Good news from New Zealand/Aotearoa

Environmental NGOs are celebrating the success of the newly elected New Zealand government in forcing the State owned logging company, Timberlands, to withdraw its plans to log extensive areas of beech rainforests on the west coast of the country's south island.

Timberlands had made all efforts to neutralise political opposition to its operations. Earlier this year, trustworthy documents revealed a multi-million dollar covert lobbying campaign by Timberlands to lobby political parties in this regard. Additionally, the company had entered into contracts with a number of sawmilling companies, even lacking formal approval for the beech forests logging. Timberlands reacted to the new government's announcement declaring that it intended to go on with its activities at least until the new authorities expressly order it the contrary. At the same time, a number of the above mentioned companies, as well as some local councils, are now threatening to take legal action against the government for what they claim is a breach of an agreement reached with the logging industry of the west coast in 1986.

In spite of these obstacles, the long campaign to protect the magnificent beech forests and wildlife of North Westland, the Grey Valley and Buller is close to success. Finally Timberlands had to obey and beech forests have been excluded from logging, while environmentalists are confident that legal actions -if taken- will not overturn the government's decision.

While the end to the proposed beech forests' logging has been welcomed, environmentalists are pressing the government to bring the helicopter logging of the rimu forests to an early end as well. Labour, the Alliance and the Greens, all of whom have been targeted by Timberlands' lobbying campaign, are committed to ending the rimu logging.

This victory is a token of the importance of the activities displayed by environmental NGOs in creating the conditions for political parties with an alternative approach to the environment to take positive steps in regard to forests.

Source: "New Zealand's New Government Stops Rainforest Logging" by Bob Burton;