



“The Bench Top” – this space is waiting for a financier: Anyone interested?

(All pix courtesy of CODE Green)

Professor Jonathan West was interviewed recently (late March 2012) on ABC radio ([here](#)), in the follow-up to the release of his report ([here](#)), and summary Chairman's report ([here](#)). On the radio he made some remarks concerning the pulp mill and the signatory ENGOs. Peter Henning, (30/3/12 on TT) took up cudgels, writing that the pulp mill was “*front and centre of the West report.*” ([West’s Protest-Free Pulp Mill Vision: A Recipe for Escalating Conflict](#)).

Peter wrote:

“West himself, in an interview on ABC radio on Wednesday 29 March, also made it very clear that the ENGOs which are signatories to the whole roundtable-SOP-IGA process will play dead on the mill in exchange for getting the native forest reserves. He said, without any qualifications at all, that he had been told that the opposition to the mill would go away if Gunns did not use native forest feedstock. No equivocation whatsoever. This is exactly the position the ENGOs signed off on in October 2010, and was made known publicly much earlier than that.

“Since West made that statement, TWS has reiterated its opposition to the mill, saying that “the pulp mill’s a different issue”, but West has made it very clear that this is not the case, both within the report itself and in the media. Who’s telling the truth?

Let this be repeated. West has made it as plain as he possibly could that a plantation-based pulp mill is not opposed by the ENGOs, and will not be opposed by the ENGOs.

“But that’s not all. In direct response to a question from the ABC about whether he had consulted with anti-pulp groups, West said that he had met with many organisations, and deliberately conveyed the impression that he had met with anti-pulp mill organisations.”

WHY NOT LISTEN NOW? – LEON COMPTON and JONATHAN WEST: [\(here\)](#)



Huddled against the destruction:

Their last stand

A remnant of the wildlife sanctuary.

I listened to Professor West's interview. He began by treading a familiar path, as if he was referring to dot-points from his Chairman's Report, the one that the government apparently would not release. Then he talked about the future of the industry as necessarily being one of a '*manufactured products*' industry ... mentioning *laminated beams/products and pulp and paper, ethanol and fuel production, reconstituted products...* This future industry, he said, needs private investment. He would not move the industry *out of* native forests into plantations, "*it's not about ending a native forest industry, it's about putting the native forest industry on a sustainable basis and then creating the conditions under which private investors will be willing to invest in Tasmania.*"



ABOVE: PERMIT EXPIRES - DAM IS CREATED - COURT CASE COMING

Professor West explained His primary motivation for being involved in the process in the interview with Leon Compton:

JONATHAN WEST: *“The conflict itself terminates or curtails our economic development opportunities. To create the industry that's possible (a manufactured products industry) would require that private investment but who in their right mind would invest in the forest industry in Tasmania at the moment with the degree of bitterness ... vitriol and denunciation that accompanies every decision, on top of all the risk of bringing into being a new product, of finding markets, of machines that don't work as expected ... exchange rates that gyrate around ... interests rates ... decisions that you have no control over? (West sees his role as bringing about an environment in which investment in a forestry products industry is possible?)*

ENGOS MUST TERMINATE SAWMILLING, TA ANN and PULP MILL CAMPAIGNS:

From West's chairman report [\(here\)](#):

“7. Cease environmental campaigns to undermine industry access to markets and capital.

Once the initial reserves and phased transition plan is agreed, the ENGOs must agree to terminate their campaigns against elements of the Tasmanian forest-product industry. This includes the sawmilling sector, veneers at Ta Ann, and a potential pulp mill. ”

COMMENT: TWS have in the IGA, documented their opposition to the Tamar Valley mill. It is more than curious that West is seeking to have them not able to protest against a potential pulp mill in the Tamar Valley. Throughout the entire 2000pp West doc, I found only 3 references to the pulp mill. Just the one above, by the Chairman, seems to promote it.



“The Pulp Mill Altar” (Pic courtesy of CODE Green)

LEON COMPTON: *“And certainly [for there] to be an end to some of the protest that's been happening...*

WEST: *“So...*

COMPTON: *“You talk about the need for that to end in the case of the pulp mill and also against companies like Ta Ann. Have you actually spoken to the protest groups that are running those campaigns at the moment, To see if they have any ... hope ...?”*

WEST: *“I've spoken to all the protest groups and many hundreds of other people, dozens of organisations in Tasmania. The protest groups are – have made clear to me that it is their intention to stop their campaigns when a feasible plan that's accepted by the major organisations ... is agreed. Indeed, some of the most contentious organisations, for example, Markets for Change, that has been conducting the campaign against Ta Ann, have indicated that the more ... work that they would prefer to do is supporting organisations, companies that undertake the sort of business that they would like to see. They point out that a lot of their work is in favour of environmentally sustainable business. The work for which they're famous in Tasmania is destroying one of our companies ... by undermining its markets, but they point out that their ethos is to use markets for change and when companies agree to change, they will support them. Now I'm not in a position to vouch for any of these claims and intentions...*

COMPTON: *“But the question is ...*

WEST: *“...what they are saying they will do if ... if ... a viable plan for reserving the most environmentally important forests is brought forward ...*

COMPTON: *“What about the pulp mill? ... Brian Green yesterday in Parliament said that was important in his set of preconditions of a peace, you also mentioned that protests will need to end over the pulp mill.*

WEST: *“I think the pulp mill obviously has a much more contentious history and is much more complex than other parts of this issue. It's my conclusion from talking to the major environmental organisations that the reality is that the origin of the vehement opposition to the pulp mill is primarily that it would have created a ravenous source of demand for woodchips from native forests. Once you remove that problem, then the reality is and the truth is that the major environmental ... organisations will not mount a campaign against the pulp mill. I don't think, given the history, that it's realistic to expect that these organisations will endorse a pulp mill, but I do think it's reasonable to expect that they will not campaign against it.*

