invaders (in the sense of geological time) of the Australian flora almost as prehistoric aliens supplanting our truly Australian vegetation. We now see these rainforests as the remnants in Australia, of the ancient Gondwanan continent when it was still attached to Antarctica sixty million years ago. They are the surviving residue of the primitive stocks from which the bulk of the modern Australian flora has been derived. This residue comprises the taxa which have undergone the least evolutionary change and includes some of the most primitive genera of flowering plants still surviving in the world. These are the most ancient Australians still surviving. Perhaps, with such an understanding of the history of these forests and with awareness of their intrinsic beauty, we should consider, as a matter of national pride, conserving all that remains of them.*

*The Australian flora, as we see it today, thus tells the story of a hundred million years of Australia as a southern land mass.*

WATT AND FOES ARE BEST OF ENEMIES

Under the above heading the New York Times of 11th November reports that soon after the appointment of the pro-development James G. Watt as Interior Secretary, money and membership applications began to pour into the headquarters of the environment groups. The Sierra Club, which has presented a petition bearing a million signatures for the removal of Mr. Watt, reported the best year in its history.

For his part, Mr. Watt is a very successful fund raiser for his party. He is now the most successful fund-raiser in the Republican Party after President Reagan. The New York Times says that "Mr. Watt has now discovered that the attacks on him and his counterattacks against the "extreme environmentalists" have made him the champion of large sectors of the Republican Party and of the business community."

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"His idea of a wilderness area is a parking lot with no lines."  
- Arizona Congressman Morris Udall, on President Reagan's Interior Secretary, Mr. James Watt. - S.M.H. report.

HAZARD REDUCTION MAY MEAN FOREST DESTRUCTION

Reporting on the preliminary results of a study by the Centre for Environmental Studies at Macquarie University, Dr. Stephen Clark stated:

*"Six years after a fire some understory species are still not up to the numbers they were at originally. A significant number, about a quarter, of the species had not recovered at the time when the next hazard-reduction burn took place.*

*These findings indicate that hazard-reduction fires may be having a significant detrimental effect on some plant species in the Sydney area. It must be stressed*

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*that these are preliminary findings and work will be continuing. It may be found for instance that unfavourable moisture conditions after the last fire were the cause of the low regeneration and survival rate,*

*It had been observed that hazard-reduction burns not only affected the shrubs but killed off the smaller, and presumably younger, trees. This opened up the possibility that frequent repeated fires could prevent the regeneration of timbered areas and the eventual disappearance of areas of forest as the present mature trees grew old and died."*  
- Macquarie University News.

#### FAR SOUTH COAST BUSHFIRES

In Bulletin no. 63 we described a disastrous fire which started from a heap of bark being burnt off and burnt 40,000 hectares of forest. The Far South Coast Environment Group reports that it is no longer able to accept assurances that fire management on the Far South Coast is sensitively and responsibly carried out by the various fire authorities. The Minister has said that fire management is being thoroughly examined, in the light of past experiences, and the Group hopes that this review will lead to a far less generous use of control burning practices, which it believes, have been responsible for many of the devastating fires which have occurred, and are still occurring, along the Far South Coast.

The Group is working for the linking of the Nalbaugh and Nungatta national parks, because of their relative smallness and isolation in a heavily committed Forestry Commission region. The Colong Committee commissioned a study of this area some two years ago.

#### OTHER COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Committee's activities in support of the South West Tasmania Wilderness and the Windsor Tableland rainforest have already been described. Committee members also participated in the SPROUT demonstration. Other activities include:

#### Rangers in National Parks:

The Committee is concerned at the stationing of rangers in district and regional offices in the towns rather than in the parks. The staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is 698 (including section 8 employees). Only 136 of these are rangers, and only 10 of our national parks have rangers in residence. We believe that as a result, not only is park supervision inadequate, but public appreciation of our parks suffers from lack of contact with park staff, both rangers and others. The N.P. and W.S. stated in reply to a letter that "because of the broad range of functions for which the service is responsible under the National Parks and Wildlife Act the former practice followed by Trusts of allocating staff to individual areas was found to be too restrictive." The Committee was not satisfied with this explanation and in reply submitted a specific plan for the relocation of district offices.

A deputation to the Director, Mr. Johnstone, has been arranged. It will discuss in addition wilderness protection, particularly from the incursion of off road vehicles.

Kakadu; We wrote to Mr. Fraser, and the World Heritage Commission. It was pointed out that there is no way in which the enormous open cut tailings dams, dumps and installations at Ranger and Jabiluka can be concealed or the mine workings restored to their natural condition. The noise of machinery, blasting and heavy transport cannot be silenced, nor the dust laid. It might be possible to contain tailings and drainage on the mine sites while the mines are operating, though judging from the recent collapse of a tailings dam, it is most unlikely. It will not be possible to retain these poisonous substances on the site after the mines are abandoned. The scenic appeal of Magela Creek and the upper South Alligator River will be destroyed and both streams polluted.

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We requested that World Heritage status be not accorded to the area for the above reasons.

