

SAVE COLONG bulletin

THE COLONG COMMITTEE • A National Wilderness Society

18 Argyle Street, Sydney, 2000.

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The question is not who is best competent to 'manage' the particular forest area, but whether or not a particular area of forest should be preserved in its natural state.....I do not believe that the Forestry Commission has any particular competence in the matter of determining whether an area has some special national importance, from the point of view of the nation's heritage.....and whether or not such an area should be preserved in its natural state.

J. P. Miller in "Living Earth" Jan. 1981.

Tropical rainforest evolved of its own accord in far distant geological time, before there were higher animals. It bred them. It raised man, who, so far from being able to devise the forest, must now devour it. When I think of the fortunes that have been made from this capital, and how little has been returned to conservation and to silviculture, I pity the distress. Sawmillers should now be logging plantations, instead of killing the goose which laid the golden eggs.

John Corner, F.R.S., tropical botanist, of Cambridge.

WILDERNESS IN NATIONAL PARKS

In view of the constant threats to wilderness which are the principal theme of these pages, the Colong Committee has for some time been concerned about the status of wilderness areas in national parks. We therefore sought a meeting with Mr. Don Johnstone, Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and were pleased to discuss the subject with him and Mr. Geoff Armstrong, Assistant Director (management) on June 7th. As a guideline to the discussion, we drew up the following summary of our proposals:

Defence of Wilderness:

The Report on the National Estate points out that "our last wilderness is rapidly disappearing under the

assaults of increasing population and aggressive technology". The aim of the Colong Committee is to save the remaining wilderness areas because, as the Report continues, "that chance will soon be lost". This aim can be achieved only by including wilderness in national parks, an objective which we hope is supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, but it is only over wilderness within existing parks that the Service can exercise control.

Definition of Wilderness:

We accept the definition of wilderness given on page 29 of the Helman report, which was prepared in consultation with the Colong Committee. We also accept the 20 wilderness areas defined in the report, though there are some near wilderness remnants which could well be managed as such. The Helman

areas already partly or wholly within parks include Colo/Hunter, Kanangra, Apsley, Deua, Pilot, Jagungal, Byadbo, Guy Fawkes, Brogo, Bimberi, Ettrema, Fiery Range, New England, Budawang, Barrington, Mann and Nadgee.

Invocation of section 59 of the National Parks Act:

As an essential preliminary to preservation, we urge the use of section 59 of the Act to halt any development in the areas already within parks.

Essentials of Park Management Plans:

Having invoked section 59, management plans should be prepared to give effect to the following:

- (1) Closure and revegetation of all roads, except those necessary for early stages of management.
- (2) Exclusion of all vehicles.
- (3) Removal of all structures, except those permitted under section 61 of the Act.
- (4) No control burns in wilderness.
- (5) No prospecting, mining, grazing, timber getting or other forms of development.

Working Organisation:

The above is a brief summary of the main objectives of a wilderness management policy. We believe that, in order to give effect to this policy, your suggestion of a working organisation to prepare a draft National Parks and Wildlife Service policy on wilderness should be adopted. A small committee, comprising appropriate officers from the Service, together with representatives of the Colong Committee and the National Parks Association, would probably be the best means of reaching an acceptable policy.

It was gratifying to the Committee representatives to hear from Mr. Johnstone that he had already, independently of our approach, decided to set up a consultative committee comprised of representatives of wilderness conservation organisations and representatives of the Service. Although we did not discuss all the Colong Committee proposals in detail, it was clear that the Service

views were close to our own. We were pleased to learn too that Mr. Armstrong had called for reports from all regional officers on areas suitable for wilderness designation, and that the definition of these areas was well under way.

A second meeting was held on July 12th. As suggested by the Colong Committee, representatives of the National Parks Association and the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs were invited. Paul Barnes and Peter Prineas attended for the National Parks Association and Roger Lembit represented the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs. Brian Preston, B.A., LLB (Hon.), author of a thesis on wilderness, was also invited. The Colong Committee was represented by Peter Maslen, Haydn Washington and Alex Colley, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service by Mr. Geoff Armstrong (Assistant Director (management)) and Mr. Jim Starling (Planning Co-ordinator). The meeting was able to concentrate on several specific issues advanced by the Service.

