

Masalai i tokaut

Number Forty Eight: 30 July, 2006

Rimbunan Hijau writing Minister's press statements

Industry apologist and Forest Minister, Patrick Pruaitch, has received plenty of criticism for his blind allegiance to Rimbunan Hijau and other logging companies. As a result he is viewed with deep suspicion by many Papua New Guineans.

And no wonder. The self-styled fearless Sepik Strong Man has sold out so far that he even allows the Malaysian logging industry to write his Press Releases and Government Position Papers!

Masalai has previously revealed how Rimbunan Hijau has direct access to senior Government figures and public servants and regularly directs them on how they should act ([Masalai 28](#)). We have shown how Pruaitch has unlawfully manipulated the National Forest Board to protect Rimbunan Hijau from sanction over its illegal logging operations ([Masalai 29](#)).



We have also exposed how an independent audit of the Forest Authority accounts found Pruaitch was 'double dipping' and branded him "wrongful, dishonest and corrupt" ([Masalai 36](#)).

In this edition we show how two weeks ago, Pruaitch's media releases that were on the front of Rimbunan Hijau's newspaper 'The National', were written for him by a new RH consultant, Alan Oxley. This man, who runs ITS Global Consultants, has been engaged by the logging company to improve its image.

This is a classic example of a Minister of State allowing his position to be defiled by foreign companies and effectively selling the 'Government of the People' to overseas commercial interests.

"Pruaitch condemns reports by Greenpeace" was the impressive front-page headline in The National newspaper on Monday 17 July. The more responsible and scholarly Post Courier ran the same story on its inside pages under the title *"Pruaitch defends logging in PNG"*.

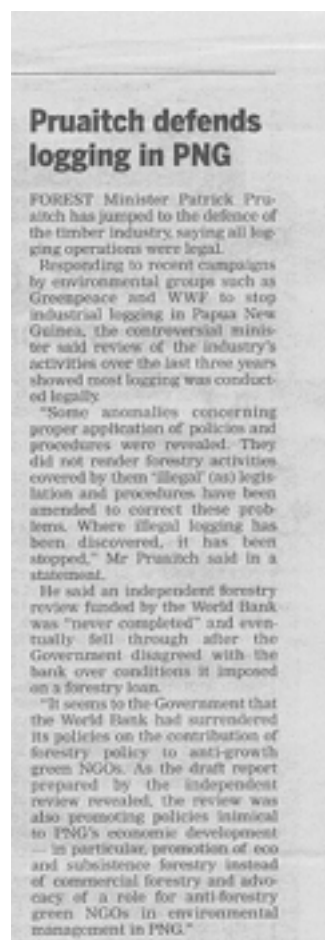
Both newspaper stories were based on a Press Release circulated by the Minister's office the previous Friday (14 July) in which he tried to defend Rimbunan Hijau and the rest of the Malaysian logging industry against the overwhelming evidence of illegal and unsustainable logging and labour and human rights abuses.

Unfortunately the Minister's Press Release and therefore neither story, contained a word written or uttered by the Forest Minister - it had all been provided for him from the generous Rimbunan Hijau.

