

HOW TO MAKE A STAND WITHIN THE ALP! (SAVING THE OTWAYS)

by

ALP Otway Ranges Interest Group

(a non-constituent unit of the ALP)

2001

Steering Committee:

Trevor Poulton (*Elwood Branch*), Nick Adams (*Fitzroy Branch*), Carol Wilmink (*Apollo Bay Branch*), Sandra Skene (*Apollo Bay Branch*), Lindsay Hesketh (*Upper Yarra Branch*)

A grassroots ALP campaign needs to be internal to the ALP - our power and capacity to influence, as grass roots members, exists within the ALP and not outside of it.

The Otway Ranges Interest Group (ORIG) represents a non-factional network of members of ALP Branches within Victoria. Our purpose is to see an **end to clearfell logging of native State forests in the Otway Ranges.**

ORIG was launched as an interest group within the ALP at Aireys Inlet on 28 January 2001. The inaugural meeting was attended by over 100 ALP members including MPs, and their guests. ORIG declared its objective - to move a motion to end clearfelling of the Otways at the **forthcoming March State Conference.** The meeting inspired optimism in many members, who have now found an ALP outlet for airing concerns over clearfell logging of the Otways, and logging of old-growth forests such as Goolengook.

Soon after the launch, ORIG conferred with fellow members on ALP Policy Committees. The result is that it now has a number of supporters actively pursuing development of ALP policies that will enhance the potential of the Otways for

sustainable jobs growth through tourism and related industries whilst identifying the destructive impacts of logging.

ORIG simultaneously set about arranging presentations at Branches across Victoria, that include moving a drafted motion consistent with the motion that will be debated at State Conference. It will also soon begin lobbying MPs and FEA delegates, in an atmosphere of increasing political pressure on the Government and within the Party, to resolve the Otways' fiasco.

ORIG members do not believe it is sufficient to rely solely on the candor of a Branch motion or emotive appeals to Party principles. In order to be successful, *internal ALP campaigners* need to access all forums within the Party where the issue can be appropriately debated. This includes Branches, FEA Assemblies and participating on various Policy Committees (and therefore consulting with community stakeholders as a part of the policy development process).

It is important to liaise with unions, and, when ready, initiate contact with the relevant Ministers and/or their advisers. It is also essential to draw high ranking members into the debate, whether by way of seeking documents or information, asking them to set up official meetings, or inviting them to participate in meetings. There must be accountability on all levels. Ultimately, campaigners must be confident that everything possible has been done to win the endorsement of ALP State Conference, if the issue cannot be resolved by the government before then.

Campaigners are advised to avoid 'talkfests' and dismiss 'lip service'. *Do not accept a cup of tea and chocolate biscuits (especially Arnotts) from Ministers, until you are guaranteed to get what you have come for, whether it be information or an interim commitment of some kind.*

In the ORIG campaign several points of resistance have surfaced - presently these include, failure of Minister Garbutt to provide figures on any potential job losses if clearfelling was to end, and refusal of ALP Head Office to provide a complete list of Branch contacts. Obstruction must be expected and can be overcome through negotiation, and looking to protocols and Party rules.

It is critical to operate within a time frame and deliberately pace the campaign. For example, only as we move closer to State Conference, will ORIG begin counting prospective votes. However, at the same time, ORIG is not intimidated by numbers: debates and campaigns are often won despite 'the numbers'.

ORIG's campaign, whilst addressing principles of environmental sustainability and performance accountability, is rooted in

a physical reality being concern for saving the Otway Ranges. What is at stake is therefore easily communicated. Branches are now mobilising in support of our purpose. ALP Branch members do not believe that clearfell logging is a sustainable practice for the Otway Ranges.

A campaign should be positive, and seek to unite the Party. ORIG's supporter base includes active members of **Labor Unity, Socialist Left, the Pledge** and other factions and members of unions. Having overarched the factions we can claim to be non-factional, whilst, given our supporter base, we do not claim to be anti-factional.

