Masalai i tokaut

Number Forty Eight: 30 July, 2006

Rimbunan Hijau writing Minister's press statements

Industry apologist and Forest Minister, Patrick Pruaitch, has received plenty of criticism for his blind allegiance to Rimbunan Hijau and other logging companies. As a result he is viewed with deep suspicion by many Papua New Guineans.

And no wonder. The self-styled fearless Sepik Strong Man has sold out so far that he even allows the Malaysian logging industry to write his Press Releases and Government Position Papers!

Masalai has previously revealed how Rimbunan Hijau has direct access to senior Government figures and public servants and regularly directs them on how they should act (Masalai 28). We have shown how Pruaitch has unlawfully manipulated the National Forest Board to protect Rimbunan Hijau from sanction

Hi! I work for Rimbunan Hijau

over its illegal logging operations (Masalai 29).

We have also exposed how an independent audit of the Forest Authority accounts found Pruaitch was 'double dipping' and branded him "wrongful, dishonest and corrupt" (Masalai 36).

In this edition we show how two weeks ago, Pruaitch's media releases that were on the front of Rimbunan Hijau's newspaper 'The National, were written for him by a new RH consultant, Alan Oxley. This man, who runs ITS Global Consultants, has been engaged by the logging company to improve its image.

This is a classic example of a Minister of State allowing his position to be defiled by foreign companies and effectively selling the 'Government of the People' to overseas commercial interests.

"Pruaitch condemns reports by Greenpeace" was the impressive front-page headline in The National newspaper on Monday 17 July. The more responsible and scholarly Post Courier ran the same story on its inside pages under the title "Pruaitch defends logging in PNG".

Both newspaper stories were based on a Press Release circulated by the Minister's office the previous Friday (14 July) in which he tried to defend Rimbunan Hijau and the rest of the Malaysian logging industry against the overwhelming evidence of illegal and unsustainable logging and labour and human rights abuses.

Unfortunately the Minister's Press Release and therefore neither story, contained a word written or uttered by the Forest Minister - it had all been provided for him from the generous Rimbunan Hijau.

THE NATIONAL, JULY 17

Forest Minister slams reports by Greenpeace, other NGOs

Greenpeace POREST Minister Patrick Prosterb has accused Prositch has accused Georgeace of denying PNG's economic development by leading egging campaigns in

reports by

Pruaitch condemns

Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and other non-govern-ment organisations (NGOs) had been pressur-ing buyers in Europe and Australia not to buy tim-ber products from PNG.

He said the forestry sec-tor had contributed a lot to the economic growth of

Forestry is important PNG. It employs 1000 people, con-10,000 people, con-tributes 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) and cams half-a-billion kina a year in exports," Mr Prusitch said in a media

Friday, Mc Prosinch had dismissed local and interna-tional media reports criti-cising the PNG Govern-Furn to Page 2

most logging operations he added.

Mr Prusitch said that

in areas that illegal logging was discovered, the
Government, through
the National Forest Authority, was quick to stop

The said that illegal logforestry.

He said 33% of forests
in FNG had been designated for commercial
was not commercially
viable and, if the Govthe control of the said state of the said stat

From Page 1 Bank required as part of a development in the rural the said the logging industry in Papua New ing a loan to improve the He said the allegations Guinea was operating focestry sector in the about slegal legally, complying with all fotestry regulations.

Mr Pruaich said in the least decause the World used from the last three years, the activities of the forestry inreview was never completed because the World

Bank imposed certain dent review, which had conditions which the been dimmed baseless.

instead of commercial said. forestry. He

the operations.

He said PNG's forest down commercial industry was investigated by an "independent ic growth, eliminate jobs neview" which the World and affect infrastructure "primary".

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dustry had been reviewed in detail. And the
reviews showed that
most logging operations
were conducted legally.
he added.

Mr. Prusitch said that
instance forestry
mr. Prusitch said that
review promoted coand subsistence-forestry
alarmist," Mr. Prusitch
said.

down commercial of the unallocated areas ic growth, eliminate jobs forests.

POST COURIER, JULY 17

Pruaitch defends logging in PNG

FOREST Minister Patrick Pru-atrich has jumped to the defence of the timber industry, saying all log-ging operations were legal. Responding to recent campoligns by environmental groups such as Greenpeace and WWF to stop industrial logging in Papua New Guinea, the controversial minis-ter and review of the industry's activities over the last three years showed most logging was conduct-ed legally.

"Some anomalies concerning

"Some anomalies concerning proper application of policies and procedures were revealed. They did not render forestry activities covered by them "illegal" (as) legis-lation and procedures have been amended to correct these prob-terns. Where illegal logging has been discovered, it has been stopped," Mr Pranisch sald in a statement.

He said an independent forestry He said an independent forestry review familied by the World Bank was "never completed" and even-tually fell through after the Government disagreed with the bank over conditions it imposed on a forestry loan. "It seems to the Government that the World Bank had surrendered

the world lank has surrenored its policies on the contribution of forestry policy to anti-growth green NGOs. As the draft report prepared by the independent review revealed, the review was review revealed, the review was also promoting policies inimical to PNG's economic development— in particular, promotion of coo-and subsistence forestry instead of commercial forestry and advo-cacy of a role for anti-forestry green NGOs in environmental management in PNG."

The Ministers Press Release was copied almost word for word from a statement given to him on Monday 10 July by the Forest Industries Association and which in turn was written and paid for by Rimbunan Hijau through their new consultant, Alan Oxley.

Masalai has been able to obtain a copy of the RH / Oxley statement.

