

# Wilderness wisdom from firm believer

Director a supporter of States' rights

By PHIL BECK

It may seem a contradiction, but Jonathan West, the recent re-appointed national director of the Wilderness Society, is a strong supporter of States' rights.

As such, Mr West's role as political activist in seeking Federal Government action on Tasmania's forestry operations could be perceived by some as being in conflict with his principles.

According to Mr West, however, those who believe this are misguided and don't understand the difference between State and Federal responsibilities.

"The forestry debate is not a States' rights issue," he said. "The Federal Government was given control over exports by our Founding Fathers, and it must exercise those powers in line with the majority will of the people."

"It is not seeking to take on any new powers, and in fact would be acting undemocratically if it did not adhere to the strict environmental policies in its election platform which attracted thousands of voters."

"The polls also show that a majority of Tasmanians and Australians support the protection of the National Estate. Any attempt to portray our role as seeking Federal Government intervention is just not correct."

Like most of the society's previous directors, who include Dr Norm Sanders and Dr Bob Brown, the Canberra-born Mr West is highly educated and articulate.

His affinity with the environment, built up during his early life when he lived near Batoch Bay, on the NSW coast.

Like many before him, Mr West first became involved in environmental politics at Sydney University, where he read forestry and philosophy and became one of the founding presidents of the university's movement against uranium mining. He was also a delegate to the Australian Union of Students' Council.

After travelling round Australia with funds earned as his job as a freelance journalist on environmental issues, and serving as a director of the Wilderness Society in 1982 and was



Mr Jonathan West... believes that public attitudes are changing

the society's Canberra lobbyist before his appointment as national liaison officer for the Australian Conservation Foundation.

"I got to know a lot of Federal politicians, particularly Barry Cohen who is now the longest-serving Environment Minister in Australia's history," Mr West said. "I believe the second longest-serving Environment Minister is Mr Ray Groom, who is now Tasmania's Minister for Forests."

Mr West joined Mr Cohen's staff as senior policy adviser of the environment in 1984 where he remained until being asked by the Wilderness Society to become its national director.

He bought a house in Devon two years ago and likes to call himself a naturalised Tasmanian.

Mr West joined the society because he believes it is the most effective organisation in the country in changing public attitudes in Tasmania's relationship with nature.

"And that's what really counts," he said. "It's what people really feel that matters, not what happens in the bureaucracy."

Mr West believes that public attitudes are changing, and that these attitudes are affecting Congress among governments. "There is just disagreement on how these attitudes can be reflected in government action," he said.

Whether or not you agree with Mr West's views, a lot more will be heard of him in the coming months.

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# Society's director resigns

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By Ann Hunt

HOBART — The director of the Wilderness Society, Mr Jonathan West, has resigned only a week before crucial hearings by the Helsham Commission of inquiry decide the fate of Tasmania's forests.

And the surprise resignation leaves the Wilderness Society without a figurehead a fortnight before the High Court battle over Tasmania's right to log its forests.

Mr West is expected to announce his stepping-down within the next few days and sources say his position will be left vacant for up to two months till a suitable replacement is found.

During those two months the battle for the State's forests will be won or lost.

It is believed Mr West has resigned to take up post graduate studies in public administration at Harvard University.

Mr West yesterday was reluctant to comment on his resignation, saying an official announcement would be made and a Press release issued "within the next couple of days".

The best-known former director of the Wilderness Society, Independent M.H.A. Dr Bob Brown, who headed the society during its successful Franklin Dam campaign, last night said he did not wish to resume the directorship which he gave up in 1984.

However, Dr Brown said he would not hesitate to "help out in an emergency".

"I won't take up the position of director again, but I will be right there in the thick of things should they (members of the Wilderness Society) want me," he said.

Dr Brown said there were about 12 potential directors.

It was "quite likely" a Tasmanian could fill the vacancy.

"However, it is a normal course of events for the position to be advertised interstate," Dr Brown said.

It is believed a likely Tasmanian candidate would be high-profile conservationist, Mr Bob Burton.