A grassroots ALP campaign needs to be internal to the ALP - our power and capacity to influence, as grass roots members, exists within the ALP and not outside of it. So strength is derived, not from straying from the Party, but from knowing and applying the Party rules and operating within the Party processes.

Finally, *real* politics is about power and success. Therefore, ORIG continually reminds members, including MPs, that the ALP holds the State seat of Geelong by only 16 votes, and that Labor can win the seat of Corangamite in the Otways at the next Federal election.

But this means the ALP must guarantee preservation of the natural beauty of the Otway Ranges and we must guarantee protection and development of its local tourism industry now estimated to be valued in excess of \$1 billion per annum. And this means we must bring clearfell logging of native State forests in the Otways to an end!

Responses to: poulton@labyrinth.net.au

Otway Ranges Interest Group

(a non-constituent unit of the ALP)

Presentation to ALP Bendigo Branches Meeting

(13th September 2001)

The ALP must make a stand!

ALP Members,

HISTORY

Labor's environmental initiatives have won the ALP many powerful returns. Labor won government in 1983 with a policy to save the Franklin River. More recently we won the Ryan bi-election when Kim Beazley made a commitment to address land clearing in Queensland, and of course we had the victory in Western Australia which was largely decided as a result of the policy of the ALP to stop logging old-growth forests.

ESTABLISHMENT OF ORIG

The result of the next federal election and the fate of the State Labor government at the next State election may also be determined by green votes. Despite this, in terms of logging native forests, the Bracks government has failed to address community concerns, concerns of unions and workers, and members of the Party.

The ALP Otway Ranges Interest Group was established late last year in response to this apparent indifference. We represent a non-factional network of members across ALP Branches.

ENVIRONMENT & WATER

Our interest is to ensure the unique natural assets and beauty of the Otway Ranges are preserved for the benefit of the public and for future generations.

As you would know, the Otway Ranges follows the Great Ocean Road along the south-west coast. Scenically, it is viewed as the jewel in the crown of Victoria. However, the region is now under threat from clearfell logging. We don't have to go to the Amazon or the rainforests of Indonesia to be aghast over forest destruction. It is happening here in Victoria under a Labor Government.

Clearfell logging is leaving the Otways looking like a series of bomb sites, causes reduction in water yields and quality in catchments and is destroying the habitat of native plants, habitats of birds such as powerful and mask owls, and habitats of native animals such as the threatened Spot-tailed Quoll. It is converting native State forests into plantations.

TOURISM

Concern over the Otways is not merely environmental. It goes to the heart of regional economic development.

It needs to be understood that the economic activity of tourism in the Otway region is now estimated at \$1 Billion per annum, whilst logging is valued at the relatively meagre sum of about \$20 Million per annum.

With over 80% of timber extracted from the Otway Forests ending up as wood chips, there is no doubt that clearfell logging of the Otways is woodchip driven, and is undermining a major regional economic asset.

It also needs to be understood this debate is also not about loss of timber workers' jobs. Only about 80 jobs would be directly effected as a result of bringing clearfelling to an end; government funds are already available for industry and workers adjustment. This debate is about creating jobs and increasing community wealth through growth in tourism which is incompatible with State government subsidised destructive logging practices.

Still, the State Labor government persists with clearfell logging of the Otways, clearfelling areas around waterfalls, clearfelling catchments, clearfelling old-growth forest stands and mixed-species containing rainforest, and clearfelling potential environmental votes.

The government needs to be reminded that the ALP holds the State seat of Geelong by only 16 votes, and that we want to win the seat of Corangamite at the next Federal election.