THE NATIONAL, JULY 17



POST COURIER, JULY 17



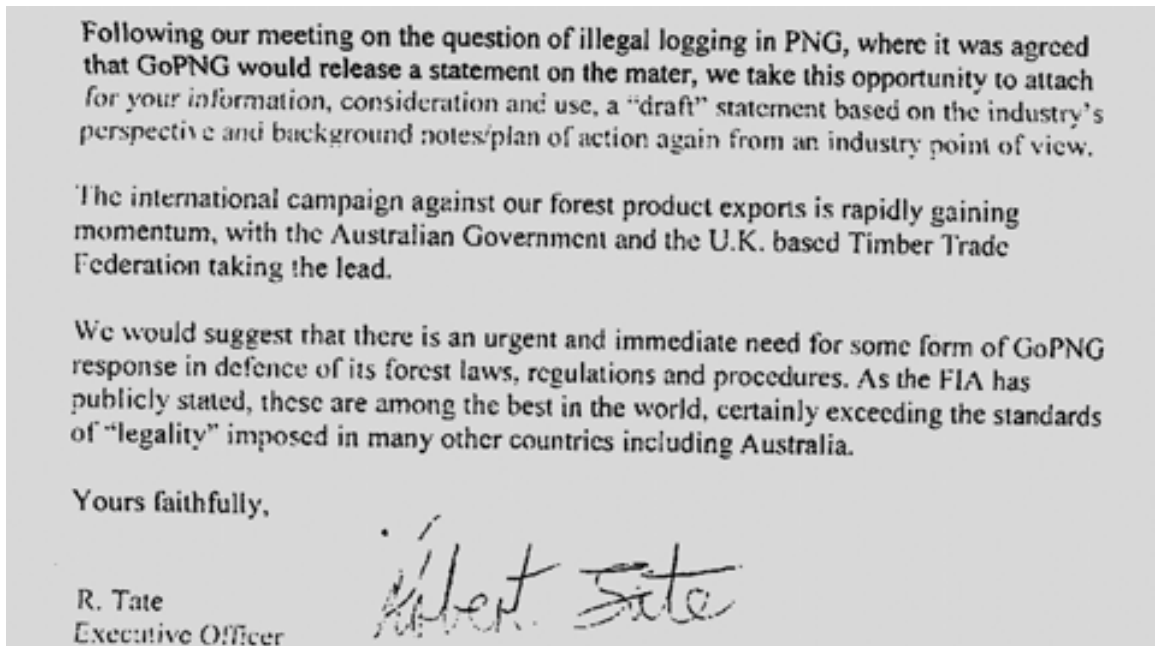
The Ministers Press Release was copied almost word for word from a statement given to him on Monday 10 July by the Forest Industries Association and which in turn was written and paid for by Rimbunan Hijau through their new consultant, Alan Oxley.

Masalai has been able to obtain a copy of the RH / Oxley statement.

Oxley's paper was delivered to the Minister via a Forest Industries Association letter which suggested to the Government *"there is an urgent and immediate need for some form of GoPNG response in defence of its forest laws, regulations and procedures"*.

The FIA letter described Oxley's paper as "a draft statement based on the industries perspective".

EXTRACT FROM THE FIA LETTER



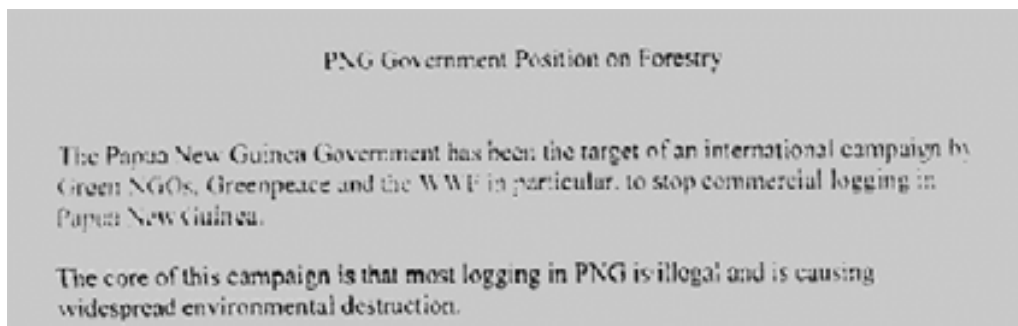
Oxley's paper was helpfully titled "PNG Government Position on Forestry".

It was this paper written for Rimbunan Hijau that the Minister used as the basis for his Press Release.

Rimbunan Hijau, a Malaysian Logging Company, engaging Australian spin doctors to write Government Statements and posting them to Government Ministers for them to use?

It sounds ridiculous and unbelievable but it is true and we have the proof.