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# ***For the Forests***

**A history of the Tasmanian forest campaigns**

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Neil Ross, Leader of the Opposition, talks to Jackie Marsh residents, Terri Skerrett (foreground) and other residents on the road to Warners Sugarloaf, 10 November, 1986. Photo: Paul Scambler, The Examiner.



Neil East inspects the Warners Sugarloaf logging site, 10 November, 1986. Photo: Paul Scambler, The Examiner.



Ferra Robinson, protest at APNM's protest at Prince's Square, 27 November, 1986. Photo: Paul Scambler, The Examiner.

in Tasmania. Federal Minister for the Environment, Senator Graham Richardson, was in the ascendancy. Premier Robin Gray, in a calculated political move, put the bulldozers in to Jackie Marsh two weeks after they were listed on the interim list of the National Estate.

At this point the shit well and truly hit the fan! We were communicating both at a state level and the national level; we had lobbyists in the Minister's office; we had a national liaison officer in Canberra also on side and understanding the issues; and at that point the Heritage Commission was on side as well. Everybody was ready when they came in to Jackie Marsh which became the focus of national attention."

**Rosemary:** "I found myself acting as the media liaison person for the Lemnathymic demonstration. I remember attending meetings up in Railton with my baby daughter Ferra who got carted around from pillar to post. I remember her sitting in the middle of a circle at a Wilderness Society State meeting at Jeff Weston's place at St Marys. She was chortling away and Bob Bucken was saying, 'This is not supposed to be a laughing matter!' We carted our kids

around; our campaigning became part of our family life but it was pretty stressful. By the time the second Jackie Marsh demonstration came up I was pregnant with my second child and a bureaucrat from the Australian Heritage Commission was staying with us for a fortnight looking at the values of the area.

Sean had cultivated a good relationship with a liaison officer in Canberra and the Director of the Wilderness Society at that time was a personal friend. We had very committed people within Jackie Marsh who were prepared to actively step logging on the site, so basically the campaign was really successful because it operated on all those levels. We had the lobbying going in Canberra,

The Wilderness Society acted as media liaison, putting out all our press releases and we had Wilderness Society people here in Jackie Marsh in droves.

For two weeks we ran a full-on campaign, based at a house called Wiltteena with people going from there into the logging sites. Despite the fact that Bob Hawke had promised there'd be no more logging in the National Estate forests, we got sold out in Canberra, thanks to the efforts of Joan Kerin. It started to look as if we were going to lose it again at which point Bob Brown came in, and Jonathon West, who was then Director of the Wilderness Society, and they said 'There's only one thing that's going to save this, and that's if everyone in the valley gets arrested!'

That's where the politics got really hard; it's one thing for committed activists to go out there and stand in front of bulldozers with their non-violent action training. It was another thing for a lot of these people to stand up and get arrested and go to gaol for the forests. Two of them worked as doctors in the town, some as teachers, a lot of them worked in hospitals, or for transport companies. The people were committed to saving the forests. There were perhaps about 25 adults living here about that time, a lot of them caught up in their kids, as we were. There was one group who were going to get arrested and another group who had never considered that they

might have to take this kind of action. There were also people from overseas who were pretty sophisticated, who had taken part in anti-nuclear demonstrations."

**Sean:** "Bob Brown had done a pretty amazing job of being supportive to the local community and saying in a non-presuring way: 'Look you're going to have to do this.' And I can remember going to a meeting and just saying 'Look this is the only thing that's going to do it.' And they said, 'OK, I've never done anything like this in my life before but I'm going to do this.'

Good feeling was generated. A whole community had empowered itself to act and we ran up the logging contractor and said, 'The whole valley, Andy, is going to be there and we're not going to move. We're going to have to be arrested.'

The politicians rang up and contractor Andy Padgett said to them, 'I don't want to go in there, I don't want to have anything to do with this.'

And the politicians said, 'You've got to go in there; we can't let these people get away with this.'

So we were there, all strung out; we blocked the logging road to Warners Sugarloaf. I stayed with two others and did child care.