Hastings Environmental Impact Study:  
The Committee has written to the Premier requesting that this E.I.S. be evaluated, not by the Forestry Commission, which prepared it, but by the Department of Environment and Planning. A further letter informed the Premier that the Forestry Commission planned to either commence work on a new road into the area or step up the logging of Fenwicks Brush early in December, and drew attention to the Ombudsman's report that the Commission has said that it intends to proceed irrespective of the examination of the E.I.S.

Washpool; The Committee is organising, in conjunction with other organisations which it has approached, for a national park plan for Washpool. The plan would be drawn up by a professional planner with assistance from the Committee.

Newnes Plateau; This is a buffer area for the Wollemi wilderness and impinges on the Colo catchment. In view of the proposed Bird's Rock Colliery, sand quarrying, and pine plantations on the plateau, we have written to the Minister for Planning and Environment requesting that a regional plan be drawn up for the area.

#### GRADY'S CREEK - ALTERNATIVE TIMBER SUPPLIES

Three and a half years after Cabinet decided to create a Border Ranges National Park and in the process, log Grady's Creek Flora Reserve, a token portion of the rainforest park has been dedicated but, perhaps by way of compensation, the pristine rainforest in Grady's Creek has not yet been logged.

Rumours are now being spread by the sawmills concerned that roading and logging of the Flora Reserve is "imminent", but this is denied by senior officers of the Forestry Commission. It is fact however that the alternative brushwood supplies, currently being logged at the rate of 4,000 cubic metres per annum in the Kyogle Management area, will run

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N.S.W. Wilderness Calendar  
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out in mid 1982. There is little doubt that the Forestry Commission will once again try to persuade the Premier to permit the logging of the largest flora reserve in N.S.W. as they have already twice unsuccessfully sought to do. This is totally unacceptable to the conservation movement.

The mill concerned is Munro and Lever which needs an annual quota of 8,500 cubic metres of peeler logs in order to supply their Grevillia Ply Mill - 4,500 coming from the Urbenville district and 4,000 from the Kyogle district.

Although the State Pollution Control Commission inquiry into the Border Ranges was told in March, 1978 that the hoop and

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bunya pine plantations in the district would be of sufficient development to supply the full quota to Munro and Lever from 1991, Forestry Commission officers now agree that portion of the quota will be available from 1985 and we know that Munro and Lever are already experimenting with the peeling of the pines, 26 hectares of which were planted in the early 1930's. Of the total of 1,521 hectares in six separate plantations, 300 hectares will be over 43 years old by 1985 and thus suitable for peeling.

In these circumstances it would be feasible to raise the current annual total cut of 21,620 cubic metres Urbenville district by 11% and allocate the resultant additional 2,400 cubic metres wholly to Munro and Lever. When added to their existing hardwood quota there of 1,600 cubic metres, the full requirement of 4,000 cubic metres now coming from Kyogle could instead come from Urbenville. Certainly about 3,000 cubic metres would be hardwood which is difficult to peel and glue but Robb and Brown, who have a brushwood quota of 3,000 cubic metres would no doubt be prepared to enter into a log swapping arrangement if suitable compensation was provided by the Government.

The integrated Urbenville first cutting cycle is expected to be completed in 1993 for both hardwoods and brushwoods. However the Management Plan states that by then an estimated 70,000 cubic metres of regrowth timber will be available, so that Robb and Brown (with a combined quota of 11,000 cubic metres) and Ford Bros. (whose quota is 4,530 cubic metres) would be able to continue until 1993 - in line with the current commitments they have from the Forestry Commission.

In any event, Munro and Lever have access to large quantities of hoop pine through their Queensland owners Carricks Limited of Brisbane. The Chairman of Directors reported to shareholders in April 1981 that they were peeling at Maryborough "in order to produce raw material for our plywood operations at Grevillia." What moral right has this wealthy Queensland firm to insist that we log a pristine Flora Reserve in N.S.W. when they have alternative supplies of hoop pine a couple of hundred miles away?

It is confidently expected that the N.S.W. Labor Cabinet, after five years of procrastination, is about to grasp the rainforest nettle. This proposal is being put to the Minister for Environment and Planning and the Minister for Forests as the solution to one part of the North Coast rainforest issue.

J.G. Somerville.

## FORM FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS

*The Secretary  
The Colong Committee Limited  
18 Argyle Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000*

Dear Sir,

I enclose \$5.00 being my subscription for all issues of the Save Colong Bulletin during the calendar year 1982.

I enclose \$ . . . . . being a donation to the Colong Committee's Fighting Fund.  
I enclose \$ . . . . . being an interest free loan repayable at 4 weeks notice.  
I have donated \$ . . . . . to the Australian Conservation Foundation, (672B Glenferrie Road HAWTHORN VICTORIA 3122) expressing a wish that my donation be spent for the purposes of the Colong Committee. I would like the grant which this enables to be allocated to the Committee's Fighting Fund/ Investment Fund.

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Because of the essential role of the Colong Bulletin in publicising our views and encouraging financial support, we are anxious to increase circulation. If you know of any potential subscribers, we would be pleased to send them a complimentary copy. Please give below the name and address of any you know of:-

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