



Frozen in daylight, this Waglan's pit viper could be mistaken for a branch.
Photo: Grant Rosoman

Southland woodchip mill that the National Government recently gave the green light to resume beech forest woodchipping. In October 1990 Nissho Iwai Corporation jointly bought into forests in the Wairarapa and Northland. Sumitomo has a share in Comalco NZ, is connected with the iron sand mining and along with Mitsubishi and Mitsui & Co buy much of our coal.

Is there any hope?

There is still some hope for the forests and the people. International protests are putting pressure on the destructive tropical timber trade. There is growing consumer resistance to the use of tropical rainforest timbers. Around the world conservation groups are seeking bans on the import of tropical timbers that do not come from sustainable logging operations or do not have the consent of the traditional forest owners and users. This is a key feature of the New Zealand tropical rainforest campaign and was a policy in the 1990 Vote for the Environment charter, of which Forest and Bird was a member.

Cashmere High School in Christchurch recently became the first school in New Zealand to ban the use of rainforest timbers. Austria recently banned the import of unsustainably produced tropical timbers and 200 West German city councils have decided not to use tropical timber in any of their building programmes. With only about 12 percent of its forest cover remaining, Thailand has banned logging altogether. In the words of a Penan woman, Libai Uwe, "if the people in the far away countries would like to see us living, then they should not buy timber from our country."

For the true worth of the forest to be appreciated, uses other than timber need to be emphasized. These include fibres, resins and oils, as well as food, medicinal and craft products. This year Trade Aid hope to market the baskets and bracelets made by the tribal people of Sarawak. By buying these we can support the people in their fight to save the

forest – a very positive form of development aid. The New Zealand Government needs to become a stronger advocate of forest conservation measures to countries like Malaysia, providing a greater level of aid, especially to promote the uses of the forest other than timber, as a source of income for the local people.

If we want tropical rainforest conservation, then we should be prepared to help pay for it, as to some extent the income from the sale of timber is being used to develop the economies of the Third World. New Zealand can also assist with the establishment of a comprehensive and secure parks and reserves system. A proposal to set up two large biosphere reserves for the Penan in northern Sarawak needs to be supported.

There are a few grassroots organizations working in Malaysia for the rights of the tribal people and the environment. One such group is Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth Malaysia). They have championed the case of the tribal people and deserve any monetary support we can give them. They have plans to help organize and co-ordinate the different tribal groups and assist them into forms of development which are good for them and their environment.

Harrison Ngau of Friends of the Earth Malaysia and recently elected MP for the Banam says "the next five years are critical. We have a chance now, or we have a disaster." 🦋

Grant Rosoman has recently finished a M. Applied Sci degree in Nature Conservation at Lincoln University. He visited Sarawak in March/April 1990 and is currently based in Christchurch working for the New Zealand Rainforests Coalition, of which Forest and Bird is a member.

What you can do!

- support a ban on tropical rainforest timbers;
- buy rainforest products that are sustainable, such as the rattan baskets and bracelets from Trade Aid, and boycott the products of the multinationals involved in rainforest destruction;
- write to Government ministers in Malaysia, New Zealand and Japan, telling them of your concerns.

Write polite letters to:
YAB Tan Sri Datuk patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmoud
Chief Minister's Office
Bangunan Tunknu Abd. Rahman Putra
Petra Jaya, 93503 Kuching
Sarawak, Malaysia

or

The Prime Minister
Datuk Dr Mahathir Mohammed
Prime Minister's Department
Jalan Dato' Onn 50480
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

or

Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu
Souri Kantei
2-3-1 Nagata-cho
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100, Japan