COMPTON: *“Why hasn't that happened then in the last few months that this process has been happening in good faith?”*

WEST: *“It hasn't happened in the last few months primarily because there is in ... when there is no resolution to the forest issue, there is a very real risk that in future, even if the pulp mill at present says 'it will not use native forest' that in future it would be rather easy without a resolution to the dispute to change the ... terms of the permit to allow it to source material from native forest and to put it back onto becoming a ... a support for native forest harvesting. Only in the context of an overall solution to the forest battle can environmentalists be confident that a large pulp and paper – potentially paper - industry in this state would not put the native forests at jeopardy.*



Tools of the Trade

NOTES:

“It's my impression from talking to the major environmental organisations” v “he had been told that the opposition to the mill would go away if Gunns did not use native forest feedstock” Compare and contrast.

“Realistic” - not to “expect that these organisations will endorse a pulp mill” (West, above).

“Reasonable” - to “expect that they will not campaign against it.” (West, above).

This realistic and reasonable stuff : is it 'expects' in the sense of 'England expects' (i.e. 'requires'), or just West thinking aloud about what might happen in the future? In this recent revival of the *ENGOS v the pulp mill debate*, that same old issue of 'a pulp mill' or 'the pulp mill' has been floating around, just below the surface. West himself seems to sometimes use the two interchangeably, as in (arguably) the *realistic-reasonable* example. In the second 'they will not campaign against it' example, it is fair to read it as 'they will not campaign against the Tamar pulp mill'. After all, there is only one on the table.

West's last comment is problematic: he says there is a “very real risk ... that in the future ... it would be rather easy ... to change the...terms of the permit to allow it to source material from native forest”. Surely he has just presented the ENGOS with a reason to campaign against the mill. We've already seen the EPA change the Permit at Gunns' bidding. Keeping West's conclusions re short supply of native forest & plantation stock in mind, it's more than feasible that Gunns might find it necessary in the future to re-enter the forests. So, even just for the sake of the forests, we still have to oppose the mill.



Rock crushing plant on the Longreach site.

We've seen above that Professor West 'expects' that the ENGOS will do their duty and not campaign against the mill. He has articulated his future vision for Tasmania, one in which forest products will not be simple veneer or woodchips (*disassembled trees*), but rather a Tasmania where the forest industry produces manufactured products like laminated beams, paper and the like. Apart from his own instance of mentioning the mill, which I quoted above, his magnum opus 'officially released' report mentions the pulp mill just twice. I include those here:

“This issue has been raised in critiques and debates about the benefits of proposed forest industry developments for Tasmania. For example, NIEIR (2008), in their critique of Allen Consulting’s assessment of potential economic benefit of Gunns proposed pulp mill, argue that any consideration of its potential benefits must compare these to the alternatives possible, for example the economic benefits of using plantation logs for other purposes, or using the land on which plantations are grown for agricultural enterprises. They argue that this comparison is necessary to identify the net benefit and whether the pulp mill would represent the best value investment of the resources involved.”

West Report: *Socio-economic Technical Report* ([Appendix 2: Assessment - employment and economic consequences \(PDF – 1.2MB\)](#)) /J. Schirmer. (pg 51) [NIEIR (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research). 2008. A comprehensive economic assessment for the Tasmanian economy of the direct benefits of the proposed Gunns pulp mill. Report prepared for The Wilderness Society (Tasmania) Inc. NIEIR, Clifton Hill.]

J. Schirmer (Adjunct Fellow, Fenner School of Environment and Society, Cooperative Research Centre for Forestry, Senior Research Fellow, University of Canberra. Upon receiving Schirmer's game changing report in 2011, “*Socioeconomic impacts of forest industry change: a baseline study of the Tasmanian forest industry*” the Premier made a Ministerial Statement in the Parliament, explaining the crisis situation in which the industry now finds itself. Schirmer incidentally recognises protest actions as only one – minor – cause for the industry downturn. Others include overseas competition, the Australian dollar, cost of production. It's interesting that while West wants an end to certain protest actions, it is not apparent that he recommends action on the major causes for the downturn)



Where once was National Heritage bush – massive earthworks have rendered whole hills into a 'level playing field'.

'...TWS has reiterated its opposition to the mill, saying that “the pulp mill’s a different issue”

but West has made it very clear that this is not the case, both within the report itself and in the media' (P.Henning)

West Report: Wood Supply Technical Report ([Report 2: Plantation production estimates \(PDF – 590KB\)](#)) /Pitt and Sherry

3.2 Potential Hardwood Plantation Products

“Modelling was undertaken for three potential scenarios for management of private hardwood plantations as indicated...

“Potential product segregation was modelled regardless of possible owners intent (for example the vast majority of private hardwood plantation has been established by Gunns under pulpwood regimes with a proposed pulp mill as a potential intended destination – Gunns, 2006”).

COMMENT:

Ironical that Pitt and Sherry, associated with consultant reports in favour of the Gunns Pulp Mill, have supplied West with material on the wood supply that suggests that the West Report's estimates of wood supply include stock for the pulp mill. If the pulp mill does not proceed, then these private forest plantations might reasonable be expected to become available to the wider market. That would have some flow-on effects for the pressure on native forests, wouldn't it?



DO NOT ENTER
SACRIFICE ZONE

For the record: CODE Green were not consulted by Professor West. We will continue to campaign against the proposed pulp mill and we will continue to campaign for the protection of our native forests – HCV forests are still being logged.



Finis



The end