



DATELINE
Wednesday
May 2
8.30pm

PAPUA NEW GUINEA - WILDERNESS LAID WASTE BY CORRUPTION

On 2 the World Bank is due to release its final report on the state of logging in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The Bank has made the release of \$160 million dollars in structural adjustment loans conditional on the report's recommendations being followed. A draft report found that one third of current logging projects in PNG are illegal and most are unfit to go ahead in their current form.

On May 2, **DATELINE** reporter John Bennett details the corruption and violence which underlie every aspect of logging operations in PNG. Included in his report -

- The logging of the Western Province area of PNG, home to the third largest untouched rainforest in the world and the Demeta people. Despite the Demeta never making, or signing any agreement allowing access, the area is being logged by Rimbunan Hijau, a Malaysian logging company. The PNG government gave their consent without notifying the Demeta who have relied on the rainforest for their survival for centuries. The Demeta are now fighting their case in court, as are many other clans in PNG. Currently 7 million hectares of rainforest are being logged across the country.
- The existence of legal statements claiming that landowners have been forced to sign agreements allowing logging at gunpoint.
- The claim that no accurate record of timber exports from PNG is being kept. Bennett's camera caught a Malaysian boat being loaded with timber on a day when no official record of that event had been made. The boat stopped being loaded when the crew became aware that Bennett was filming
- Documents which reveal that in 1999 senior bureaucrats in PNG spent 167-thousand kina at a part-owned Malaysian restaurant. The money, earmarked for environmental protection, was from aid donors, including the Australian government. The minimum wage in PNG is 27 kina.
- Allegations that PNG police have become private enforcers for logging companies and are on the payrolls of those companies.
- Forestry officers and ministers are continuing to share in the profits of the logging companies. Allegedly, the Deputy Prime Minister and Forestry Minister, Michael Ogio, has illegally granted new logging areas to a Malaysian company in addition to giving the company huge tax concessions.
- I. The systematic human rights abuse of logging workers including rape and physical punishment.

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program publicity

Music/aerials

In Papua New Guinea the sad legacy of the country's forestry industry must be lived with every day.....

West of Madang township is the Trans-Gogol Valley.....

It's an area which saw large scale industrial logging begin in the 1970's.

And it's here that an old man has a terrible lesson in history for his youngest grandchild.

Asikai Dominic is 5 years old.

He's reached the age when, in Papua New Guinea, a boy must learn about his birthright.

By his grandfather, Dobon Turkop, he'll be taught the customary tribal boundaries of his people, the Juam clan....

But Asikai is too young to understand the tragedy of what he is to learn.

***Tape 6. 31:46** Now the few trees that you see – it was not like this before. There was a huge jungle that covered these hills – you would never have been able to see through that jungle. That's where all the animals lived, all the different kinds of animals - the giant pigeon, the wild pigs, the cassowary, and the wallabies – they were all plentiful here.*

Dobon Turkop knows with the sad certainty of personal experience that his grandson's future could be as barren as the hills before them.

If Asikai stays on his tribal lands he will become a part of the tale of exploitation and misery that began in the Valley thirty years ago.

Tape 6. 31:17** Until 1970, 1971 – up until that time everything was untouched. Now all you see before you, this bush, it's become like a desert. There were trees that once grew from the soil all the way to the mountain range. **31:46** But today if you go around here and look into the rivers and the bush it's not a good sight. That's why all this time we have been suffering – there's nothing here, absolutely nothing. I don't know what to say. **32:30

It was Dobon Turkop's own father who naively sold logging rights to the Juam traditional lands when PNG's industrial logging industry was beginning to boom.

A Japanese company paid the government for huge tracts of rainforest here and then pulped the hardwood for paper.

The clear-felled land was planted with non-native eucalypts and has since been through three harvests.

The Juam people have been paid annual royalties they claim amount to little more than one kina per person.....

A sum which won't buy a loaf of bread.

For three decades they've been forbidden to use their own land.

Even untouched areas surrounding waterways are out of bounds for the hunting and subsistence farming on which Dobon's people traditionally rely.

Tape 15 26:08 *I am very sorry for the damage to the river and the bush. Now we are suffering, within my family and the rest of the landowners here. All the small creeks that we tried to save are almost gone too. That's why at this point of time we cannot find any relief or any happiness.*

Tape 15. NATSOUND – SONG CONTINUED

350 kilometres away is PNG's largest and least developed region, the Western Province.

