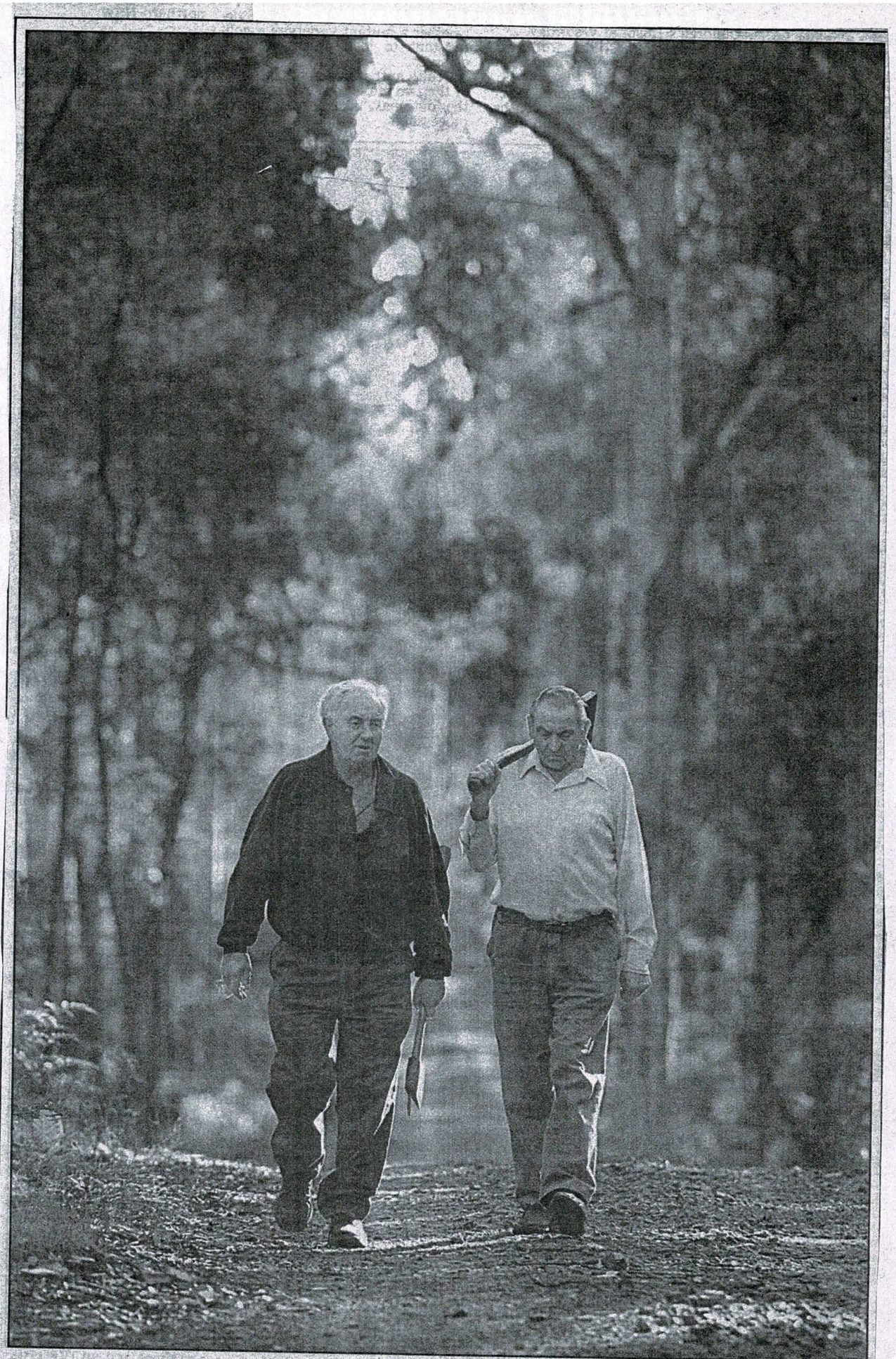


IN the autumn of their lives, Bill McCashney, 64, and Jimmy Evans, 62, are battling an unlikely foe, their former industry. Bill, an ex-champion axeman, says soon there won't be enough trees for the wind to whistle through. **GREENS FURY, Page 4. Picture: CRAIG BORROW**

Melton Regional News 31/1/95

NEWS EXTRA



● **Unlikely allies: Conservationist Alan Gray and ex-sawmiller Bill McCashney.** **Picture: DAVID SMITH** 429DS520

WOODCHIPPING in the Wombat State Forest has forged some unlikely alliances, with timber workers and conservationists finding themselves united in their fight.

