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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND WILDLIFE



ANOTHER VIEW

If the current series of letters to the Editor in the "West Australian" and the one sided interviews on TV (Nation wide) have upset you, you may take some comfort from this extract from the second reading speech delivered during the parliamentary introduction of the Conservation and Land Management Bill.

"This Government rejects completely the proposition that the Forests Department, or specifically Foresters, are not capable land managers. Unfortunately, under the previous Government, the Forests Department was placed in a position of confrontation with sections of the conservation movement. That was the fault of the Government, not the Department or Foresters. As is the case in any Government agency or profession, there are a range of philosophies. The fact is that with the Forests Department, there is very strong disposition towards conservation which was reflected in the strong opposition that foresters voiced to the expansion of the bauxite mining industry.

Recent action at Wanneroo -

- ABOVE: The Channel 9 helicopter chartered for the fire lighting trials in the pine plantations.
- BELOW: Controller Alan Briggs (L) instructing ground crew and Heavy duty operators - Steve Campbell, Andrew Lange, Ian Rhodes and John Grenfell.



Another view
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Another reason for exclusion of the Forests Department from an integrated land management agency is that the production function of that Department would be in conflict with other functions of the integrated agency. There are three principal reasons why this proposition is not valid:

Firstly, over much of the forest estate, the forest is already managed for a number of different uses, including conservation and recreation, as well as production. This requirement to manage forest production areas for multiple use has been made mandatory in this Bill. . .the inclusion of Wildlife and National Parks personnel with Forests in an integrated agency will substantially improve the conservation and recreation values of those forest lands which have been reserved for forest production.

Secondly ...there are very stringent provisions in this Bill which ensures that there is no conflict between the production function and conservation and recreation functions of the new Department....the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority is responsible for management of Conservation and National Park areas and there is a specific provision excluding commercial forestry activities in National Parks and Nature Reserves.

Thirdly, contrary to what has been suggested, inclusion of production as one of the functions of the new integrated agency will bring substantial benefits to conservation and recreation. In effect, the staff and resources which must be employed for production forestry and for which there is a revenue return for the Government, can be utilized for conservation and recreation activities...the overheads that are associated with the running of any agency can be shared and the costs of such overheads minimized. Thus, without detracting from the resources devoted to production forestry, it is possible to provide substantial additional resources for the conservation and recreation functions of the new Department.

But what is not appreciated by those who have labelled foresters as inappropriate land managers, is that it is the Government which determines policies, not the Public Service. Any criticism of previous forest management practices should be directed at the previous Government, not the Forests Department"



AN EYE ON THE INDUSTRY

As Senior Inspector administering the Timber Industry Regulations Act (1926), Eric Wells sees his job as the ultimate in public relations.

The administration of the Act is the responsibility of his controlling officer - traditionally the (Acting) Conservator of Forests - and yet Eric's job can involve negotiations with the Department on behalf of the timber industry's workers. Eric and his small team are also responsible for maintaining safe working practices and conditions for the industry's employees - in the bush felling, on the skids and in the mills - and in the event of an accident the inspectors must quickly collect all the information regarding the circumstances and be prepared to present the details in court.

"You need to be impartial, persuasive, have an eye for detail and be totally aware of the industry's methods, equipment and its regulations," said Eric. "Above all you need a sense of humour and the ability to develop people's trust."

"We deal with a wide range of people - contractors and mill company executives concerned with budgets; bushmen new to the work and old hands who think they know it all; insurance assessors and manufacturers of equipment; officials from other government departments; the police, hospital staff and the coroner - so personal relationships are important."

And the task is spread over a wide area. There are some 135 registered sawmills in the Southwest (including 20 mobile units) and over 2000 men are employed either in the bush or in the mills. Eric clocked up 35 000 km last year and is on call 24 hours a day. "Working under those conditions, keeping yourself in one piece becomes a major part of the job," said Eric.

In 1945, Eric joined his two older brothers back from the war to work as 'Wells Brothers' near Margaret River. They felled, hauled and cut jarrah sleepers for fifteen years before selling out. After working for twelve months as a twin sawyer with Worsley Timber Company, Eric was approached by Frank Collins (The Forester from Margaret River) concerning a new job with the Department. Eric started at Pemberton in 1961 with Pat McNamara as his D.F.O.

Eric has two other Inspectors on his team - George Gedling based at Bunbury, and Peter Pedretti based at Manjimup. "We try to see everybody at least once every six weeks," said Eric. "We talk to new men in the bush and encourage safe working habits, discuss the overall operation with the contractors and check on mill machinery and methods. We make recommendations and have the authority to shut down work in unsafe conditions.