The first of these was the question of wilderness definition. There are many definitions, usually in terms of aesthetics or experience rather than measurement. The main question was that of size, the conservationist viewpoint being that the acceptance of small areas was unlikely to allow for complete species representation and could lead to fragmentation of larger areas. Geoff Armstrong's view was that we should concentrate on quantitative, readily understandable criteria, such as in the Helman report so that the definition would be understood by the land use planner, the public and the politicians. It was agreed that the Helman definition (25,000 ha. without major indentations) was acceptable, but that smaller areas with high natural value and spaciousness should not be excluded.

On the question of procedures for reservation, we were pleased to learn that these were already well advanced. Reports already called for from regional officers on areas suitable for wilderness classification would be discussed at a meeting at Headquarters.

of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Act, and another area in Kaputar National Park was pending. It was agreed that the use of section 59 to preserve areas during the preparation of management plans and to safeguard them thereafter, was desirable. Most of the Helman areas, both within and outside parks were under investigation.

Wilderness legislation was also discussed. It was agreed that a well worded statement of the aim and objective of wilderness reservation would help to justify and popularise the wilderness concept. A suggestion that the Service itself produce posters and other publications seeking public understanding and support for the concept was well received.

There was complete agreement on the question of so-called "elitism" in the use of wilderness areas. The Service's view is that it should provide for a wide range of recreational and other activities. In a paper presented at the second World Wilderness Conference, Geoff Armstrong expressed this as follows:

I would transfer publicity emphasis to seeking public support for the whole spectrum of nature conservation and recreation opportunities offered to the community by national parks. Wilderness is but one end of that spectrum and its overuse in publicity will polarise rather than win public support.

A number of other issues, including the controversial control burning question remain to be discussed at another meeting to be held in August. The Colong Committee representatives believe that the Service's concept of wilderness management is close to our own, and that agreement on differences should not be difficult. Many of the principles outlined in our guidelines are recognised in the following statement of constraints to apply within designated wilderness areas, as given in papers by Geoff Armstrong and Jim Starling:

- * Activities that conflict with opportunities for wilderness experience of the highest possible quality will not be permitted.

- * Wilderness areas will be maintained as free as possible from signs, trail markers and other management devices.
- * Unless circumstances are exceptional, management operations in wilderness management areas will be on foot or skis, or (when consistent with other management practices) on horseback.
- * Tracks other than those essential for management of wilderness management areas themselves will be closed (Section 61(2)(b) of the Act refers).
- * Essential management tracks will be rehabilitated to as near to a natural condition as possible, consistent with the need to utilise them periodically for essential management operations.
- * Other sites of disturbance will be rehabilitated to as near to a natural state as practicable.
- * The use by private or commercial interests of any form of motorised transport (including the landing of aircraft) will not be permitted.
- * Motorised transport (including aircraft) operated by any agency, except for essential management or rescue operations, will not be permitted.

RAINFOREST WRITE-IN NOT DENIGRATED

Mr. Nick Griener M.P., Liberal member for Ku-ring-gai, has written to the Committee as follows:

Your Bulletin of June 1982 does me a considerable disservice in suggesting that I "denigrated the effort" re the Rainforest Write-In at the Drummoyne by-election.

The facts are that in the course of a long interview the day after the by-election I was asked by the Sydney Morning Herald as to the vote for "Save the Rainforests".

I replied with absolute truth that at my table at Abbotsford it was about 5%.

It was certainly not my intention to

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either denigrate or play-up the vote recorded.

As you should be aware, I am particularly concerned that the Liberal Party develop a more sensitive policy position on a wide range of environmental issues.

In this context the article does me and the Liberal Party a gratuitous disservice and I would be grateful if you would publish this letter by way of correction.

The Hon. Secretary has replied as follows:

Thank you for your letter of June 10th on the rainforest write-in. It was discussed at today's meeting of the Committee and will certainly be published in Bulletin No. 73.

We didn't doubt the truth of your statement, and the low write-in at your booth may have been due to lack of rainforest workers in that area, or other causes.

Your concern for a more sensitive policy on a wide range of environmental issues is much appreciated. At the same time it cannot be denied, as you may gather from the tone of our Bulletin, that there is disappointment in environmental circles concerning the Liberal Party's policy. The Tasmanian Division supports the Franklin dam, and the Commonwealth Government refuses to block funding. Its attitude is now the subject of a court action.

On the subject of rainforest, there has been no declaration of policy.