Here, the Bamu River runs through dense forest.....

The third largest stand of untouched rainforest in the world.

And it's here that another tribe is beginning to feel the bitter injustice of forestry, PNG style.

Tape 16. NATSOUND – BULLDOZER

This is Kelaye Kima's home.

For centuries the lives of his people, the Demeta clan, have depended completely on this environment.

They've relied on the forest for everything..... food, shelter, clothing, and medicines.

But intruders are threatening to destroy it all.

The bulldozer belongs to Malaysian logging, Rimbunan Hijau.

Its a home invasion with the blessing of the PNG government.....

Neither the company nor the government asked the Demeta's permission to take the trees.

Tape 16 28:35 *I feel angry when I see the Malaysians cutting the trees because I did not sign the TRP (Timber Rights Purchase) agreement with the company or with the government. I feel angry when I see the destruction of my bush. 29:00*

Tape 17. NATSOUND – CHAINSAW, TREE FALLING.

When the chainsaws started here, the Demeta had no idea their land had been signed away by the government.....

Part of the massive Wawoi Guavi forestry concession to Rimbunan Hijau.

All up, three quarters of a million hectares are at the mercy of loggers here.

Tape 17. NATSOUND – TREE FALLING

The Malaysians call this selective logging.....

They select the tree they want for timber, and then destroy everything in their path to get it.

The PNG Forest Authority admits 16 smaller trees die for every tree which makes it to milling.....

Tape 16. NATSOT – BULLDOZER

But the real figure may be closer to 60 which are left to rot.....

Including once magnificent giants which are killed, but go unused because they are not a valuable species.

For the Demeta, all trees are valuable, and this destruction is like murder.

Tape 17. 29:55 *When the company is finished all of the trees will be gone, and in the future my children will be starving for food. So I want the lawyers to stop the company from logging. 30:15*

Tape 16. NATSOT – OUTBOARD

Port Moresby lawyer Annie Kajir is the weapon Kelaye's people are using to fight the company's invasion.....

Tape 17. 10:30 *His is a typical example – he's just there and he doesn't know that the company is going to go onto his land at this particular time to take out so many logs at that particular time. It's actually a sad situation. 10:46*

While other clans talk of waging war against the loggers, the Demeta want to fight for their forest in court.

That means bringing a team of environmental lawyers and scientists to the isolated Bamu River.....

To document traditional boundaries, and plot the places where loggers are at work.

TAPE 16. NATSOT – MAP MEETING. *Like I said it is about 32 kilometres on this side, then later we'll go down this road.*

It's a massive area, and a massive job.....

The lawyers work on a tiny budget in a race against the companies which employ vast resources to push further into virgin forest.

Natsot – Annie. Tape 2. 8:36 *They're supposed to be building roads, but they're supposed to be within certain boundaries, but they've gone outside those boundaries and that's what we were afraid of. 8:43*

The Demeta clan is just one of Annie's landowner clients fighting a David and Goliath battle against foreign loggers in PNG.

She claims that as landowners are becoming more aware of their rights, companies are increasingly using intimidation and violence to get what they want.

Tape 2. 40:32 *Allegations where you have landowners forced to sign papers with a barrel of a gun at their back. Those are the kind of allegations that we get. Q. So, people being forced to sign agreements? A. Yes, In the presence of police and company officials, without proper legal advice, with*

guns pointed to them – we have statements from these people. 40:58

The Papua New Guinea Police Force says it's investigating numerous complaints that its police officers are acting as private enforcers for logging companies.

Annie Kajir, who documented many of those complaints, says police are accused of threatening and brutalising landowners.....

Even forcing some people into acts of bestiality.

Tape 2. 39:30 *Getting on their knees crawling with the gun at their back. Telling them to crawl so many distance. 39:39* *Being shot at in the presence of families, they haven't done anything wrong, these are peaceful people living there with guns being fired..... 39:48* *Guns being carried around by un-uniformed policemen, what else is there?39:57* *telling people to carry dogs on their backs and to walk and to, you know, suck the dog's, you know? Those are some of the allegations we have. Q. So serious abuses of human rights? A. Serious abuses of human rights. 40:16*

Galeva Sep is a police officer.

He claims many of his colleagues are effectively on the payrolls of logging companies.

