

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS, SUPPLIES OF SAWLOGS

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

I refer to the Government's old-growth forest policy, which promised that the Labor Government would implement a comprehensive package to assist both workers in the timber industry and the timber industry itself.

- (1) Is the Premier aware that south west timber mills expect to run out of sawlogs in the next few weeks?
- (2) Will the Premier review the forest management plan to ensure continuity of log supply?
- (3) What discussions has the Government had with the industry to ensure that families in the south west timber region are not without financial support?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1)-(3) First, I thank the member for introducing to the Parliament the subject of old-growth forests in Western Australia because, thankfully, they are with us now and will be with us forever into the future as a result of the decision made by this Labor Government. Second, we will make sure that our state forests are managed properly. As the member knows, a management plan is in place that is based on scientific principles that we will utilise to manage the forests. As the member who asked the question knows, some concern has been expressed about whether sufficient logs will come through the system in order for it to operate given the conjuncture of what is available at the current time. I am confident that that supply will be able to be provided. Letters went out yesterday to the various mills indicating the Government's position on how we will manage our forests. We do these things properly. The Liberals logged the old-growth forest and did not care for proper forest management. That is why previously it was such a big issue in Western Australia. We stopped old-growth logging and will manage these forests properly.

Mr C.J. Barnett: What about the families, the unemployed, and the people leaving town and businesses closing - what about them, Premier? The Labor Party used to stand up for low-income people.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I take it from that comment that the Leader of the Opposition will be into those old-growth forests should he win government - that is what he is telling the people of Western Australia. I remind the people of this State what members opposite did last time, and what they would do if they could get into the forests again.

In answer to the question, supply has been tight, but we are confident that we will be able to fulfil our requirements to protect the forests properly, as we need to do according to the plan, and also to provide sufficient logs so the industry can operate properly.