

**CORRECTED PROOF- 20 OCTOBER, HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, TAS.
FORESTRY - LOGGING OPERATIONS, SOUTH SISTER MOUNTAIN**

[4.50 p.m.]

Mr MORRIS (Lyons - Motion) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes with grave concern the proposed logging operations on South Sister near St Marys, which will have negative effects on the future viability of the St Marys community and will also adversely affect, amongst other things -
 - (a) at least six threatened species on the currently proposed logging coupe;
 - (b) the visual landscape;
 - (c) tourism opportunities;
 - (d) water quality and quantity; and
 - (e) council infrastructure including roads and bridges.
- (2) Directs the Government to abandon the proposed logging of South Sister, which is against the wishes of many in the local community and notably opposed by former Labor forestry minister Dr Andrew Lohrey in correspondence circulated on 7 September 2004.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Will you be seeking a vote on this?

Mr MORRIS - Yes, we will.

This mountain is currently within the so-called multiple-use areas under the control of the Government through Forestry Tasmania. Just below the peak of South Sister is marked out a coupe called NI 114A which surrounds about two-thirds of the peak except the very peak itself. What I intend to do is examine those points, firstly, starting with a document that I have received from the local community up there from those who support the protection of South Sister. I should say that I do not believe firstly, that this community is opposed to having sensible and appropriate logging with consultation within the area of South Sister. But what they have a big problem with is the process that has been undergone in this particular circumstance and the outcomes that they fear may happen and the appalling lack of consultation and information that has been provided to that community.

This is called the South Sister declaration. This declaration is a statement of certain beliefs and aims of the people of the catchment in respect to the natural environment surrounding St Marys and has been triggered by the proposed logging of South Sister by Forestry Tasmania, which is proposed for early next year. The declaration was stated at the campaign launch of the 'Save our Sisters' at St Marys on 17 September 2004 and it goes:

- '1. Small erosions are the way extinctions begin the start of the process by what is common becomes scarce.
2. The protection of water supply and water quality is basic to the survival of the community.

It is, indeed, one of their major concerns.'

If I could be interrupted for the moment, I see that the minister has a prepared speech and therefore does not intend to respond to what I have to say unless he is going to do more than his prepared speech. But you were not able to hear what I was saying from this declaration because of the interruption you were receiving. I continue:

- '3. Maintaining the abundance and distribution of common species is as important to the community of the living world as maintaining the existence of endangered species.
4. What we seek to protect does not derive from man's efforts, but can be protected by men of goodwill.
5. The future of our local human community is inextricably connected to the future of the local mountain community.
6. We recognise and support values other than those which are considered valid only if they can be regulated, classified, counted, measured and valued in terms of money and utility. We believe our natural places have values other than product.
7. We wish to pass on our local natural places in good health as a bequest to succeeding generations.
8. Our natural surroundings create their own energy, energy which enriches us as human beings.
9. The natural places which surround us from the territory or catchment within which we feel we belong, a catchment whose boundaries are determined by history and our ongoing daily associations, not lines on a map. We wish to protect those places to the fullest extent.

10. A townscape includes the surrounding natural places which are an essential part of the amenity of the town.
11. We support local sawmilling for the supply of local timber to the local community.
12. To protect and preserve the existing nature values, biological and geological diversity and the water catchments of the mountains and passes surrounding St Marys - Mount Nicholas, South Sister, North Sister, St Marys Pass, St Patricks Head, Mount Elephant, Elephant Pass and the Grey Hills - and to protect the beauty and amenity of the surrounding environment to those who live within it. We believe they should be given conservation status of the order of national park, State reserve or nature reserve, and that this status be accorded to the entire area including land between the named places and the reverse slopes extending to the coast to provide ecological connectivity and to ensure the uninterrupted continuity of the natural evolutionary process of the area, and that this area be known as the "St Marys Conservation Area".'

So that is the declaration of the people who support the protection of this area. What I am doing here is advocating on their behalf - I make no apology for that - and I do wish to highlight in particular that they support local sawmilling of local timber for local purposes. They are not opposed to the timber industry in total but they do want that to be a part of their environment, not a dominant part but a part that serves them, not dominates them.

