



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

ADJOURNMENT

Forestry

SPEECH

Thursday, 21 October 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Thursday, 21 October 2010 Page 106 Questioner Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (12.36 pm)—Colleagues may remember from my question in question time on Tuesday that sections of the forest industry and the environmental movement signed the Tasmanian Forests Statement of Principles, a document that sets the scope for nine to 12 months of negotiations to end the acrimonious debate over forestry.

To reach a lasting solution will require enormous goodwill, faith and trust from all parties. I know that there are sceptics about the possibilities of a lasting agreement and peace in our forests. Indeed, given the long history of our forests being used as a political battleground by and for a variety of interests and causes, and the ability to contain these battles within the geographical confines of our island state for the purposes of media and activist propaganda, it is little wonder that such hard-nosed scepticism exists. However, I, along with others such as the managing director of Forestry Tasmania, Bob Gordon, are on the side of the angels and believe an agreement is possible—an agreement to grow the forest industry and to finally achieve global recognition for Tasmania's stewardship of the forests.

I was pleased to note the positive response of Forestry Tasmania to the statement of principles, and its willingness to sit down with ENGO negotiators, in good faith, to work through the process of implementing a moratorium of some 39 coupes outlined in the agreement. This will be a contentious process, and I am encouraged by the willingness in good faith of Forestry Tasmania to make this happen. However, it is a process requiring good faith on all sides, and it is important that forest contractors are not financially disadvantaged if current contractual arrangements are affected by locking up coupes. I am pleased to note Forestry Tasmania's stated commitment to fully consult with the Tasmanian Forest Contractors Association and the relevant unions.

According to Forestry Tasmania estimates, the cost of relocating will be in the order of \$5,000 for each contractor, and the Tasmanian government has confirmed that it will cover those costs if and when they are asked to relocate. In a demonstration of good faith, Bob Gordon has argued that by implementing the moratorium as quickly as possible it will remove the burr under the saddle, as he puts it—one of the irritants that can inflame passions and prevent open and meaningful dialogue. I would add, however, that one of those irritants will be issuing a media release of what you are going to do before you consult with the parties affected by it. I would certainly put that warning on notice.

I note also that as another gesture of goodwill in this process, and to leave the conflict of the past behind, Forestry Tasmania has asked the Tasmania Police not to proceed with charges brought against 11 of the 21 people charged over the so-called Mother's Day protest in the Florentine who are due to appear in court on trespass charges on Monday of next week.

Importantly, Forestry Tasmania has clearly stated its intention to show good faith in their current customers, with a significant number residing in my electorate. Indeed, I note that Bob Gordon clearly asserts in his report in the latest edition of *Branchline* of Wednesday 20 October:

... the Statement of Principles indicate a clear commitment by the ENGOs to deliver a sustainable quantity and quality of wood supply to keep the saw and rotary peeled veneer mills going. There's also a clear commitment that Forestry Tasmania will be allowed to meet its contractual obligations.

We have arranged meetings with sawmillers this week. We believe there will be sufficient sawlog resource to provide certainty for sawmills other than those operated by Gunns.

I spoke on forestry and its importance to Tasmania and my region only last Monday evening and finished by saying how crucial it was that the agreement honour existing wood supply contracts to sawmillers and processors in my region, such as Ta Ann and Britton Timbers, located at Smithton. Like Forestry Tasmania, I expect these contracts to be honoured and resource security guaranteed into the future. I agree with Bob Gordon that the industry is on the cusp of a period of considerable uncertainty. Great change is indeed upon us, but as Bob himself says, 'Properly managed, we can achieve an orderly transition to a new era of cooperation, and hopefully

growth.' I too want to see the industry grow in peace, and part of this will require certainty for and support of value-adding enterprises such as Ta Ann and Britton Timbers.

I acknowledge the work of people like Michael O'Connor from the CFMEU, Environment Tasmania, the Wilderness Society, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Forest Contractors Association and others in bringing about the principles of the agreement and I look forward to them being implemented in good faith and goodwill. *(Time expired)*