If an accident happens we drop everything. It is vital we get to the scene as quickly as possible, before details are lost. Our photographs, reports and witness statements are important. Some damages claims don't go to the courts for years, so we must be methodical and accurate at the time of our investigation."

Any way you look at it, the inspector's task is enormous. With Eric's background and his quiet no nonsense approach, he fits the job like a glove - and it does have its rewards. When Eric started as an inspector in 1967 there were 767 lost time accidents. In 1983 there were 93, testament enough to his powers of persuasion.

FOOTNOTE:

The State Government will introduce legislation to establish an Occupational Health and Safety Commission during this spring Parliamentary session .

It is expected that the new commission will review and incorporate the Timber Industry Regulations.

STAFF TRAINING

From 16 - 20 July 1984 a course was held in Perth Training Centre to give basic instructional skills to twelve Departmental Officers.

The officers were:- Paul Marsh, Bruce Telfer, Bill Towie, Wolf Tiedemann, Brad Commins, Lindsay Armstrong, Alf Lorkiewicz, Peter Jenkins, Peter Bidwell, Barry Jordan, Ian Riley, and Keith Low.

The course content was drawn up by officers of the Perth Trainer Training Centre and Departmental Training Officer Frank Pridham. It was essentially a practical course based on the Systems approach to training. Participants were in general agreement that it was a well conducted, relevant course which should result in more effective training at Divisional and Sectional Level.

It is hoped that a similar course will be available in the first half of 1985.

A sub-committee of the Implementation Group of the Department of Conservation and Land Management has been formed to co-ordinate future training in the new Department. The sub-committee consists of:-

Mary Colreavy - Training & Research Officer, National Parks Authority.

Kevin Morrison - Training Officer Fisheries and Wildlife.

Frank Pridham - Training Officer Forests Department.

As a matter of urgency the sub-committee has made proposals on the development of the Field Officer Cadet Scheme. Initially this will be organized on similar lines to previous years, but with some syllabus revision. For this reason the sub-committee has been assisted by Superintendent Ken Brehaut of TAFE who has a long association with the Forests Department Field Cadet Course.

It is planned to advertise the new cadetships at the beginning of October 1984.

'Bush Telegraph' is the staff journal of the Forests Department in Western Australia. Any views or opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Department and articles published should not be taken as statements by the Department or the West Australian Government.

All enquiries and comments should be directed to Ian Kay, the editor, phone Como HQ ext. 329.



Artistic Touch

Louise Burch (Publications) worked hard to design the winning logo for the Como Social Club (pictured), to be used on stationery and membership cards.

As a special 'honour', the social club also asked Louise to draw last week's raffle - for a bottle of Teachers Whisky and a bottle of Bailey's. Louise won that as well.



Lucky winner of the first random number prize (\$10) for a social club member was Scott Samuels (Mapping). Have you joined yet?

Don't forget Frank Campbell's "farewell" at State Headquarters, from 5 p.m. on Friday 7 September.

Ring Janie Rowse (ext. 211) for any last minute bookings (\$8.00).

NORTHERN REGION CHRISTMAS PARTY

7 p.m. FRIDAY 23 NOVEMBER.

Tickets \$22.50 all up single.
(Cheques payable to L Cade or D Haswell).

Numbers by 5 October. Money by 31 October.

M.C. Eric ad lib Jenkins
Father Christmas and Divisional song contest.



July was an interesting month in Computing with several long awaited events finally occurring.

The Perkin Elmer computer was available for 97.8%. The major downtime of 2½ hours was due to the installation of new disk drives. A further 1½ hours was due to changes to improve the data communications.

The new 300 million character disk drive arrived and was installed during July. This has increased the disk capacity of the Perkin Elmer by about 30%.

The eight long awaited Perkin Elmer terminals have arrived. These are being installed in the Research and I & P sections in the South West.

As indicated in the last Bush Telegraph an information retrieval system for Research Working Plans was completed by Research staff.

The Forest Focus mailing list system was re-written for Publications Branch. This has greatly improved the enquiries that can be made and allows sub listings of various categories of readers. The new system is also used to store the circulation list for the Fisheries and Wildlife publication "Swans".

Several changes were made to the data communications network to reduce the number of errors that occur when Division are using Reliance software. The error rate has been reduced from 30 times for June down to 3 for the last three weeks of July.

Martin Clifton began work early July on the Fire Behaviour system. Field staff will be glad to know that the system is being changed to run under Reliance and the new version should be ready to go in October. Only the way that the data is entered has been changed, the timetable and type of data will be exactly the same. The Fire Suppression system should be installed in one Division during January.

Work also began on setting up a General Ledger for the new Department of Conservation and Land Management.

T Morgan