To move on, I would like to now come to the issue of water, and as per usual in these matters the issue of water is in dispute as to what the likely impacts of a logging operation on water are. So let us point out at this stage, despite having not yet received a timber harvesting plan to definitively say what is planned to happen on that coupe, but from what we understand, it is intended to be a shelter wood operation and the minister, I am sure, will be able to confirm that, which will mean in this case that a substantial amount of the trees in that area will be taken out but there will be a significant number of trees remaining which, although not providing a complete canopy, will provide a partial canopy remaining on that coupe.

So unless I misunderstand that completely, I am not suggesting here that this area is to be clear-felled and there is indeed, from my understanding again, the intention to have what is called a cool fire - if that is not a contradiction in terms, especially if you try putting your hand in it; you will find most of them are actually hot.

Mr Hidding - You know the difference.

Mr MORRIS - Yes, I do indeed, but it is a fire that is intended, if all goes well, not to burn the trees that remain standing but to provide some debris burning on the ground. I will come to the point why that is not very good later on, in this particular instance.

I would just like to quote a piece here from the conclusion of a document called 'Comments on Forest Practices Board's Criticisms' on the appraisal of this area by David Lehmann. This is where, I believe, a Mr McIntosh has criticised Mr Lehmann's comments and this is Mr Lehmann responding to that, and I will only go to the conclusion. He says:

'I do not believe that I have overstated any risks. I believe that McIntosh and the Forest Practices Board have understated them.

When livelihoods and vital water supplies to individuals are involved, some caution would seem to be warranted.'

He then goes on:

'I wrote that the code of practice does not guarantee water supplies and McIntosh offers no hope, since the risks are dismissed. He writes that this is a coupe on dolerite. It is not, it is a coupe on talus over coal measures and is susceptible to failure and alteration with implications for water supplies'.

There is no point in reading the whole thing. The conclusion there I think is used to reiterate Dr Lehmann's, which was that there are risks to the water supply. Apparently those risks have been ignored or denied by the Forest Practices Board and therefore the community feels that, given that they have two doctors who are giving them two opinions on one subject, that they will go with the precautionary approach, as advocated by Dr Lehmann. I have every reason myself to think that is probably the best way to go.

So what we have here is almost the removal of the major trees on almost the top, but not the very top, of one of the most significant mountains in the St Marys area, from which a number of people draw their water and are totally reliant for their water supplies.

I would now like to go on talking briefly about some of the threatened species that exist there, and I have to rely on the information that has been provided by me and take it as true; if it is not, I will be prepared to accept otherwise. On the flora *Eucalyptus brookeriana*, a protected species under the Regional Forest Agreement and *Euphrasia collina deflexolia*, which is a threatened species, are present on the coupe. Despite Forestry moving *brookeriana* from the proposed logging coupe, they will have to widen the road, which will mean destruction of some more of these trees.

Then we come to fauna. The area is reasonably well known as habitat for the two species of the blind velvet worm, both the giant and the blind velvet worm, and I will just

give you some more information on that. This comes from a valuer's report and it says here:

'Blind velvet worm. Status, endangered. Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 due to its restricted distribution and loss of habitat. Caterpillar-like with two antennae, velvety skin and 15 pairs of legs. Completely white and up to 50 mm long. Distribution and habitat. The blind velvet worm is restricted to 160 square kilometres in the St Mary's area in the north-east. A large proportion of the population lives in a core area, including Mount Elephant and the catchments of the Lower Marsh, Wardlaws and Piccaninny creeks. It occurs from near sea level to over 800 metres of altitude on South Sister.'

So what we have here at South Sister is the maximum altitude of the range of the blind velvet worm. It then goes on:

'The blind velvet worm requires a moist environment and decaying eucalypt logs. They provide the most important microhabitat. It has also been found under stones on shaded ground. It feeds on insects and other litter-dwelling invertebrates.