Lindsay Tanner, Federal Shadow Minister for Finance, stated at the Young Labor Conference on 1 April 2001:

"There are signs of mounting concern about environmental issues in Victoria. In the Otway region in southwest Victoria local tourism and water supply operators are starting to campaign against excessive logging in sensitive local catchments. Environmental protest is no longer the exclusive preserve of conservation activists. Businesses and communities whose livelihoods are threatened by inappropriate activity are at last beginning to make their voices heard. The Bracks Government would be wise to heed these voices."

We would add to that. **We as members of the ALP must make a stand!** We must urge the Brack's Labor government to now bring clearfell logging of native forests in the Otways to an end.

12 SLIDES & COMMENTARY

FURTHER ADDRESS - OBJECTIVE

Members, there is a state-wide interest in bringing clearfelling to an end, and there needs to be a state-wide response within the Party.

The objective of the Interest Group is to seek a government prohibition on clearfell logging of native State forests in the Otway Ranges.

The political message that needs to be delivered by members of the ALP to the government and the Minister is this -

- Labor must emphasise its traditional commitment to protecting our environment. This will provide hope for our fragile forests and will also benefit Labor electorally.
- Clearfell logging means devastation of our native forests and reduction in water quality and yield in catchments.
- Clearfell logging is counterproductive to the region's economic growth which is dependent on tourism.
- Tourism is the industry that will also best guarantee preservation of the natural beauty of the Otway Ranges.

STRATEGY

It is our intention to see a policy recommended at the next ALP State Conference that promises an end to clearfelling of the Otways. We are seeking support from Branches, Policy Committees, the various factions and from MPs to achieve this.

We ask you to lobby your own FEA delegates to support such a policy position, either in their capacity as independents or as members of a faction.

MOTION

In order to maintain the momentum of this campaign within the ALP, we have circulated a **template letter** and would ask that you consider its contents tonight and the motions contained within the letter. We refer the letter to the Secretary.

Contacts

Otway Ranges Interest Group

(formed statewide as a non-constituent unit of the ALP - 2000)

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**Australian Labor Party
Lilydale Branch**

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PO Box 795, Lilydale 3140

Sunday, 20 May 2001

Ms Lewellyn Prain
Secretary Economics & Industrial Development Policy Committee
10/98 George Street
FIZTROY VIC 3065

Re: Policy of ALP State Government to clearfell log the Otway Ranges

Dear Lewellyn,

At the meeting of the ALP Lilydale Branch on 23rd April 2001 the following 3 motions were carried:

16. That the ALP Victorian Branch and the ALP State Labor Government formally assert policy positions endorsing an end to clearfell logging State Forests in the Otway Ranges.
17. That the Minister for Environment & Conservation varies current and only grants future sawlog licences under the *Forests Act 1958* (Vic) for the Otway Forest Management Area subject to a prohibition on the practice of clearfell logging by NRE with regards any timber extraction.
18. That the Branch/FEA supports the purpose of the Otway Ranges Interest Group within the ALP.

Matters of concern to ALP members re the above motions, include:

- Clearfell logging is economically inappropriate to the Otways region given the priority of a burgeoning local tourism industry now estimated to be valued in excess of \$1 billion per annum.
- Clearfell logging of State Forests leaves the terrain bare and highly disturbed, and reportedly has major impacts on water yields and quality in catchments.
- Clearfell logging undermines the biodiversity of the Otways native forests, including the habitat of native plants, birds and animals and has the effect of converting State Forests into plantations.
- The Otways must be properly regarded as a special environmental/tourism living zone guaranteeing preservation of the natural beauty of the Otway Ranges.

We urge you to consider our concerns and we seek responses to the above resolution.

Yours in friendship ,

Andrew Bridger
Secretary Lilydale Branch

Cc: Premier Steve Bracks
Mr David Feeney, ALP State Secretary
Ms Margaret Lewis, Secretary Conservation & Environment
Mr Gurkan, Secretary Culture & Tourism Policy Committee
Hon Sherryl Garbutt, Minister Environment & Conservation
Otway Ranges Interest Group - poulton@labyrinth.net.au