



Japanese Timber Demand Soars

THE U.S. STATE OF WASHINGTON is at present the site of a battle between conservationists and loggers over protection of one of the great temperate areas of rain-forest left in the world. The arguments bear echoes of those carried on in New Zealand, relating to the definition of sustained yield. The U.S. Forest Service has interpreted it to mean large scale clearfelling of old growth forests, trees of which may be as old as 500 years.

At threat is the habitat of the rare northern spotted owl and other wildlife such as the grizzly bear.

Japan is the market for the most of the timber. However, rather than being chipped, the magnificent Douglas firs and cedars are shipped as logs for the Japanese building industry. In 1989 Japan built 1.68 million new homes, twice that of the U.S. which has double the population.

Audubon magazine says that the Japanese use prodigious amounts of timber in their homes because they are so fond of wood. A quality home can call for upwards of 30 tonnes of timber. Japan's wasteful and excessive demands for industrial plywood and for paper products similarly place enormous demands on the world's forests.

Malaysian Timber Ban a Veneer

THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT by the Malaysian Government of a proposed ban on the export of logs is nothing but a hollow sham, according to the Japan Tropical Forests Action Network. In a move praised by some conservationists, Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad late last year announced there would be a ban on the export of logs from Sarawak and Sabah. Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer has been given some of the credit for persuading the Malaysians to come up with a ban.

However it has become increasingly clear since the announcement that the Malaysian Government is using the ban proposal simply as a ploy to buy time while the forests are destroyed at an even faster rate.

Nigel Hooper of JATAN says that logging is actually increasing so that all available timber may be extracted before the terms of the ban are enacted.

"Companies are entering some land for a fourth time. They are logging even small trees that are then thrown away, the purpose being to ensure that regeneration is impossible. The devastated forest is then converted to some form of mono-agriculture such as palm oil or rubber," he says.

His comments are supported by the *Utasan Konsumer*, published in Penang, which reports that Prime Industries Minister Datuk Seri Lim Keng Yaik has postponed the ban until 1995.

Comments the paper: "He forgot to mention that by 1995 there would hardly be any primary (virgin) forests left... Sabah's forests will be logged out by the early 1990s, while Sarawak's virgin forests are estimated to vanish in seven years."

Besides the wildlife and plants, what is also at stake in the forests is the survival of the Penan people. In a last desperate attempt to save their forest homeland, the Penan visited Japan in March to beg the Japanese Government to place an immediate ban on the importation of logs from Sarawak and Sabah.



Forest and Bird member David Lamb recently returned from Thailand where he witnessed the results of logging. The smoky atmosphere in the background of the photo was ever present as fallen forests burned. In a bold move, Thailand banned all rainforests logging last year.

Names of companies involved in the destruction have a familiar ring – the Marubeni Corporation and C.Itoh Ltd are of course behind rainforest destruction in New Zealand. JATAN is calling on the New Zealand Government to disallow commercial transactions between New Zealand companies and the loggers, and conservationists in this country are being asked to boycott the companies and their products.

Seal Cull Call

NEW ZEALAND is not the only country where seals are perceived by commercial fishers as posing a threat to the fishing industry.

In Canada, calls have been made for a cull of the grey seal population off the east coast of Canada, on the grounds that they eat large amounts of fish which would otherwise be caught by humans.

The demands for a cull of the 70,000 strong grey seal population coincide with a crisis in the North-west Atlantic fishery. Quotas have been cut and thousands of jobs lost in fish processing factories.

Overfishing has been identified as the major cause of the crisis, with over-optimistic assessments of stocks by scientists an important contributing factor.

Buyer Beware

GOING GREEN is not as easy as it first appears, as overseas experience is proving. The following example is an instructive one for beginners.

Recycled paper may not be what we usually understand it to be, that is, paper which has been used and re-processed. The Warmer Campaign (World Action for Recycling Material and Energy from Rubbish), recently complained of their experience with "recycled" paper in *Warmer Bulletin*:

"At no time were we told that "recycled" paper had probably never left the paper mill. Now that we are aware that the bulk of paper being sold as recycled is actually paper that was damaged in processing and simply re-processed at the same mill, we feel a little foolish. Obviously mills cannot just discard damaged rolls, and it makes total sense to reprocess it in this way. We just wish that we, along with many thousands of other consumers, had not believed it to be recycled in the way that we all think of as recycled: post use. We feel conned."

One of the most galling things is that mills have placed a premium on recycled paper, on the grounds that it is more costly to produce.

The Baka – Forest Dwellers Under Siege

LAST YEAR New Zealand TV audiences were shown the moving story of the Baka people of the Cameroon, on the west coast of Africa. The Baka are one of the few remaining African forest dwellers. Altogether it is estimated there are about 200,000 people of different tribes in central Africa whose lifestyle depends on the forests.

The present generation of Baka may be the last of the tribe to live in the forest. Between them the World Bank and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have hatched the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) which will effectively put an end to the Baka people's way of life.

In Cameroon, the plan calls for a 600 km highway to be driven through the heart of the remaining forest in the south-east of the country. This will open up 11 million ha of forest, which will be divided up into industrial exploitation, agriculture, settlement or conservation.

At least 8 percent of the money involved in the project is earmarked for conservation, but the indigenous peoples will be banned from hunting, they will not be allowed to go into certain areas and they will be forcibly resettled.

Unfortunately governments around the world are pouring massive resources into the TFAP, a scheme which has been criticised by conservation groups as being a front for continued large scale destruction of tropical forests. The UK Government recently pledged 100 million pounds towards "saving the rainforests", with it all going to the TFAP. 🦋