Prime velvet worm habitat is eucalypt forest that has not any high-intensity or frequent fires within about the last 20 years and has numerous rotting eucalypt logs greater than about 40cm in mid-log diameter on the ground. Logs with a soft rot centre decaying at ground level are ideal microhabitat. Other eucalypt forest with rotting logs is more marginal habitat. Although apparently tolerant of some habitat disturbance, frequent or high-intensity fires can eliminate this velvet worm from otherwise suitable habitat.'

There we have for this endangered species two very good reasons to be very careful with that area. Firstly, it has a very specific requirement, and that is large logs on the ground. Now what this logging operation will do, if others of a similar type are anything to go by, is it will take out the future large logs greater than 40cm, except for those that it leaves, which will predominantly be sawlog, and that is the future logs that could be lying on the ground which provide the critical habitat for the blind velvet worm.

The other thing it says here is that it does not like fire, and that after frequent or high-intensity fires it can take 20 years at least to come back. So if the fire that is planned to be cool turns out to be warm, it could well be that the blind velvet worm is killed in significant numbers and takes a long time to recover. But even if it does recover, it may find that its future habitat needs of large rotting logs are no longer available because they have been exported.

Mr Hidding - Large rotting logs? Are they being exported?

Mr MORRIS - Yes, in little pieces.

Mr Hidding - Rotting logs?

Mr MORRIS - Yes, future rotting logs. They start off as solid trees, they then get holes in them and they start rotting, they fall over, they keep rotting, and they provide habitat. If you export them as good-quality logs, they are not there for the future.

Mr Hidding - Good catch, Mr Morris.

Mr MORRIS - You are welcome. I have one more piece on the endangered and rare species, which is about moths, and I come here to a document entitled 'Comments on a visit to South Sister near St Marys, Tasmania' by Peter McQuillan, Centre for Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania. In fact I will read the whole thing; it is only one page. It says:

'The north-east of Tasmania is a known biodiversity hot spot, but there is poor documentation for the distribution of local species and limited understanding of their association into functional ecological communities. Better knowledge of the regional biodiversity of Tasmania is essential as a guide to sustainable management of resources, since maintenance of biodiversity is a key indicator of sustainability.

I briefly surveyed natural habitats on South Sister at the invitation of Mr Frank Giles and Miss Julia Weston, with particular emphasis on invertebrates. There is no doubt that the area requires a more comprehensive assessment of its biological values, given the imminent threat from timber harvesting.

The South Sister forests serve the important and interrelated purposes of safeguarding an important array of native fauna and flora and providing the foundation of a superb ecotourism experience.

I walked several transects to the summit of South Sister, making notes on species and interactions between species that I observed. Overnight I operated two 12 volt ultraviolet light traps and a 160 watt mercury vapour lamp from the generator in order to attract nocturnal insects. Specimens were identified by reference to synoptic collections held in my laboratory at the University of Tasmania and the taxonomic literature.

The results: table one is a list of the insect species that have been identified so far. It is noteworthy that several species are not so far known to occur inside any national park in Tasmania. A list of insects,

mostly moths, which were collected or observed on South Sister and which have been identified to at least genus level so far. Those annotated NNP are not recorded from a national park in Tasmania.'

I do not wish to go through the long list of species that were identified but needless to say there are, I believe, six species, all of which I believe are moths, which were not found within national parks in Tasmania. Hence the degree of their protection is somewhat limited and it certainly sends a signal saying that in these areas we should be more careful, and we should take extreme care when these insects are to be found in this area. Anyway, that is dated September 2004 and, Minister, if you would like, I can provide you with any of this information.

I will now move on to some of the correspondence that has been received by local residents and whilst not wanting to read all of this I will just refer firstly to a letter from a Dr Francis Bailey who has been writing for some time and who is seriously concerned, and from a Marguerite McWatters who is also seriously concerned and who lives in Germantown Road, as does Francis Bailey. I also have letters from several other people who live, funnily enough, in Lohreys Road, Dublin Town, which brings me to the point.

