

in Western Australia called forests '... irritating excrescences on the face of the Earth to be sawn up, ring-barked or otherwise destroyed.' ”

What Lane-Poole actually wrote was: 'Forests instead of being regarded as assets were looked upon as irritating excrescences on the face of the earth (sic) to be sawn-up, ring-barked or otherwise destroyed to make room for the settler.' (*Annual Report of the Woods and Forests Department*, printed 1919.)

A world of difference in meaning, I would suggest, is being foisted upon the reader by those three dots at the beginning of the *Ecos* version and even more so by the truncation of Lane-Poole's sentence without any dots or other indication that the meaning has been further adulterated. It is even more damning that to the best of my knowledge Lane-Poole is not quoted either correctly or incorrectly by J.H. Leigh *et al* in their book. The reference has been injected solely by the reviewer presumably, from the following irrelevant context, to implant is personal and mistaken conception of forestry as a mining operation.

It is inconceivable that any professional forester would hold the view that was attributed to Lane-Poole. It is even more inconceivable to those who have seen the beautiful karri forest growing on a settler's farm which Lane-Poole bought back against the strongest opposition to demonstrate this very point to the Western Australian Government of the day.

W. Gentle,
Commissioner for Forests,
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The first Conservator of Forests in Western Australia did not describe forests as '... irritating excrescences on the face of the Earth to be sawn up, ringbarked or otherwise destroyed' (*Ecos* 37, page 24). He was quoting a turn-of-century politician, who used this unfortunate description, in attempting to emphasize the previous, and then current, attitude to the State's karri and jarrah inheritance of the population at large.

Unfortunately this misquote tends to set the tone for the rest of the section on forestry in the article 'Native plants facing extinction'. Forests departments in many States, and countries other than Australia, have frequently existed in most inappropriate cabinet portfolios. Departments of lands and mines have often been the repository because of the forestry department actually owning and managing lands on behalf of the government. The interpretation of 'mining' the resource, analogous to quarrying, might enter the head of a politician, or one seeking to deliberately detract from the operations of a forestry department so placed, but would be completely at odds with the ethics of the trained forester, most particularly one educated in the concepts of classical conservative forestry. The portfolio in which the department rests is rarely the choice of the conservator.

Indeed, were it not for the considerable and devoted efforts of past foresters in many countries to ensure that reasonable areas of

potentially productive forest were legally preserved from casual exploitation or total elimination for other forms of land use, there would be even fewer examples of forest ecosystems extant today than presently exist. Most forest departments in Australia, though some rather belatedly, have reserved representative areas of the various ecosystems in their forest estate from silvicultural operations, as scientific reference areas. It is regrettable that the same principle could not have been applied to land considered suitable for agriculture, in the past.

Again, plantation forestry may be a threat in some cases, but I believe you highlight the threat out of context; it is the same threat to areas of native vegetation as any other type of land development, and is not necessarily contributing thereby to the extinction of particular ecosystems or individual species. Indeed, plantation forests should relieve the pressure for exploitation from some of the remaining indigenous forest.

I think it is most unfortunate that the opening paragraphs set an inappropriate tone to the forestry section. The article as a whole was excellent, and most timely. I am in full agreement with your criticisms of wood chipping, despite the foresters' justification on silvicultural grounds. I am wholeheartedly supportive of the conservation cause where our native flora and fauna is concerned, and popular review articles such as this are most important.

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LETTERS TO ECOS



A misquotation corrected

I protest at the disgraceful misquotation from the report to Parliament of the first Western Australian Conservator of Forests (C.E. Lane-Poole) perpetrated by *Ecos* in its review of 'Extinct and Endangered Australian Plants' by J.E. Leigh *et al* appearing under the title 'Native plants facing extinction' in *Ecos* 37, page 24.

The *Ecos* version reads: "In 1917 the first Conservator for (sic) Forests