The A.L.P. sent us a copy of their environmental policy and the sections relevant to our work were published in Bulletin No. 64. We stated in this Bulletin that "we would be pleased to publish the Liberal Party's policy on the preservation of natural areas if the Party cares to supply it". It was not sent.

In the absence of a policy statement, it is the present belief of the Colong Committee that the Liberal Party is subservient to the anti-conservationist Country Party in environmental matters.

The Colong Committee would be very willing to assist you in framing such a policy. It was agreed at the meeting that a discussion with members of your party concerned with conservation policy was very desirable. It was suggested that Mr. Dowd, Mr. Rizzoli and yourself might take part. I would be pleased if you could let me know whether you think this could be arranged.

NO COMMONWEALTH DAM COMMITMENT

Earlier in the year we wrote to the Prime Minister, requesting that his government refuse finance for the Franklin dam. His reply was that decisions on South-West Tasmania were the responsibility of the Tasmanian Government. He has, however, written to Senator Chipp that "the Commonwealth has entered into no commitment to give its support should the Tasmanian Government decide to proceed". He has also written to the Tasmanian Wilderness Society stating that there is currently a freeze on infrastructure borrowings. Had this information been given in the reply to our letter it would have provided at least a partial answer, but it was not given.

Having placed South-West Tasmania on the register of the National Estate, the Commonwealth is in fact obliged to make no funds available because section 30 of the Australian Heritage Commission Act forbids a Minister taking any action which would adversely affect any part of the National Estate unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative. The freeze on infrastructure funds means that \$40.5 million of loan funds will have to be diverted from areas such as housing and education if the scheme proceeds.

The Federal A.L.P. has submitted a 24 page report to the South-West Senate Committee. A recommendation is made for a policy of no further hydro projects in the South-West.

ACID RAIN KILLING TREES

Acid rain is the result of emissions of sulphur dioxide from power stations and industries and nitrogen oxide from vehicles. These emissions, together

with other contaminants move into the air masses which form our weather systems. They combine with water vapour to form sulphuric acid and fall to earth as rain. The acid enters leaves through the stomata and causes leaf dieback. In the earth the acid releases aluminium, manganese and other metals which poison the tree roots. The rivers and lakes of Canada and Norway have become badly affected. In Ontario, some 140 lakes have been pronounced dead. In some places the fallout is stronger than lemon juice and only marginally weaker than battery acid. In an article entitled "Ten Billion Dying Trees" published in the Sunday Times (London) of 4th April, Brian Jackman describes the damage caused in Germany. "A decade of warnings by foresters and ecologists," he writes, "has passed unheeded". No forest is too remote to be affected. In Baden-Wurtemberg 64,000 hectares of forest is dying and in Bavaria 55,000 hectares. Buildings are rotting and in badly affected areas four times as many people suffer from chronic bronchitis as those in country districts. Lung cancer also is more prevalent.

A recent CSIRO study has proved that acid rain falls in Sydney. Die-back is occurring, e.g. the disappearance of angophoras from Castle Crag and Middle Head (though this may be from other causes). Mr. Gillett of the CSIRO thinks it is unlikely that acid rain would affect fish or vegetation in Sydney, because it would be swamped by Sydney's existant acid soils. It was, however, possibly a factor causing eucalyptus die-back in New England. In view of the proven occurrence of acid rain in northern hemisphere areas remote from sources of generation, and the proximity of New England to the industrial pollution centres along the Hunter, it could well be a strong possibility. No time should be lost in inaugurating a research programme to follow up the leads already indicated by the CSIRO research.

AUSTRALIAN MINING INDUSTRY COUNCIL WILDERNESS POLICY

In 1981 the A.M.I.C. amended its 1980

policy to the extent of dropping the sentence which read "The mining industry opposes the concept of wilderness areas if access for mineral exploration is to be totally withdrawn". This may have been a reaction to the growing acceptance of the need for wilderness preservation. In fact unrestricted prospecting remains the policy of the Council, as expressed in the statement that "The mining industry stresses that, to ensure the proper assessment of Australia's mineral potential, exploration must be far-reaching, requiring that access to land, under appropriate controls, be maximised". In the next sentence it is claimed "That exploration is essentially a sampling operation employing modern techniques which require only small soil and rock samples to be collected for analysis with minimal, or no, disturbance to the environment".

This is true of some initial prospecting techniques, provided it is done on foot, but not of follow up operations such as drilling and costeaning. No prospecting is worth while unless it is intended to mine any economic deposit found.