The imagery that came out of that action was some of the best we've ever seen. It was people being strong and committed. It was very peaceful, very positive. When



# helsham: an analysis

## Alistair Graham

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**My first visit to Tasmania was from New Zealand when I was working on the Antarctic minerals regime and the Tasmanian Government hosted one of the negotiating rounds. I was the NGO representative on the New Zealand delegation. That was in 1985, when the Gray Government had just announced the fast track legislation for the Electrona smelter.**

Bob Burton was involved with the campaign. Subsequently he made an appointment to come and see me when I was Director of Fund for Animals at Manly in Sydney. He knew I'd had lots of forestry experience in New Zealand and he literally asked me if I'd come down. I just said, 'Yes,' having in mind that Tasmania would be a nice place to be and to live.

With an Honours Degree in Agricultural Forest Sciences from Oxford in the early 1970s, I absorbed the intellectual stuff about forests and forestry very quickly because I was thrown into the Helsham Inquiry. It took me a lot longer to get into the sociology and politics of Tasmania and the conservation movement. My first inkling of what was ahead for me came from the grapevine.

Not only was I going to organise things in the Helsham Inquiry but I was the designated replacement for Jonathan West. People in Sydney said, 'Do you realise what you're letting yourself in for?' I had no idea what I was letting myself in for! I had only the dimmest perceptions that The Wilderness Society existed at this stage.

I came down in August 1987. I remember it was bitterly, bitterly cold. I had a couple of meetings with Jonathan and also the President of ACF at the time, Hal Wootten. Getting the evidence together for the Helsham Inquiry was mainly the work of Hal, although the political work to create

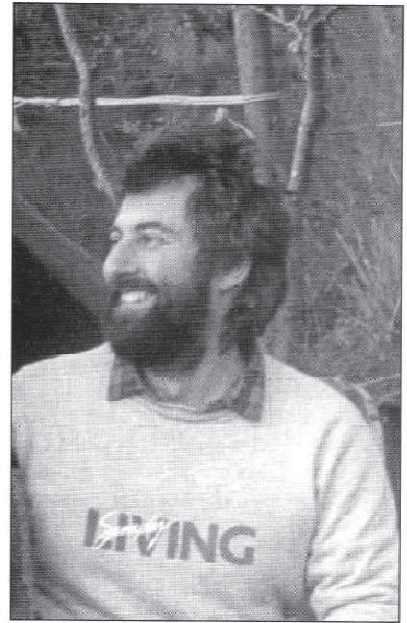
the opportunity was the significant contribution of Jonathan West. It was through Hal that we got John Basten in – a bright young barrister out of Sydney who organised things and was willing to put the emphasis in the right place.

The conservation movement got Commonwealth funding and my job was to organise the spending of that money. The nexus between Jonathan West, Joan Staples and Craig Emerson was enormously powerful. You make your own luck. You work with the opposition you have. Jonathan was known and trusted within Labor party circles. I couldn't do those sort of things. My energy went into networking the movement as a whole, so that when we wanted help the movement responded.

The two key people who did most of the bread and butter work were Sean Cadman and Grant Dixon. In terms of the case for World Heritage, we divided up the work. Sean had the job of getting the scientists together who could say things about the biological and cultural characteristics of the area. Grant did the geological characteristics. They made the contacts with the scientists and worked with them, organising their appearances, working with John Basten on the proof of evidence and understanding, so we could cross examine them to bring out the crucial points. It was a team of four who were the core of the input. It was a great team, it worked superbly well and Grant and Sean were fantastic in terms of turning information and ideas into logical, ruthless, cold legal presentation of information.

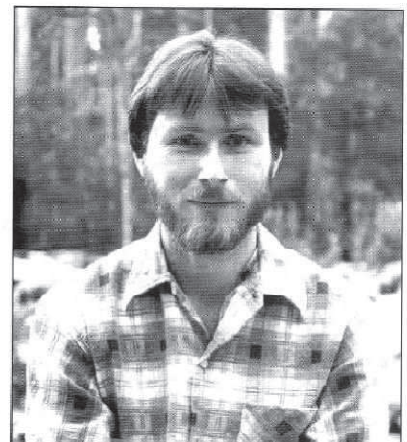
We all learnt a lot about World Heritage values. It was very good for our morale to find the overwhelming majority of academics around the country who knew anything about Western Tasmania were all enormously supportive and went out of their way to find evidence and to give evidence. Geoff Law has, over the years done a superb job of extracting that information.

