

LOG, THEFT FROM ST JOHN'S FOREST BLOCK

1. Mr MASTERS to the Minister for Forest Products:

On Sunday night, television news programs showed what was said to be a log suitable only for charcoal production, but which had been sawn into valuable timber useable in furniture and other high-grade products. Can the minister tell the House the truth about the origin and status of that log?

Mr OMODEI replied:

This is a serious matter. The log is a feature log, not a charcoal log, and was stolen from a landing in St John's forest block near Nannup. The contractor who harvested the site in the 1997-98 season recognised the log as soon as he saw it on television. He went to his bush landing to find that the log was gone, with only fresh sawdust to show where it had been. He remembered the log well because it was unusual to find a dry log with such little defect. He had separated it from the remaining logs on the landing because of its value as a feature grade log. As it was already a dry log, it was estimated that no loss would be incurred if it remained on the landing until the contractor returned with his equipment to shift the rest of the logs. The log would have been offered to buyers with feature-grade contracts. Forest Products Commission staff are confident that it would have been bought for feature-grade uses. The value of the log is estimated at \$265 - not the \$40 claimed. The theft of the log may cost the contractor \$70 in production costs. I understand the sawn timber was dumped at Simcoa's plant at Kemerton. It has since been recovered and taken to Harvey, where it will be sold at one of the periodic specialty timber auctions.

Ms MacTiernan: Have you referred it to the police?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr OMODEI: It was interesting that all these things coincided with the announcement of the new Forest Products Commission and its commissioners, and also the announcement of the Government's forest products strategy. It also coincided with the threat of an injunction by the conservation movement on the publication "WA Forest Products - Adding Value", which the Government will insert in newspapers to educate people around Western Australia about what it was doing with timber. That threatened injunction never came to fruition. This Government has seen a range of stunts by the conservation movement. It is interesting to note that the strategies are set up at their meetings; and it is interesting, too, the people who attend those meetings. I table for the benefit of members the Adding Value to Forest Products strategy for Western Australia, produced by the Forest Products Commission, and the "WA Forest Products - Adding Value" insert that will go into newspapers around Western Australia. In response to questions about whether this matter will be referred to the police, it is an operational matter. I expect the full force of the law will be brought to bear.

[See papers Nos 532A-B.]