

"The Public Eye Awards 2006"

Nomination form A (for companies that have excelled in socially and environmentally irresponsible behaviour)

Nominated company or corporate group:

Name: GUNNS Limited

Headquarters: PO Box 572; Launceston, Tasmania, 7250, AUSTRALIA

Turnover/net profit: Last year's post-tax profit of AU\$ 105 million was up \$AU32 million on the previous year.

Branch of trade: Timber company, woodchips

Owned by: GUNNS Pty Limited

Number of employees:.....No information available

CEO: John Gay

Further information on the company/corporate group:

Since 1875, J. and T., Gunn were a medium-sized sawmiller and hardware retailer. The big change came in 2001, when GUNNS took over Boral's forest assets, as well as those of North Forestry Products. Since then increased its asset base from AU\$143 million to AU\$ 703 million. It is Australia's largest woodchip exporter. State port corporation reports show it exports 5 million tonnes of woodchips annually, mainly to Japan. The hardwood woodchips are predominantly derived from highly destructive logging operations in ancient forests, high conservation valued old growth.

GUNNS new project is a proposed AU\$ 1 billion-plus pulp mill. A major concern is, that it will intensify the logging rate of old growth forests (Darby, 2005).

The accelerated and unaccountable logging industry is destroying wholesale native forests, which are unique in the world for their flora and fauna.

The "GUNNS Action" at Styx 4A Coupe, Global Rescue Station, organised by The Wilderness Society and Greenpeace last year, was another attempt to make the consumers of the Tasmanian timber products aware of the ongoing destruction of the Tasmanian forests. A 65 meter high platform was erected in the Styx Valley. Reporters from all over the world came to the area to witness the braveness of the campaigners.

Nominated in the category:

Reasons for the nomination:

December 2004, GUNNS Ltd, (worth AU\$ 1 billion), Australia's biggest exporter of hardwood chips, and in control of more than 80% of the logging in Tasmania, sued 20 locals, 2 politicians and green groups for what it alleges a series of wrongful acts. GUNNS is claiming a total of AU\$ 6.4 million in damages. It claims that the defendants were engaged in a campaign that "constituted a conspiracy to injure GUNNS by unlawful means". The court case has been filed in the Supreme Court of Victoria in December, 2004.

What GUNNS refers to is, that local communities and green groups held protest marches (16,000), blockades, as well as informing Japanese customers and investment banks of the threats to Tasmania's forests and to all the wilderness and wildlife. Ancient old growth forests are being chipped into pulp for Japanese paper.

This lawsuit is purely designed to intimidate the environmental movement in Australia. It will also create further division and anger within the Tasmanian community.

This lawsuit is a serious attack on the freedom of speech and the people's democratic freedom. Every effort must be made to stop it.

The export of Tasmanian (oak) timber should be stopped.

It may be legal, but it is environmentally, socially and culturally unsustainable.

References:

- Maesen, L. van der 2000. Australia and Tasmania, carbon sequestration: A case study. Fieldwork: 1995-2005. Report for Friends of the Earth International, Amsterdam.
- Darby, A., 2005. Lawyers, GUNNS and forests. Political protest will carry a high personal cost if a timber company successfully sues logging protesters. Sydney Herald.
- Kingsnorth, P. Tasmanian Develry. The Ecologist, December 2004.
- Lang, C., 2005. E-mails.
- Newsletters from World Rainforest Network; Friends of the earth International.
- Web sites: The Wilderness Society; Greenpeace; Friends of the Earth International.

(Remainder of the references is in the unpublished article I supplied for the publication of the report: "*Legal Forest Destruction*", commissioned by WWF; Greenpeace; Milieudefensie, Novib etc. It is expected to be published in two month time).

NOTE: ABC News online Monday 18th July 2005.

"Court strikes blow to GUNNS claim.

Tasmanian timber giant GUNNS has had a major setback in its bid to sue 20 environmentalists and environmental groups, with the Judge describing the statement of claim as unintelligible.

In the Supreme Court in Victoria this morning, Justice Bernard Bongiorno struck out GUNNS' 360-page statement of claim.

Justice Bongiorno said large parts of the statement of claim were either unintelligible or understandable only after what he said would be the most careful and painstaking analysis. He said the extensive use of crossreferencing rendered some parts ambiguous at best and at worst misleading.

He said in some cases it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a defendant to work out whether they were liable for a specific forest action".....

Information for the organisers:

Nomination submitted by:

Name of organisation: Friends of the Earth

Name of contact person:

Address:

E-mail:

Phone:

Fax:

My contact address must not be made public because of severe repercussion of GUNNS.
This company is intimidating, some of its contractors have shown violent behaviour.
They are absolutely ruthless.