Minister, one of your predecessors in this House some years ago, Mr Andrew Lohrey - I take it there may well be a connection between that and Lohreys Road - has written to me in an e-mail, which I gather some other people received as well, requesting me to speak out and seek the protection of the South Sister area. Again, I will not read that letter but he was indeed a forest minister of the very party that is currently in government and I do beseech you, Minister, to have a discussion with him and seek his opinion, given that he still has more experience in the portfolio than you, even though not much more.

Just to finalise my contribution to this, I do ask you, Minister, to ask Forestry Tasmania to slow down a little bit, to please afford the local community the time and the consultation that I think is rightfully and properly due to them and to consider all of the issues that they have raised, including the threatened species and the visual landscape. As I have said, this is virtually the top of the South Sister area and whilst it is not intended to be clear-felled it will still have quite a marked impact on the visual landscape. It will indeed, as the locals tell me, have a negative effect on the tourism opportunities that are afforded by people who currently and in the future are likely to walk and travel to the top of South Sister to enjoy the beauty of that area and the views it affords.

Then there was, of course, the water quality and quantity. As I have said before, there are a number of people in that area who rely on the mountain of South Sister for their water supply and they are fearful that both the quality of that water will be compromised and the quantity will be diminished.

They have also raised the issue of council infrastructure although I think perhaps there is a minimal amount of council infrastructure currently at risk, given the fact that the road has been handed over to Forestry Tasmania some years ago and they made an

almighty mess of it last time I was up there whereby they found the biggest, messiest slasher they could possibly get and drove along the road and smashed everything on either side of it with absolutely no consideration whatsoever. No clean up, there were branches and limbs and bits of debris all over the road; it was an absolute mess and not a credit to an organisation that supposedly is taking care of our areas. This was a road that was somehow handed over from the Break O'Day municipality to Forestry Tasmania for care, and care was the last thing considered; they made an absolute mess of it.

Mr Booth - You look after this for us.

Mr MORRIS - Yes. Right, no worries, we will just flatten the lot. I was quite disgusted with that. In fact I think I have some photos somewhere of that.

I will conclude those remarks, Minister, by saying that the local community there like myself and the Greens are not opposed totally to logging. They have asked me to seek to have this area put into a reserve but I think that that really comes from a fear of loss of control whereby they do not feel that Forestry Tasmania is listening to them and therefore their only option is to seek total protection for the area because they do not feel that the dialogue with Forestry Tasmania would allow them to have confidence in the current process that is under way whereby some harvesting of resources within that area could occur and yet the values be maintained.

That is really, I think, the nub of this and that is that they do not have confidence in Forestry Tasmania unfortunately. I will conclude my remarks there.

[5.17 p.m.]

Mr GREEN (Braddon - Minister for Infrastructure, Energy and Resources) - Mr Deputy Speaker, we are opposing this motion and I will give you the reasons why.

I have to say that the member who has just resumed his seat I believe is falling into a trap of running causes -

Mr Booth - What, representing his community?

Mr GREEN - on the basis that he believes that it will be of some advantage to him politically. I back that up by saying to him - I have to say to you -

Mr BOOTH - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member clearly is being extremely disorderly in that he is attributing an improper motive to my colleague, the member for Lyons, in bringing this motion forward. I think that is disgraceful to infer that he is only doing it for base, political motives when he clearly believes what he is talking about.

Mr GREEN - No point of order?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - No.

Mr GREEN - No, I did not think so. Mr Deputy Speaker, the problem with the member and his party is that they want to try to ride these sorts of emotive arguments in a way that somehow gives them an advantage.

Mr Morris - What was the motive about that?

Mr GREEN - They do not want to talk about the sustainability of the forest industry or the sustainability of harvesting in this particular coupe.

Mr Morris - I just did.

