

Masalai i tokaut

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The Robber Barons are still here

And it is OFFICIAL

A new and confidential government report describes logging companies as acting like robber barons roaming the countryside at will.

The involvement of Rimbunan Hijau in illegal logging deals has been specifically singled out as deserving of a full judicial inquiry.

The report also details how officials are assisting and encouraging the logging companies to gain unlawful access to forest resources.

It specifically names Wari Iamo, David Nelson and Thomas Nen as being involved in activities that are 'wholly improper'.

The report also describes a 'web of deceit' that is 'orchestrated or coordinated from a central source'.

This throws a spotlight on those on those politicians including Dr Allan Marat and Patrick Pruaitch who have so publicly and enthusiastically embraced Rimbunan Hijau and the Minister for Justice who has his own long-standing business connections with the company.

**A copy of the report in PDF format is available for
downloading [HERE](#)**

The robber barons

It was Justice Barnett in the late 1980s who first described logging companies as acting like robber barons - roaming the countryside and seizing whatever forest areas they wanted with no regard for the law or the wishes of local people.

Now, fifteen years later, a new and previously confidential report commissioned by the government concludes that the robber barons are still "as active as they ever were" and they are "not only free to roam, but are in fact encouraged to do so by persons whose proper role is to exercise control over them".

These findings cannot be dismissed as the idle speculation or empty rhetoric of overseas observers as the report was co-authored by a senior lawyer with extensive PNG experience and a very experienced forest officer from the National Forest Service. The report is based on their detailed investigation into six unlawful forest allocations and extensions that were granted in 2002.

The logging companies involved in the six illegal logging projects are identified in reports on the individual concessions. They are Rimbunan Hijau (Wawoi Guavi), Rimbunan Hijau (Vailala Blocks 2&3), Rimbunan Hijau (Passismanua), Concord Pacific (Kiunga-Aiambak), Kerawara (Simbali) and Milne Bay Industries (Bonua Magarida/West Gadaisu).

Central control

The report also identifies that the improper activity "is in some way orchestrated or coordinated from a central source".

The implication here is clear: the illegal activity is not just the result of simple bribes from specific logging companies to individual public servants, there is a centrally coordinated web of deceit and corruption that pervades the whole logging industry and which reaches to the very highest political levels.

Who are the politicians that we see in the media embracing the foreign logging companies? Dr Allan Marat. Patrick Pruaitch. Mark Makapai. Chris Haiveta. And who did the Barnett Inquiry reveal was involved in forest corruption? Ted Diro and even Michael Somare. Who has close business links with the logging industry? Sinai Brown.

Who amongst these might be co-ordinating the current web of deceit?

Corrupt officials

Thomas Nen. Identified as being responsible for an illegal Timber Authority for Concord Pacific to extend their Kiunga-Aiambak logging operation. He then tried to cover up the illegal permit and he was responsible for "many falsehoods" in his advice to Ministers. He then purported to grant another logging concession – Lake Murray Block 2 – to Concord Pacific; his approval "contradicted all legal requirements for the acquisition of timber rights".

"The overwhelming impression is that Mr Nen was peddling documentation and that Concord Pacific was the recipient of it all".

Why has Concord Pacific not been thrown out of the country?

Why is Mr Nen not in jail?

David Nelson. Mr Nelson lied when he denied that a logging extension had been given to Concord Pacific. Mr Nelson approved the use of K15,000 of taxpayer's money to pay for police protection for Concord Pacific when angry landowners threatened their illegal logging operation. Mr Nelson deceived and lied to the National Forest Board and ignored the advice of his forestry officers. He also failed to implement Forest Board decisions. He had "a clear determination to give Concord all it could ask for".

Events now show us that in order to avoid any harm from these findings Mr Nelson and the Minister for Forests, Patrick Pruaitch, have conspired in a scheme where Mr Nelson was unlawfully sacked and then reinstated by the Courts.

Dr Wari Iamo was heavily involved in facilitating an illegal logging permit for Bonua Magarida. He lied to the Minister and ignored the advice of forestry officers and lawyers that what he was doing was unlawful.

In a subsequent report the experts reveal that Mr Iamo was similarly involved in the illegal extension of the logging permit for Vailala Blocks 2&3. He lied to his Minister, he ignored the advice of forestry officers and lawyers and he deliberately acted outside the law.

Why has NEC not acted to sack Dr Iamo?

Why have the Prime Minister and Puka Temu and Ted Diro all personally intervened to try and stop disciplinary proceedings against Wari Iamo?

Rimbunan Hijau

The review process has identified Rimbunan Hijau as being involved in three of the six illegal projects. This is perhaps not surprising as they control well over 50% of the logging industry in PNG.

The separate project reports given to the Chief Secretary in April this year recommended that "the time has come for a full investigation into the affairs of this company. They should be compelled to produce documents and to account for their actions. Officers of the Forest Authority have acted in the company's interest and not those of the landowners or the nation".

This is not the first time that we have seen this type of recommendation. In July 2002 the Ombudsman Commission recommended "all forest projects undertaken by Rimbunan Hijau should be carefully audited and monitored and all future proposals should be critically screened before approval".

In 2000 the National Intelligence Organisation reported that Rimbunan Hijau was involved in political corruption, illegal logging and human rights abuses.

But it seems that our politicians love Rimbunan Hijau. The reasons are clear – political and personal donations of hard cash. Anyone who doubts this need only read the NIO reports and pop along to the Airways the next time the National

Alliance holds a fundraising dinner.

And why do we see so much positive press about Rimbunan Hijau in our newspapers. Rimbunan Hijau owns The National!

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