Why, despite the overwhelming weight of evidence, did the decision go the way it did?



Alistair Graham, 1989.

One of the things I learnt working with John Basten was that the facts of the matter don't actually have much to do with it...I felt distinctly naive about this...that it was an enormous political event. For all the trappings of intellectual rigour, for better or for worse, we failed to persuade Helsham, the presiding judge, or Robert Wallace, the economist from South Australia. We essentially failed to make the case before them that this was a place worth recognising and to a large extent it was because they were so profoundly unfamiliar with this kind of natural history information and completely confused about what world heritage values were and what the Commonwealth was obliged to do about them. It just got really messy in the end and it became obvious by Christmas we weren't going to get a good result out of it.



Bob Burton, 1987.





'Whatever you do, don't vote Liberal!'

'...We wouldn't keep up the supply!'

**I paid \$1 to get rid of Michael Hodgman.**



Election meeting in the Hobart Town Hall, July 1987.



'...we had our own election signs... and handouts.' July 1987



Prime Minister Hawke hugging baby wombat during 1987 election campaign. On 11 July Hawke won a third term and the ACF and TWS claimed they had delivered a crucial 2.2% of the vote.  
Photo: TWS Call.

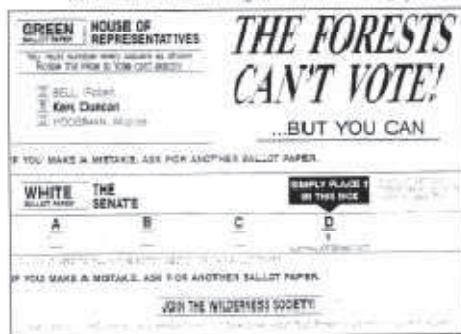
is in Denison.' When you start doing things well, there's a lot of support, a lot of good feeling. We had our own

### the forests can't vote but you can! federal elections 1987

Jonathan West, then director of TWS, asked me to come in and help; we really needed a flag-waving campaign and this was to be the unseating of Michael Hodgman MHR in the Denison electorate. The badges, tastefully designed by a well-known graphic designer, were dispersed throughout the community. 'I paid \$1 to get rid of Michael Hodgman.' 'We couldn't keep up the supply! The badge became the focus of the campaign to the extent that Hodgman was responding to it. We had a really good display down at Salamanca Market, in Sandy Bay and in North Hobart. We backed Duncan Kerr, the Labor candidate and this was a typical Federal election, a two-horse race. We were successful. Minutes after the election results appeared Geoff Law rang up from Melbourne: 'Well done! The biggest swing in the country

election signs, our own handouts, the badges, an election meeting in the Town Hall, stalls at Salamanca market...and we came up with a good logo: 'The Forests Can't Vote but You Can—whatever you do, don't vote Liberal.'

The last thing I did before I left TWS in 1988 was to initiate The Great Tasmanian Forest Walk, which I really intended to go on and organise. We had a brainstorming session that lasted about a week. The big question was, 'How can we focus on the forests without having a blockade in the summer?' I put some weeks of groundwork into just what we could do. We came up with a number of events, some really good ideas. The way to start things happening is to take people out of the campaign office, down to the pub or just to an empty room. The Great Walk was a fantastic success.



### an activist's dilemma

Leaving TWS was a very painful decision, in a way. At that time, late 1988, there was no money in the organisation. I couldn't see my way through needing to earn some money and at the same time I felt very drawn to working in the organisation. I had to stop myself. I was not making it, financially. I came to accept that I could only contribute short, sharp bursts. I had a household to run and had to accept my circumstances. Of course I returned from time to time for specific projects and more recently, in 1999 and into 2001, organised the successful forest tours of the Styx Forest. A total of 64 tours have introduced 1 926 people to this inspiring forest.

Once an activist, always an activist.