Mr GREEN - I go back to you and this is what I say: I am getting a bit sick of it with you. It is all sweetness and light, but the fact is you did the same down there at Pitt Water when it came to oysters. You did not think that it was appropriate that we have sustainable jobs down there, you were running all the arguments about the place as if the world was going to cave in if we built those oyster racks and provided the 30 jobs into the long term and a sustainable industry that enhanced the area in terms of producing high-quality food in the form of oysters. Now you come into the House and suggest that the Greens do not oppose all logging. You have said in the past that you support selective harvesting but the first opportunity you get to come out in support of a selective harvesting operation, what do you do? You run the same old tired arguments that you always run about every forest operation that exists. You cannot clear-fell, you cannot selective harvest, you cannot go into regenerated forest, as it is in this case, and carry out a sensible and sustainable forest harvesting activity without you lot coming in and defending 'not in my back yard'. The old story. You are as thin as a saucer of milk: you cannot see through it but you know the bottom is just there.

Mr Booth - We're representing the community, you know that.

Mr GREEN - It is just pathetic, and I am getting a bit sick of it. I think you will be exposed on that basis. You run all these arguments about blind velvet worms, and all the rest of it, but how do you think they ever survived the millennia to this point, for goodness' sake, with wildfires and everything else that has gone on.

Mr Booth - Well, not with chainsaws and excavators, that's for sure. And no farms. They were spared from Forestry Tasmania.

Mr GREEN - The fact is there have been harvesting operations going on. Mr Deputy Speaker, the area into the South Sisters has been a State forest for many years; it has been logged before and remains available for long-term timber supply under the Regional Forest Agreement. The Tasmanian Government is committed to the sustainable management of our forests, and that is consistent of course with the Regional Forest Agreement. Much of the horseshoe range of mountains around St Marys has been protected in reserves established during the RFA process.

Mr Booth - How much of it?

Mr GREEN - The Nicholas Range is protected in a forest reserve and St Patricks Head is protected as part of the St Marys Pass State Reserve. Forest practices plans for the coupe of the South Sisters are not yet completed, but values such as water, landscape, archaeology, flora and fauna are being thoroughly assessed. It will be selectively logged for high-value sawlogs and be regenerated after harvesting, which is expected to go ahead in the first half of next year. It will be selectively harvested for high-value sawlogs - everything that you have advocated in the past.

Mr Booth - Yes, what percentage?

Mr GREEN - Yes, trot out your forest policy - that is in there.

Mr Booth - How much will go to chips?

Mr GREEN - Selectively harvesting, the way forward, and that is exactly what will happen on this particular coupe.

Mr Booth - How much are you going to chip, Bryan? Come on.

Mr GREEN - Senior soil and water scientists from the Forest Practices Board have already inspected the coupe and have determined that except for the eastern side of the coupe which will not be harvested, the soils are very stable and the operation will not adversely affect the soils and/or water. I am advised, Mr Deputy Speaker, that there are no rare or threatened species that will be impacted by this proposal -

Mr Morris - Apart from the blind velvet worm and the moths.

Mr GREEN - and there will be no adverse effect on water quality. This has been confirmed by the independent hydrological advice from the Forest Practices Board, however, additional protection measures around water intakes will be undertaken.

The landscape has also been a major consideration as part of the planning process. Harvesting operations will leave no visible sign of logging from any significant tourist vantage points, and that is another example of how the tourism industry and Forestry Tasmania are working together to make sure that there are no visual impacts, and there are some very good messages around the place, and very good examples of that around the place that highlight that Forestry Tasmania is prepared to work with the community to make sure that there are no visual impacts, particularly on the selectively harvested coupe.

Mr McKim - So if I was standing on top of South Sister I wouldn't see it there? Is that right? I used to run commercial tours on the Sisters, you know, and I can tell you, you'd see it from where we went.

Mr GREEN - Yes, yes. South Sister, have you been up there too?

Mr McKim - Yes.

Mr GREEN - What were you doing? Rock climbing?

Mr McKim - No, you don't have to climb, there's a path up there.

Mr Booth - He was running commercial tours actually, in his previous life before Parliament.

Mr GREEN - All I am saying to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, is there would be no visible sign of logging from any significant tourism vantage point.

Mr Booth - Do you call the peak a significant point? I do. Come on, answer the question. Do you call the peak significant?

Mr GREEN - The peak? If it is a significant peak, yes.

Mr McKim - So you won't see the operation from the peak at South Sister?

