



Speech by

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FORESTRY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PAFF (Ipswich West—ONP) (10.18 p.m.): Last week, I listened to this debate on the Forestry Amendment Bill. In that debate, the contributions of the member for Whitsunday, the member for Crows Nest and possibly the Leader of the Opposition seemed to make sense. The people in the bush are not butchers of the bush; they know that they must manage the forest, for it is their livelihood. The Forestry Amendment Bill facilitates a South-East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement. That is an agreement between the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, the Queensland Conservation Council, the Wilderness Society, the Queensland Timber Board, and the Queensland Government. The stated objectives of this agreement are listed as being a world-class conservation system, the ecologically sustainable management of forests, a competitive and efficient timber industry, and enhanced economic development and employment prospects for rural communities.

What is a world-class conservation reserve system? Is it simply a big system? Perhaps size really does matter to the greenies. I think that a world-class system is simply the system that a minority of loud greenies considers appropriate. No-one in this State objects to holding natural resources of various sorts in reserve to maintain such values as biodiversity and the naturally occurring balance between species that are found in the wild. What they do object to is the locking up of huge tracts of Crown forest that are far larger than necessary to meet the requirements of conservation.

Once again, few would argue against the ecologically sustainable management of our forests. The problem is that the forest industry has vastly different ideas from the greenie coalition about how to responsibly manage a native hardwood forest. The greenies' idea is to lock up vast areas of the timber country in the State - timber country that has sustained a well-managed native hardwood industry for the past 150 years at least. As a result of this pincer movement, which is slowly squeezing the lifeblood from our timber towns, loggers desperate for timber will be forced to cut trees that, in the normal course of events, would be left for the next rotation. That will be the cue for the greenies to rise up in their normal sanctimonious manner, point to the degradation that they have been responsible for promoting and roundly condemn the poor struggling timbermen who are trying to glean a subsistence living from the inadequate timber blocks allocated for their use.

No-one wants to see our native hardwood forest degraded. The timber industry believes that the best way to meet all the objectives of the agreement is to reduce the area of country that has been locked up and make much greater areas available for systematically controlled logging. This allows the thinning of older trees that are in demand, which in turn promotes the accelerated growth of the forest in general. As most people would be aware, one of the great issues facing us as a global village is the production of carbon gas. Old dying forests are not very active and, therefore, do not consume much carbon. However, young dynamic selectively logged forests are growing rapidly and have a far higher demand for atmospheric carbon, as it is one of the basic molecular building blocks of timber.

The next stated objective is a competitive and efficient timber industry. We can be very sure that the first half of that statement will come true. The industry will certainly be competitive. The industry will be forced to compete desperately against itself for the meagre scraps that are thrown to it by the all-powerful greenies. However, will we have an efficient timber industry? I do not think so. What we will have is an industry that is forced by Government policy to cut timber to such a small diameter that it will make logged areas look like war zones. Once again, the greenies will come along with their television

cameras and, lo and behold, on the 6 o'clock news the public will see graphic shots of chainsaw-wielding loggers, unmercifully attacking defenceless little trees, and a barren landscape. Nobody will bother to mention that this situation was brought about directly by the actions of the greenie coalition and this Government.

Recently, I read a book on the history of the Brisbane Valley, which was published by the Esk Shire Council. I was amazed to learn of the amount of logging that took place in the area of Blackbutt, Linville, Toogoolawah, Esk and Fernvale since first settlement in 1841. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of timber was taken out of that area. Lars Anderson was a miller in the area. Prior to 1900, there was no management. However, since about the 1920s, there has been some control and in all these years there have been no problems with forestry management. I ask: why now?

Honourable members can be assured that the small towns of Blackbutt, Linville, Toogoolawah, Esk and Fernvale will be hurt by the introduction of this Bill. Those towns depend on the forests for work and that dependency affects the whole community, including shopkeepers, carriers and others too numerous to mention. The introduction of this Bill comes at a very bad time, when people are really hurting. There is a lot of uncertainty amongst country people. If we fail to listen to the bush, we do so at our own peril. A lot has been said on this matter and I will not go on. However, the Government should be warned: although the population of the bush is down on votes, at the end of the day the people will have their say at the ballot box.

I grew up in the bush. I recall when I was a child that I went cutting timber with my father. That was pretty tough work. I remember my father cutting logs with a crosscut saw and then using wedges to cut the timber into split fence posts. That was a long time ago. My father was a conservationist. He would only cut the amount of timber that he needed. Today, the people on the land are still doing the same sort of thing. When I bought land in Queensland, I did the same thing. I only cut the timber that I needed to build a fence. I did the work myself. I used a chainsaw to split the fence posts and I fenced the property. I left a good stand of timber. That philosophy was handed down from my father. I do not think that a lot of people really understand how hard bush people work. If a little bit of real thought was put into the forestry management proposal before the House and some sort of a moratorium was held, I am sure that a better scheme would come up than the one we have been discussing for the last couple of weeks.