# mainland support triggered major advances

## Stephen Mattingley



Stephen Mattingley

“ I spent my early life in Adelaide but as I had relatives in Tasmania I was always visiting the Island. What really got me involved in the forests campaign was a walk up Wylds Craig. Looking south I saw the magnificence of the South-West and then the contrast with the totally devastated Florentine Valley. It was like a cancer eating away into the South-West. That was in December 1984.

In Adelaide I had been involved in submission writing on the Woodchip EIS in 1985. It was in the context that this was the first of a series of woodchip decisions that would affect areas all around Australia. It was important to reach members of Parliament who had no forest in their electorate, no forestry issues, to create the federal context. I had a few weeks to fill in before uni exams, but it kept on being delayed. We wrote to the politicians, visited them or their staff, taking along maps, explaining how we wanted National Estate areas protected. Some we saw two or three times. At the same time we were writing newspaper articles and putting together displays for shopping centres. We were quite active in the last half of 1985. South Australian members of The Wilderness Society had a reputation for doing this ground work. Not much had been done in identification of wilderness areas in South Australia. However many members walked in Tasmania in the summer, had been involved in the Franklin Blockade and supported conservation in Tasmania. They were prepared to do the work for the areas adjacent to where they went bushwalking.

Joan Staples was doing a lot of work in Canberra at this time and Dave Heatley spent a lot of time up there, working with

Joan. That was when Jonathan West was in the Federal Minister for the Environment, Barry Cohen's, office.

In December 1985 I finished a walk in Tasmania and they still hadn't made the woodchip decision so I thought I'd pop into Davey Street, The Wilderness Society's office. I had some spare time. I was there till February 1989.

The plans came out to extend the road south of Farmhouse Creek. I had helped prepare briefing papers for the media on both Farmhouse Creek and the Lemonthyme and sent them to politicians. In Adelaide I did a lot of lobbying and wrote to politicians regularly, going to see as many as I could.

What surprised me, coming to Tasmania, was that people didn't talk to the politicians. The dialogue went on through the media. It's terribly important to make the politicians aware that there are people in their electorates concerned about these issues.

In Adelaide, The Wilderness Society only employed four shop staff and everything else was done by a committee after hours. We hired someone to take on the forest campaign after I left to come down here to Tasmania. The Committee members, who all had full time jobs, couldn't keep abreast of the political developments and the media. Conversely the employed coordinator would find difficulty getting press releases cleared by the committee, a situation creating tension. The interface between the activists and those with the greater authority is a perennial problem in many organisations.

After Farmhouse Creek, The Wilderness Society in Hobart got very active but also motivated people in the south-east of the mainland through the supply of information and more pressure on the Feds. The mainland support triggered major advances in Tasmania in 1986. It was the impending

Helsham Inquiry that led Jonathan West at the end of 1986 to suggest I should spend more time in Tasmania.

It was important that people were active in Hobart and also on the mainland. It's very hard to run a good campaign on the mainland if there's not good local support in Tasmania providing information and photographs. On the other hand, it's not good enough to have a campaign in Tasmania alone. Where the Federal Government is involved there needs to be action on the mainland to persuade the Federal Government it's a serious issue.

Early in 1987, when we were expecting the roadworks to resume south of Farmhouse Creek, we organised for people to go down there with radios and keep an eye on what was going on.

We broke the story on logging in the Lemonthyme on Christmas Day in 1986 and Barry Cohen, Minister for the Environment, said he'd have it locked up in twenty-four hours. Of course it wasn't. Although an inquiry had been promised before Christmas, there was a lot of pressure to make sure these areas were protected before and during the inquiry.

The legislation wasn't passed until April 1987 so there was a summer of protests in the Southern Forests as well as in the Lemonthyme. There was a Federal election called in June and held in July. The Inquiry didn't get seriously under way until after the election. It proceeded in two stages; first it looked at world heritage values and then the other requirement was to look into alternative forest resources. That second stage started at the end of October and ran through until early January 1988.

I remember going on flights over the Southern Forests after the Helsham Inquiry was set up. We talked to Hal Wootten, the President of ACF, about the Inquiry because