

“In Support of Progress” Newsletter

In this issue

Mining

Peace and FT

Leadership

The Statistics pack

Agriculture

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Peace and Mining

Who would have thought it? In your wildest dreams, did you ever consider that protests would start up again even before the Forest Agreement Bill received Royal Assent (ie became law)? Be honest, did you?

The conservation movement was split, Tony Burke was throwing money around, and the government, success within its grasp, was regaling those who were sceptical of the outcome. At least give it a chance, they said.

Well, it's happened. Bob Brown's latest baby, the "Save the Tarkine" group, paraded its protest wares outside this week's Minerals Conference in Hobart. Joining the protest was Vica Bayley, a signatory to the peace agreement. Remember him! Earlier in the week he described Bob Brown as living in the past for his outspoken criticism of the agreement, later in the week he has joined him.

The movement is back together. Reconciliation over the Tarkine. What seems to always be forgotten by the peace makers is that the conservation movement needs conflict for its survival. Through conflict and protest they get publicity, and from that publicity come appeals to our "better" nature, to raise funds and to lobby governments. Two elections are looming. What a wonderful time to ramp up the conflict.

Forget about hearing anything factual in this coming scenario. Words such as pristine, majestic, mystical and magical will be the order of the day.

Do they care that they are placing more jobs and livelihoods at stake? No way. It is of no consequence to them at all. "We feel for those who are losing their jobs. But it's not our fault. It's the market!" With the highest unemployment in the country, with investment stalling and the government distracted in its pursuit of its social agenda, the first rounds have been fired.

The Tarkine region is the new battleground. A temporary injunction has been taken out on a mining company (Shree) operating in the area while certain matters of law are considered. More will flow.

Miners, look out. It's on!

Peace and FT

On Thursday, Forestry Tasmania chief Bob Gordon was dumped by his Chairman, who was brought into the organisation to "move the business forward". A vocal supporter of the peace process, Chairman Bob Annells has wasted no time in removing his CEO, Bob Gordon, once the Bill had passed the Parliament.

With all deference to their first names, may I have my two bob's worth. There would appear to be two dots. Dot 1 – The Greens support the amended Forests "Peace" Bill in the Parliament. Dot 2 - Bob Gordon, despised by the conservation movement, who continually condemned him, is sacked. One could be forgiven for joining these two dots.

Leadership in the Public Sector

Actually, losing senior bureaucrats is becoming a bit of a habit. The Prisons Chief left under a cloud (he must be the first general manager ever to have taken leave over a workers comp. claim), the Children's Commissioner went to greener pastures on the mainland, the head of Treasury wanted to spend more time with his family (if that was really the case, why take on the job in the first place?), the head of the Energy Reform Oversight Committee has left in the middle of this important task to head up the Local Government Water Corporations, and now the head of Forestry.

It reminds me of the Oscar Wilde quote *"To lose one (parent)... may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness."* What would he say in the present circumstance. Who's next?

The Statistics Pack

The latest data from the ABS shows a continuing decline in employment, an increase in both unemployment and underemployment (ie part-time work), and economic indicators suggest a slowdown in investment and economic activity. Confronted by this data, the Premier is reported as saying the figures were "disappointing". And this after saying the day before she was pleased with the consistent signs of recovery! Disappointing indeed. What an understatement!

The Premier talks up a Jobs Package as being her government's response to the present situation. The package will cost \$24.5 m and contains 11 initiatives. Good as each may be, they are short-term one-off expenditures. If one believes the economy (and jobs) is best stimulated by investment, then the government should be concentrating on the present impediments to investment. That is where the real answer lies.

It will require articulating a vision of economic growth, of pulling the right economic levers, of promoting the climate for economic engagement. Band-aids, at the end of the day, fall off. They are only band-aids.

Agriculture

Many are pinning their hopes on an agriculture-led revival. I hope their hopes are well-founded. However, I am beginning to get a queasy feeling in my stomach that things may not be so rosy. Apart from some niche crops, such as cherries and grapes, the sector is plagued with cheap imports from overseas, and the extraordinary market power of the two big supermarkets. I suspect all is not as it could be "down on the farm".

I don't support live exports to overseas destinations which show such a cruel disregard for the most basic tenets of animal husbandry. The method of slaughter of these animals sickens me. Such behavior diminishes us as human beings, and we are the lesser for allowing it. If the trade is to continue, then it must come with a caveat, that animals not be subject to such appalling treatment, and death. If the caveat cannot be met, then no trade. QED

This newsletter is supported by Tasman Management Services.

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