Tape 2. 27:20. *The company pays police travel allowances, airfares and accommodation, and all that. Q. So how does that effect the way they act? A. It effects in a way that when they go to an area they would only protect the interests of the company, they do not go in there to be a neutral people. 27:53 Q. So in a way they are bribing the police to act for them? A. That's right, yes. 28:00*

Sep has helped many people from his Western Province clan make complaints against other officers.

28:25 *My people told me there was a lot of inhuman treatment, like hanging people upside down from a mango tree, or telling people to climb coconut trees and jump down, which one of these guys ended up t Port Moresby General Hospital. 28:40*

Paul Singi claims he was tortured by police.

He challenged the logging company he worked for, suggesting traditional owners be compensated for activity on their land.

His punishment was three days locked in a steel shipping container in the Western Province's forty degree heat.

Tape 2. 21:29 *The time was about 10pm on a Monday, I was locked in there without being fed, without food or water or without being allowed to have a bath or go to the toilet until Wednesday which was the third day. While I was in there on the first entry into the container, a policeman came who has been mentioned earlier, name which is known as Alex Vokendro who is a task force sergeant, a police commander, he kicked me here and on the elbow and told me to pushups and sit-ups and later on to get out of the container and look at the sun. And there was the scissors that was brought by the policeman and he shaved my hair off without any concern for me. I was told you criminal, and I was shaved. 22:36*

More disturbing are the allegations about the treatment of female workers.

They are recruited into camps so isolated the only way in or out is by plane.

Once in the camps, many women claim they're forced to have sex with company officials and the police who work for them.

Natsot – Union Meeting Tape 24

National and international unions have been investigating human rights abuses of PNG logging workers for more than six months.

Tape 24 9:02 *These workers are living there under the threat of their jobs being terminated. They have no choice when the company, when the management approaches them they just go along and do what they are told to do, and that is sexually exploiting them, especially the young ones who are employed in the companies. 9:27*

In secret meetings, union officials have taken dozens of statements from women and girls who say they're routinely threatened with guns and that shots are fired to scare them into having sex.

Woman No 1:

During the night police come and try and wake the girls from their sleep. If the girls don't pay attention to them they fire shots in the air.

Woman No 2:

Police would normally go to the girl's dorms and threaten them and go to sleep with them.

Women who become pregnant must have abortions or face ejection from the camps, with no way to travel the hundreds of kilometres home.

Woman No 3:

If a girl is pregnant it is likely to be terminated. Company regulations don't allow pregnant ladies to work so the only way to stay is to get rid of the baby.

For decades logging in PNG has been a business defined by the abuse of power.

A succession of cash-strapped governments has sold off whatever natural resources could be sold.....

Seven million hectares of forests are currently in the hands of loggers, with another five million promised.....

A total area twice the size of Tasmania.

Even with timber prices low since the Asian economic crisis, logging companies here are a law unto themselves.

Tape 23. 11:23 *I remember we described them as being like "robber barons", just roaming the countryside doing whatever they wanted to because they had the power. 11:37*

Tos Barnett, now head of the West Australian Administrative Appeals Tribunal, ran an inquiry into PNG's forestry sector more than ten years ago.

His revelations of widespread high level corruption brought down one PNG government, and threatened the successors.....

towards the end of the inquiry, he was attacked in Port Moresby and stabbed almost to death by an unknown assailant.

Tape 23. 7:47 5:50 Not only were the Forestry Officers and the ministers in government and the other leaders who were meant to be controlling this not controlling it, but they were sharing in the profits because they were being corrupted in many cases by these foreign timber companies. 6:10

Foreign logging companies continue to operate largely as they see fit.

At this remote port on the island province of East New Britain, the crew of a Malaysian vessel stopped loading logs when they noticed they were being filmed.

They only started again after a silent standoff lasting nearly four hours.

There was no government-employed inspector present for the loading.

However official records for the day showed the Malaysian company reported no loading of timber took place.....

Only adjustments to the ballast of the vessel.

18:47 If those who are given the task of enforcing the conditions are being paid on the side or getting other benefits then there's no hope of stopping it. 18:59 I don't suppose I'm surprised that the ignorance of the landowners and the greed of some of the landowner leaders and the greed of the timber companies and the corrupted greed of some of the officials involved in administering the system have combined to allow the same things to happen. I don't suppose I'm surprised but I'm disappointed. 19:25

Tape 15 15:49 Quite a number of people say that after the Inquiry things have changed.

A decade ago, Silas Boas gave evidence before Tos Barnett, as the Forestry Officer in charge of the massive Western Province logging concessions.