Mr GREEN - You will see a treed landscape, because we are talking about selective harvesting. This is the point about this, isn't it, really? The fact is that this is a selective harvesting operation. What are we to do? We are not talking about pulpwood here, we are talking about removing high-quality sawlogs. That is the advice I have - high-quality sawlogs. 'Selectively harvested for high-quality sawlogs' - that is what it says. And yet the Greens are up opposing it. You could run exactly the same argument with every coupe in Tasmania. If you go to the Leven Canyon you will run the same argument there, If you go to the Blue Tier you run the same argument there. It does not matter where you go in the State, you run exactly the same argument. You come in here and ask me to listen to your proposals with regard to this, but what you are saying to the Government is that you do not want any harvesting there at all.

Mr Morris - No, I have made it clear. What was the last thing I was saying?

Mr GREEN - You said that you wanted to make a reserve.

Mr Morris - No, that was the first thing I said. The people of St Marys have asked me to make it a reserve. What I said to you is they do not trust your mob.

Mr GREEN - Oh, right. They do not mind logging but they do not trust us to log it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GREEN - Mr Deputy Speaker, we will be opposing this motion. The fact is that this will be harvested in an appropriate way, taking into consideration all the values of this particular site. There will be no threatened species affected by this coupe; it will be

selectively harvested. It does provide for the sustainable future, particularly with regard to high-quality, high-value sawlogs. This area has been harvested in the past, and it is part of a sustainable logging program on into the future forever. It will be regenerated, it will provide jobs and income for people on the east coast of Tasmania in and around St Marys. This is a great example of a coupe that the Greens could actually get into and support, but because there has been some 'not in my backyard' people -

Greens members interjecting.

Mr GREEN - I mean some people living in that area have actually cleared farms in that area. So it is all right to clear a farm but it is not all right to selectively harvest some of the forests around. Forests like that have sustained the Tasmanian economy to a very large extent for a long, long time. So this a good example of a coupe that could be supported by the Greens but unfortunately it is not. You want to run all the arguments about water and all the rest of it. Lehmann - you trot him out every time.

Mr Morris - He is doing good science, I believe.

Mr GREEN - Well, in his own view - everyone else in the world is crazy except him, according to him.

Mr McKim - You should not stand up in this place and demean the scientists. It is cowardly.

Mr GREEN - The problem is that we know that there is a bent here. If he is going to come in now on a selectively-harvested block and say, 'All the water values blah, blah, blah will be affected', well then, where do we stand when it comes to the advice from this particular individual?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I trust the system will ensure that this block is harvested in an appropriate way.

[5.28 p.m.]

Mr HIDDING (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I just want to point out in the short time available to the House in this debate that in moving this motion the Tasmanian Greens took the lion's share of this time, which only allowed 10 minutes for the minister to respond. It is appropriate that he have that long, but it has left no time at all for the Liberals to speak on this motion.

Mr Booth - Well, put your position quickly - are you in favour or not?

Mr HIDDING - Well, I am going to vote with the Government - and now you decry it and you do not give me a chance to put my views on the subject. It is my electorate as well and I have some strong views about South Sister. I have been substantially lobbied on this matter, just as the member has, but I will say that at the time of constructing the

Regional Forest Agreement Christine Milne, who was a member for Lyons, did not once raise this area as being significant.

Mr McKim *interjecting*.

Mr HIDDING - I have some views, but sadly and rudely, the Greens did not allow me enough time so we need to go to a vote.

The House divided -

AYES 3

Mr Booth
Mr McKim
Mr Morris (Teller)

NOES 20

Mr Bacon
Mr Bartlett (Teller)
Mr Cox
Ms Giddings
Mr Green
Mr Gutwein
Ms Hay
Mr Hidding
Mr Michael Hodgman
Mr Will Hodgman
Mrs Jackson
Mr Kons
Mr Lennon
Mr Llewellyn
Mrs Napier
Mr Polley
Mr Rockliff
Mr Sturges
Mr Whiteley
Ms Wriedt

Motion so negatived.