

Letter to Bega District News 13 December 2011

Woodchipper protest "bizarre"

Your report (BDN 13/12/11) of the logging industry protest at the Bermagui Forest Forum last Friday was accurate enough as far as it went. Norm Wilton and his mates were, for the most part quiet, non-violent and did not unduly disrupt our event, but they are the meat in the sandwich.

What the report did not say, though, was that prominent among the protesting loggers and their supporters were the General Manager and Forestry Manager of South East Fibre Exports (SEFE), owner of the Eden chipmill. Dont get me wrong. I am a great believer in civil disobedience and direct action. Throughout human history it has been a way for powerless and dispossessed individuals and groups to make their voices heard. Without it we would probably still have slavery. Women would not have the vote. Basic civil rights in many continents would still be denied and many more whales would have been slaughtered in the Southern Ocean. I could go on. Countless human rights and environmental causes could never have resisted unjust laws and the overwhelming strength and financial power of entrenched opponents.

It is bizarre, therefore, that these chipmill managers, recipients of six figure salaries and representatives of a huge multi national corporation, Nippon Paper, Japans biggest paper manufacturer have chosen to adopt the tactics of the powerless to promote their industry. Even more bizarre when we remembers that SEFE employs a Corporate Affairs Manager whose sole job is to manage the image of the woodchipping industry.

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