

OLD-GROWTH FOREST, RECENT LOGGING IN SOUTH WEST

65. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

I refer to the Government's old-growth forest policy and the Premier's statement in this House on 16 September 2003, which reads -

We stand by our statement that we have delivered our promise to stop logging all old-growth forests.

- (1) Is the Premier aware that just three weeks ago his Government logged an area of south west forest containing trees of between 150 and 200 years old?
- (2) Can the Premier explain that if an area of 150 to 200-year-old trees that are more than 70 metres tall do not constitute old-growth forest, as asserted by his Minister for the Environment in the paper today, what does constitute old-growth forest?
- (3) Will the Premier now admit that he and his Government lied to the people of Western Australia?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1)-(3) I do not think the member can see the forest for the trees! I find it extraordinary that someone who advocates the logging of old-growth forests in Western Australia has actually asked this question. It shows how low and opportunistic the Opposition has become. The definition of old-growth forest was agreed upon nationally. We used it as the basis of our policy to stop logging in such forests. I am very proud that we have stopped that logging. It has been a major breakthrough in Western Australia. It means that future Western Australian generations can enjoy those old-growth forests. However, should the Liberals get back into government, those forests will be under threat. Should the member who asked that question have continued in his ministerial position, they would have been logged. We are talking about old-growth forests. Our definition has been backed up by the action we have taken.

The timber referred to in the member for Warren-Blackwood's question was set down for logging under the existing plan. It was advertised in the indicative harvest plan for the southern forest region 2002, which I believe was advertised in late 2001. The 2002 indicative harvest plan for the southern forest region was advertised in Saturday's edition of *The West Australian* late 2001. The Forest Products Commission met with the Western Australian Forest Alliance and Conservation Council regarding the plan.

We are not logging old-growth forest in Western Australia. Everyone knows that. However, we have a very opportunistic Opposition.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They are old-growth trees. Be honest.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: What is the Leader of the Opposition's position on this subject? Is he saying they should not be logged?

Mr C.J. Barnett: The member for Warren-Blackwood said it was inappropriate to log those trees. They should not have been logged.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Is it not interesting that the Leader of the Opposition is commenting on matters related to "the bush". I am interested in what the Leader of the National Party thinks of the Leader of the Opposition's comments on the bush. I have an article from *The West Australian* of 14 November 2001. The Leader of the National Party wants to give us advice on how we should conduct our policy in the bush. The article states that the Leader of the Opposition had consistently opposed uniform electricity charges for country customers, and that he publicly opposed country road building programs including the \$100 million southern transport corridor.

Point of Order

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The answer the Premier is now giving is not in any way relevant to the question asked by the member for Warren-Blackwood about the cutting down of old-growth 150-year-old trees. It has nothing to do with electricity. It is about logging old-growth forests. I know he is the Premier but he should be brought into line because he is abusing the procedures of this Parliament.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Premier's response is pertinent to the question, and he will show that. The Opposition is obviously embarrassed by the facts.

The SPEAKER: Order! The inclusion of the word “lied” in the question was unparliamentary. If I had picked it up sooner I would have made the member withdraw it. I think the Premier is in fact responding to interjections rather than the question. I direct that this answer finish quickly.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I am not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Blackwood do not understand -

Mr P.D. Omodei: Warren-Blackwood.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Murray-Blackwood - Warren-Blackwood; I apologise. I am not surprised that both of them do not understand the difference between a forest and a log. The Leader of the National Party is reported in *The West Australian* of 14 November 2002 as saying this about the Leader of the Opposition -

In his days as a Cabinet minister he hardly ever went near the country areas even though he was minister for energy, a vital portfolio for country WA.

No wonder the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the difference between a log and a forest.