Being a member of the Wombat Forest Society may seem unlikely for an ex-sawmiller, but Trentham resident Bill McCashney is committed to ending woodchipping.

Mr McCashney, who began cutting firewood as a timber worker in 1946, said he had watched local timber workers being edged out by the woodchippers.

"As a young fellow I used to come out here and it was beautiful bush, but it has all changed now," Mr McCashney said.

"I am totally opposed to woodchipping because it does not allow any regrowth or future for the industry.

"It seems fairly criminal to send woodchips to Japan and then they are sold back to us."

The society's president, Mr Alan Gray, said he started it because Mr McCashney nagged him to do something about the forest's destruction.

> **'It seems fairly criminal to send woodchips to Japan and then they are sold back to us'**

Mr McCashney has accompanied Mr Gray, who is a committed conservationist and editor of *Earth Garden* magazine, to protests and press conferences ever since.

Mr McCashney said while he also used to cut down trees the difference was it was done selectively with a view to the future.

"The forest supervisor would go through the area to be cut down and mark the trees and there was no clear felling," Mr McCashney said.

It took 48 times more timber to create one full-time job in the woodchipping industry compared with the local Wombat sawmills, he said.

Mr Gray, who moved to Trentham 10 years ago and has a property on the edge of the forest, said he was amazed by the extent of community support.

About 20 people attended the society's first meeting which now has about 1800 supporters, he said.

Mr Gray said everyone in the town was behind the campaign because woodchipping did not replace what it removed, and timber families wanted a future for their children.

Trentham was the only timber town with greenie stickers in its pub, he said.

Mr Gray said during the woodchipping operation, eight trees were supposed to be left standing per hectare to help the regrowth. The woodchipped regions were then burned to encourage regrowth, but this only happened half the time.

The woodchipped areas would not be renewed for at least 100 years, Mr Gray said.

The society is i
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A federal court
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Mr Gray said th
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Mr Gray said th
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Age. 19/5/94



Picture: PHILIP CASTLE

Mr Bill McCashney, forest worker turned greenie, inspects a burnt-out logging site in the Wombat Forest.

A forester undergoes a green conversion

by HUGO KELLY,
nvironment reporter

fter a lifetime logging the Wom-
at Forest, a belt of eucalypts
queezed between Daylesford
nd Woodend, Bill McCashney
as undergone a conversion. The
d timber worker fears the indus-
y he helped build now threatens
des the forest he calls the
ngs of Melbourne.

Leaning on a pickaxe as he sur-
yed an area recently denuded
woodchippers, Mr McCashney
d: "If they keep taking wood-
ips and logs out of this forest at
s rate, they'll finish it off soon".

he State Government admits it
allowing contractors to take
re wood from the forest than
ws back. "At the moment, it's
t out of balance," said a Con-
servation Department official, Mr Kevin Lowing.

Mr McCashney started sawing down the tree of Wombat Forest when he was 14.

In those days, he said, the area's timber industry was built on sawlogs. "Not any more. Now, more and more of the forest's being taken out for woodchips," said Mr McCashney, who has joined the Wombat Forest Society to bring attention to what he says is serious degradation.

Mr Lowing said the department's 80-year "sustainable yield" logging rotation for the 39,000-hectare forest was on target.

According to department figures, nearly 1000 hectares are being logged this financial year. But Mr Lowing said the industry's two-stage harvesting system meant not all would be fully logged.

The Forest Society's director, Mr Alan Gray, claimed the department was "trying to cover-up the destruction of the forest, when plantation wood alternatives are freely available".

He said: "You can't log 1000-plus hectares of a 39,000-hectare forest for long without running out of forest." He said State Government logging policy allowed three times as much wood to be taken out than grows back.

According to a Government spokesman, the department's "sustainable yield" assessments of how much timber can be taken without endangering the environment are based on the number of sawlogs which regrow each year.

Mr Gray said: "What this means is the Government has decided on a sustainable yield without accounting for how much is removed in the form of woodchips, firewood and burnt waste."

"I have been told privately by sawmillers that if this yield continues there will be no meaningful forest in an environmental sense left here by the turn of the century."

Mr McCashney said he decided to take a stand on the issue after he returned home from 10 years away. "When I returned, I found this forest in big trouble," he said. "The amount of millable material just left to burn on the forest floor, the lack of supervision by the department. It's depressing".