15:55 Nothing has changed – the practice, the malpractice and the corruption still goes on. It's done under the table. Most of our resources are being mortgaged especially by decision-makers at the political level. We are still losers at the end. 16:16

Over the past decade, many of the people charged with protecting PNG's forests have displayed open contempt for Barnett's recommendations.

These documents reveal that in 1999 senior bureaucrats in the Office of Environment and Conservation spent an extraordinary amount of government money entertaining themselves.

167 thousand kina was spent at this Port Moresby restaurant, which is part owned by Malaysian interests.

In a country where the minimum weekly wage is 27 kina, OEC officials spent 47 thousand kina here in just four nights.

Much of the money was from aid donors, including the Australian government, and was earmarked for environmental protection.

Tape 1 39:19 *There certainly is corruption going on - very difficult to prove at the highest levels - but that's not our biggest problem, our biggest problem is that these organisations do not run effectively. **Q** So the OEC is effected by corruption, ineptitude, and lack of resources? **A** Yes, and if I was going to rank those I would rank corruption probably at the bottom. 39:47*

Dr Tom Wagner, pro vice chancellor of the University of Papua New Guinea, has reviewed some of the work done by the Office of Environment and Conservation.

He says the corrupt squandering of funds means even those who do want to protect the country's environment, have their hands tied.

26:40 *What we don't have is the equivalent of an Australian or US EPA that can review these proposals in detail and say "wait a minute, there are some very important guidelines and specs that need to be in here, or there are some very important environmental concerns you have not taken into account", and because of that the environment loses out in PNG. 27:03*

Allegations of corruption go to the second highest office in PNG.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Forests, Michael Ogio, has a special relationship with one Malaysian logging company.....

Illegally granting it new areas to log, along with huge tax concessions.

His actions, regarded as beyond the pale even by PNG standards, have led to demands in the media he be sacked.

Mr Ogio ignored repeated requests to be interviewed for this story.

TAPE 12 NATSOT – REVIEW TEAM MEETING WITH LOCALS

The forests of PNG may have one last chance.

NATSOT

That chance is an investigation by the World Bank.....

A review of plans to let loggers loose in the last remaining accessible forests.

It's an attempt to force the PNG government to clean up its act.

Tape 13 4:28 *Some of our timber has already been cut. There was all kinds of money coming in but*

we haven't seen any of it. Then the company disappeared and we don't know what has happened to it. 4:41

Last year the World Bank effectively threatened to withhold a one-hundred and sixty million dollar loan.....

Forcing the government to place a hold on new logging projects.

Not surprisingly, some logging companies have ignored the moratorium.

Tape 13 6:27 They made roads all over Rottok Bay, and they took the timber by road and loaded it onto ships. Now all the timber's finished. 6:37

Over three months, these world bank investigators found widespread evidence of fraud and corruption.

They also found the rights of landowner's had been consistently abused.

Tape 12 Lucis - 15:52 It's not just you watching. There are outsiders watching. Once you've sold your trees that's it..... The ones who have already sold theirs - you go and see how they live. 16:05

Tape 12 Tony – 16:32 A lot of countries have put together a fund – a lot of money – to look after the rainforest that's left in the world. PNG's the third biggest rainforest left in the world. There's plenty of interest now – the whole world is watching. 16:54

The review's draft report damned many of the projects, deeming one third to be illegal, and most unfit to go ahead in their current form, if at all.

But environment groups and aid donors fear the PNG government will only pay lip service to any recommendations, grab the World Bank's cash and go back to business as usual.

Tape 11 19:05 If you do a review obviously you are acknowledging that there is something serious going on and something serious going wrong. And you do a review and you spend a lot of money getting experts out there – people who know the situation in Papua New Guinea really well and have been involved in forestry a long time - if they come up with a report and recommendations, those recommendations should be taken seriously and should be implemented. 19:31 And I think the moratorium shouldn't be lifted until those recommendations are in place and everybody is satisfied that the situation has been improved. 19:44

The signs aren't good - Forestry Minister Michael Ogio has already given the go-ahead to one project condemned by the review.

Natsot – Tape 15

The story that will be told to the next generation of Papua New Guinea's children about their rainforests is still being written.

NATSOT DANCING

Unless changes are made, at the current rapacious rate of logging one of the world's last great wild

areas may be destroyed in under fifteen years.

MUSIC AND CHILDREN