**EXTRACT FROM THE PNG GOVERNMENTS POSITION ON FORESTRY
- WRITTEN BY RIMBUNAN HIJAU / OXLEY**



The degree of similarity between the RH/Oxley Statement and the Ministers release is quite remarkable as the table below shows. The Minister adopted the whole layout, tone, and arguments given him by RH and copied whole paragraphs word for word.

The poor Minister obviously doesn't have a clue about what is really going on in logging camps across the country and clearly doesn't like to rely on the National Forest Service for advice.

The Minister has been so captured by foreign corporate interests he has clearly forgotten that Government is meant to serve the people and that it has an important role in REGULATING industry rather than allowing it to run rough-shod over the interests of ordinary people.

Government is supposed to be a buffer that regulates the forestry industry by making sure that it follows the law so that its operations benefit ordinary people and protect the environment. Instead Minister's like Patrick Pruitch are happy to see the forests and local people raped so long as they are receiving the favors of the logging companies.

Rimbunan Hijau is now the effective government of our once proud nation.

THE REMARKABLE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PRUITCH'S STATEMENT AND THE 'GOVERNMENT' POSITION PAPER WRITTEN BY OXLEY FOR RH – the few differences are highlighted in red

Patrick Pruitch Press Release, 14 July 2006	Rimbunan Hijau / Oxley to the Minister, 10 July 2006
... campaigns by... Greenpeace and WWF to stop industrial logging in Papua New Guinea	... campaigns by... Greenpeace and WWF in particular to stop commercial logging in Papua New Guinea
Greenpeace... pressuring buyers in Europe and Australia not to buy timber products from PNG	Greenpeace... pressuring buyers in Europe not to buy timber products using timber from PNG
Forestry is important in PNG. It employs 10,000 people, contributes 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) and earns half-a-billion kina a year in exports	Forestry is important in PNG. It employs 10,000 people, contributes 5% of GDP and earns half-a-billion kina a year in exports
... the last three years, the activities of the forestry industry have been reviewed in detail. The reviews showed that most logging operations were conducted legally	... the last three years, the activities of the industry have been reviewed in detail. They showed that most logging was being conducted legally
Some anomalies concerning proper application of policies and procedures were revealed. They did not render forestry activities covered by them 'illegal'. Legislation and procedures have been amended to correct these problems. Where illegal logging has been discovered, it has been stopped	Some anomalies concerning proper application of policies and procedures were revealed. They did not render forestry activities covered by them 'illegal'. Legislation and procedures have been amended to correct these problems. Where illegal logging has been discovered, it has been stopped
... by an 'independent review' which the World Bank required as part of a condition before providing a loan to improve the forestry sector in the country.	... by an 'independent review' of PNG logging which the World Bank required as part of a condition before providing a loan to improve forestry in the country.
It seems to the Government that the World Bank had surrendered its policies on the contribution of forestry policy to anti-growth green NGOs. As the draft report prepared by the independent review revealed, the review was also promoting policies inimical to PNG's economic development — in particular, promotion of eco and subsistence forestry instead of commercial forestry and advocacy of a role for anti-forestry green NGOs in environmental management in PNG	It seems to the Government that the World Bank had surrendered its policies on the contribution of forestry policy to anti-growth green NGOs. As the draft report prepared by the independent review revealed, the review was also promoting policies inimical to PNG's economic development — in particular, promotion of eco and subsistence forestry instead of commercial forestry and advocacy of a role for anti-forestry green NGOs in environmental management in PNG
... eco-forestry is not commercially viable	... eco-forestry is not commercially viable
... also false and deliberately alarmist	... also false and deliberately alarmist
33% of forests in PNG had been designated for commercial use	33% of forests has been designated for commercial use
63% remained unallocated and non-productive	63% remains as unallocated non-productive
... most of the unallocated areas are 'old growth' or 'primary' forests	... most of the unallocated forest is 'old growth' or 'primary' forests