Oxley's paper was delivered to the Minister via a Forest Industries Association letter which suggested to the Government "there is an urgent and immediate need for some form of GoPNG response in defence of its forest laws, regulations and procedures".

The FIA letter described Oxley's paper as "a draft statement based on the industries perspective".

EXTRACT FROM THE FIA LETTER

Following our meeting on the question of illegal logging in PNG, where it was agreed that GoPNG would release a statement on the mater, we take this opportunity to attach for your information, consideration and use, a "draft" statement based on the industry's perspective and background notes/plan of action again from an industry point of view.

The international campaign against our forest product exports is rapidly gaining momentum, with the Australian Government and the U.K. based Timber Trade Federation taking the lead.

We would suggest that there is an urgent and immediate need for some form of GoPNG response in defence of its forest laws, regulations and procedures. As the FIA has publicly stated, these are among the best in the world, certainly exceeding the standards of "legality" imposed in many other countries including Australia.

Yours faithfully,

R. Tate Executive Officer

Oxley's paper was helpfully titled "PNG Government Position on Forestry".

It was this paper written for Rimbunan Hijau that the Minister used as the basis for his Press Release.

Rimbunan Hijau, a Malaysian Logging Company, engaging Australian spin doctors to write Government Statements and posting them to Government Ministers for them to use?

It sounds ridiculous and unbelievable but it is true and we have the proof.

EXTRACT FROM THE PNG GOVERNENTS POSITION ON FORESTRY – WRITTEN BY RIMBUNAN HIJAU / OXLEY

PNG Government Position on Forestry

The Papua New Guinea Government has been the target of an international campaign by Green NGOs, Greenpeace and the WWF in particular, to stop commercial logging in Papua New Guinea.

The core of this campaign is that most logging in PNG is illegal and is causing widespread environmental destruction.

The degree of similarity between the RH/Oxley Statement and the Ministers release is quite remarkable as the table below shows. The Minister adopted the whole layout, tone, and arguments given him by RH and copied whole paragraphs word for word.

The poor Minister obviously doesn't have a clue about what is really going on in logging camps across the country and clearly doesn't like to rely on the National Forest Service for advice.

The Minister has been so captured by foreign corporate interests he has clearly forgotten that Government is meant to serve the people and that it has an important role in REGULATING industry rather than allowing it to run rough-shod over the interests of ordinary people.

Government is supposed to be a buffer that regulates the forestry industry by making sure that it follows the law so that its operations benefit ordinary people and protect the environment. Instead Minister's like Patrick Pruaitch are happy to see the forests and local people raped so long as they are receiving the favors of the logging companies.

Rimbunan Hijau is now the effective government of our once proud nation.

THE REMARKABLE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PRUAITCH'S STATEMENT AND THE 'GOVERNMENT' POSITION PAPER WRITTEN BY OXLEY FOR RH – the few differences are highlighted in red

Patrick Pruaitch Press Release, 14 July 2006	Rimbunan Hijau / Oxley to the Minister, 10 July 2006
campaigns by Greenpeace and WWF to stop industrial logging in Papua New Guinea	campaigns by Greenpeace and WWF in particular to stop commercial logging in Papua New Guinea
Greenpeace pressuring buyers in Europe and Australia not to buy timber products from PNG	Greenpeace pressuring buyers in Europe not to buy timber products using timber from PNG
Forestry is important in PNG. It employs 10,000 people, contributes 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) and earns half-a-billion kina a year in exports	Forestry is important in PNG. It employs 10,000 people, contributes 5% of GDP and earns half-a-billion kina a year in exports
the last three years, the activities of the forestry industry have been reviewed in detail. The reviews showed that most logging operations were conducted legally	the last three years, the activities of the industry have been reviewed in detail. They showed that most logging was being conducted legally
Some anomalies concerning proper application of policies and procedures were revealed. They did not render forestry activities covered by them 'illegal'. Legislation and procedures have been amended to correct these problems. Where illegal logging has been discovered, it has been stopped	Some anomalies concerning proper application of policies and procedures were revealed. They did not render forestry activities covered by them 'illegal'. Legislation and procedures have been amended to correct these problems. Where illegal logging has been discovered, it has been stopped
by an 'independent review' which the World Bank required as part of a condition before providing a loan to improve the forestry sector in the country.	by an 'independent review' of PNG logging which the World Bank required as part of a condition before providing a loan to improve forestry in the country.
It seems to the Government that the World Bank had surrendered its policies on the contribution of forestry policy to anti-growth green NGOs. As the draft report prepared by the independent review revealed, the review was also promoting policies inimical to PNG's economic development — in particular, promotion of eco and subsistence forestry instead of commercial forestry and advocacy of a role for anti-forestry green NGOs in environmental management in PNG	It seems to the Government that the World Bank had surrendered its policies on the contribution of forestry policy to anti-growth green NGOs. As the draft report prepared by the independent review revealed, the review was also promoting policies inimical to PNG's economic development — in particular, promotion of eco and subsistence forestry instead of commercial forestry and advocacy of a role for anti-forestry green NGOs in environmental management in PNG
eco-forestry is not commercially viable	eco-forestry is not commercially viable
also false and deliberately alarmist	also false and deliberately alarmist
33% of forests in PNG had been designated for commercial use	33% of forests has been designated for commercial use
63% remained unallocated and non-productive	63% remains as unallocated non-productive
most of the unallocated areas are 'old growth' or 'primary' forests	most of the unallocated forest is 'old growth' or 'primary' forests