

## WHY ARE WE PICKETING?

### RAINFORESTS ARE CRUCIAL TO LIFE ON EARTH:

- they are the home of 50-90% of the world's 30 million species. - they are the home of millions of tribal peoples.
- they absorb water and help to prevent floods.
- they control weather patterns.
- they store carbon which helps to combat the Greenhouse Effect. - they hold the soil together, stopping it from being washed away during heavy rain.
- they provide non-timber products such as clean water, food, shelter, fuel, medicine and raw materials such as rubber.
- they provide disease-resistant varieties of food species (e.g. rice, wheat, maize) which are important for modern agriculture. - they have provided 50% of modern medicines yet fewer than 1% of tropical plants have been tested for their medical potential. - they are the gene pool of life.

### IF WE DESTROY RAINFORESTS, WE DESTROY LIFE:

- according to David Suzuki, after 350 million years, the rainforests will be destroyed within 30 years.
- 100 species are driven to extinction EACH DAY as a result of habitat destruction.
- tribal people, such as the Penan of Sarawak, are being driven out of existence as a result of rainforest destruction.

### THE CAUSES

An area of the world's rainforests the size of a football field is destroyed each second. Why? The main causes are logging, road building, dam building and clearance for cattle ranching and agriculture. **THE MAIN CAUSE IN SOUTH EAST ASIA IS LOGGING.**

## WHO BENEFITS?

Corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and military officers in South East Asia. Logging companies, timber importers and consumers in Japan, America, Europe and Australia.

Companies make quick profits by using rainforest timber as a cash crop. The workers are not unionized, receive poor pay and work in appalling conditions - in Sarawak they work under lights at night and without adequate safety procedures.

The Australian government and companies are heavily involved. The government supports the import of rainforest timbers and helps to finance the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) - which draws up the plans for rainforest logging. The government also supports the destruction of Australia's own old-growth forests.

Australian companies import about 300,000 cubic metres of rainforest timber from South East Asia each year; 80% of it from the pristine rainforests of Malaysia.

## WHAT ARE WE DOING?

In response to the call for an import ban by non-government organizations (NGOs) in South East Asia, the Melbourne Rainforest Action Group (RAG) is asking the people of Melbourne to help us picket rainforest timber dockyards in order to halt Australia's role in rainforest destruction.

## PLEASE SUPPORT US BY RESPECTING THE PICKET.

RAG's nonviolent action campaign has received tremendous support from trade unionists. The Waterside Workers' Federation, the Seamen's Union and the Australian Workers' Union have all imposed 24 hour bans on rainforest timber ships. The Building Workers' Industrial Union has totally banned the use of rainforest timbers on all construction sites.

We respect the social and environmental conscience of unionists and now we need your strength and support to permanently halt the import of rainforest timbers into Melbourne. Please help us to SAVE THE RAINFORESTS!

# YOUR CHOICE - EVOLUTION OR EXTINCTION?

Each one of us has a choice. We can ACT NOW to save the world's rainforests, or we can stand by and let them be destroyed. What is your choice?

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Call a workplace meeting to consider rainforest destruction. Invite RAG to come along to discuss it.
2. Ask your union to officially recognise the picket.
3. Ask your union to ban the handling and use of imported rainforest timbers.
4. Don't buy rainforest timbers such as Meranti, Merbau, Ramin, Jelutong, Kapur, Nyatoh, Batu and Kempas. Use second-hand timber and alternatives to rainforest timber instead.
5. Speak with other people, explain the issues and encourage them to act.
6. Join us on the picket.

## REFERENCES

Orams, Wendy & McQuire, Stuart. 'Rainforests: Recognize Your Connections'. Melbourne, 1990.

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MELBOURNE RAINFOREST ACTION GROUP

**RAINFORESTS:  
THEY DIE,  
WE ALL DIE.**

*NOTICE TO TRADE UNIONISTS*

**SAVE THE  
RAINFORESTS PICKET**

*Starting soon!*