PENSIONER'S GIFT

We are pleased to report that, following a donation of \$2,000 to the A.C.F., accompanied by an expression of the donor's wish that the amount be used for the purposes of the Colong Committee, the A.C.F. has been able to make a grant of \$1,950 to the Committee. The gift represents the proceeds of an age pension, claimed solely for the purpose of helping the Committee in its work. In accord with the donor's notification to the Committee, the sum has been allocated to the Investment Fund.

SOFTWOOD GLUT, BUT RAINFOREST LOGGING CONTINUES

At Carrick's Ltd. Annual General Meeting held on May 11th, the Chairman, Sir Roderick Proctor, M.B.E., said that "Hardwood milling has been curtailed at Grevillia following negotiations with the N.S.W. Forestry Commission. It was replaced late in

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the year by a new plantation pine mill, which has produced according to expectations. However, a glut of pine products developed late in the year and margins have had to be cut drastically to meet competition from pine produced overseas and in Southern States".

SHOULD TREES HAVE STANDING

The above is the title of a book by George Masterman, the theme of which is that streams and forests like ships and corporations should have legal rights which can be argued in litigation by others as guardians. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act in New South Wales does, in fact, enable anybody to sue in order to restrain any person from breaches of the Act. It is this provision which has enabled the National Parks Association to seek an injunction against logging in the Hastings rainforest.

KATOOMBA AND DISTRICT WILD LIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY ACTIVE

The Society reports that its Land Use Committee has been very active and has made many submissions to the City Council. The Land Preservation Fund stands at \$4,610.20, sufficient to purchase a block at Wentworth Falls for reserve.

We gratefully acknowledge the receipt of donations from the following during the half year to June 30, 1982.

J. Ambler	D. Hillsdon
R. Atkins	P. Howard
V. Attenbrow	L. Hutchinson
G. Austin	D. Johnson
M. Beard	H. Jones
W. Bell	E. Kaub
W. Bennett	A. Kay
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M. Brannigan	J. Lynch
G. Cahill	P. McMahon
H. Cameron	D. Miller
N. Cameron	J. Offermans
M. Cawte	J. O'Reilly
E. Chapman-Wade	F. Pallin
P. Conaghan	C. Payoe

E. Cunningham	C. Pennell
A. Davies	P. Seelenmeyer
N. Douglas	M. Simpson
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Myles Dunphy	J. Stevenson
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M. Fackender	R. Taplin (2)
C. Ferguson	B. Temple-Watts
L. Fraser	G. Thorpe
L. Fraser (Miss)	J. Veevers
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T. Floyd	E. Walpole
A. Gibbs-Jordan	G. Warwick
C. Gibson	G. Watson
A. Godfrey-Smith	M. White
H. Gold	K. Williams
B. Grant	I. Williamson
L. Hamill	J. Wrigley
R. Harmer	R. Younger
P. Haydon	

Central West Bushwalking Club
Federation of Bushwalking Clubs
Manly-Warringah Flora and Fauna
Protection Society
Sydney Rennet Co. Pty. Ltd.

In addition the following have made donations to the A.C.F. during the same period, enabling the Foundation to make grants to the Colong Committee.

D. Butler, M. Bouman, C. Carder,
B. Chick, R.O. Chalmers,
P.J. Conaghan, B. Cooley, A. Correy,
D.C. Fry, E. Hanvin, M.J. Holms,
J.I. Kirkby, P. Laird, N. L. Lovell,
R.J. Lowing, M. Millar, P.T. Millard,
J. Offermans, J.L. Rentoul, J. Simons,
R.H. (Dick) Smith, F. G. Vanry,
J.J. Veevers.

PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE BY THE COLONG COMMITTEE

(Price includes postage)

The Save Colong Bulletin	
Per Annum	\$5.00
Kakadu Coloured Poster	\$1.50
Border Ranges Poster	
(Black and White).	\$1.50
Wilderness in Australia	
Helman et al	\$5.00
Coloured Rainforest Posters:	
Single Poster.	\$2.50
5-49 Posters	\$1.50
50 or more (each).	\$1.10
Wilderness in Danger -	
Michael Bell & Associates.	\$7.20
Habitat - Border Ranges Issue.	\$1.00

FORM FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS (NEW) 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.

NAME: (Mr./Mrs./Miss)

ADDRESS: POSTCODE

SIGNED: DATE

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