

Towards a Different World Order

The Fight to Save Clayoquot Sound

Vancouver Island's Clayoquot Sound, encompassing half of the world's remaining temperate rain forests, is in danger of destruction from clearcut logging. A controversy which has incorporated the interests of industry, native peoples, and environmentalists, the battle for the Sound has become a symbol for an entirely different way of living.

by Paramjit Mahli

As the twentieth century draws to a close, it is a formidable task to take inventory of changes around the globe. The past hundred years have witnessed two world wars, the rise and fall of totalitarian empires, and the birth of nuclear power. Human rights, free markets, democratic governments, third world development, jobs, taxes—these issues fill our newspapers on a daily basis. However, there is one factor which has for years been neglected, and is only now coming to the forefront of human consciousness: the home to all this activity, the earth itself.

Be it the air we breathe, the oceans we sail, the land we farm, or the animals we share this all with—people have suddenly realized all is not well. Concerned individuals point to the destruction of the environment and argue for its preservation. At once emotional and scientific, they search for another kind of world order which integrates people into their actual environment, rather than allowing them to carve from it the world they choose.

Symbol of an Endangered Earth

The Great Wall of China is one of the few traces of human activity on earth visible from satellite photographs. Large tracts of clearcut land on the Queen Charlotte Islands (north of Vancouver Island) are another. Fifty-six percent of the world's temperate rain forests have already been logged. They have all but disappeared from England, Scotland, Turkey, New Zealand and the United States. Now, all that remains of these ancient, dense forests is to be found in Chile and Canada's westernmost province, British Columbia (B.C.).

Located on the west coast of Vancouver Island, Clayoquot Sound is one of the world's last coastal temperate low-

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[Adrian Dorst]



Blockade in Clayoquot Sound: 1,000 arrested, over 800 charged in 1993. [Adrian Dorst]

land rain forests. In this complex environment, old growth trees up to 1,500 years old and 18 feet in diameter exist in a biomass (the number of living things per cubic meter) that is the largest of any ecosystem on earth. The delicate balance of life within such a system makes the species who inhabit it completely interdependent; when one part is destroyed, the whole suffers.

The Battlelines are Drawn

The future of the Clayoquot Sound rain forest has been the subject of a heated controversy which, in the past two years, has garnered international media attention. In over 35 years of logging, the ancient trees of Clayoquot Sound have generated huge revenues for Canadian loggers exporting to Japan, the United States and Europe. Nevertheless, this economically productive environment is on the brink of ecological collapse. Though the destruction of Clayoquot Sound has only recently found its way onto government agendas, the issue is not new.

Vancouver-based MacMillan Bloedel, the largest logging company in B.C., has legally owned the rights to log much of the Sound since 1958. In 1979, a local protest group—the Friends of Clayoquot Sound (FOCS)—was formed to protect the Sound from loggers and lobby for government intervention. Six years later, as other groups took up the cause, human blockades attempted to stop this devastation of a unique world heritage.

By the early 1990s, Clayoquot Sound had become a focal point in an international struggle to end the destruction of temperate rain forests. Yet, there are other issues at stake. The forestry industry employs, both directly and indirectly, thousands of British Columbians. Any ban on logging will have serious economic consequences for the province's already depressed resource-based economy. The Sound is also home to over 3,000 native people who have never ceded their lands to the government or corporations. On an even larger scale, the Sound has become an important symbol in the fight to preserve the earth's irreplaceable environment and the need for people

to take another look at how they interact with it.

The Government Takes Action

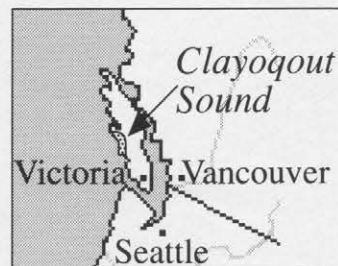
In April, 1993, despite public outcry, the provincial New Democratic Party (NDP) government in B.C. granted MacMillan Bloedel the right to log 62 percent of Clayoquot Sound's 656,000 acres. Logging was banned in approximately one-third of the forest. Commercial logging was permitted in the remainder with the exception of 17 percent that was classified as a 'special management area' where only limited logging could take place.

The decision the B.C. government was forced to make concerning the future of logging in Clayoquot Sound represented a political juggling act for Premier Mike Harcourt. The government was caught in between its traditional

allies. Over the years, much of the support for the NDP has come from organized labor (in this case, loggers), and the party has always been quick to champion the causes of environmentalists and native groups.

Yet, in this day and age, governments are assessed by their electorate largely on the basis of unemployment figures and indicators of economic performance. Forestry is one of Canada's key industries. In 1992, exports of forest products amounted to \$22 billion (Cdn.), \$9.5 billion in B.C. alone. That same year, forestry in the province generated \$11.7 billion in revenue. The provincial government's policy on Clayoquot Sound was designed to preserve 2,715 forestry jobs. However, the restrictions on logging, which were imposed to satisfy environmental groups, may still result in a loss of over 400 jobs, a substantial blow for an industry which downsized by 27,000 in the 1980s.

These restrictions did little to satisfy environmentalists, as they did not rule out clearcut logging. The government's policy came under increased scrutiny when, early in 1993 with the decision on the Sound imminent, the B.C. government announced that it had purchased a \$50 million interest in MacMillan Bloedel, becoming the forestry giant's largest shareholder. In August, 1993, the B.C. Court of Appeal ruled that there had been no wrongdoing on the part of the government in allowing MacMillan Bloedel to log Clayoquot Sound after purchasing shares in the company. Despite this, under substantial public pressure, B.C. has sold its stake in the company. This blatant conflict of interest, together with the unsatisfactory terms of the April, 1993 resolution, led to an outcry by loggers, local and international environmentalists, natives and other concerned citizens.



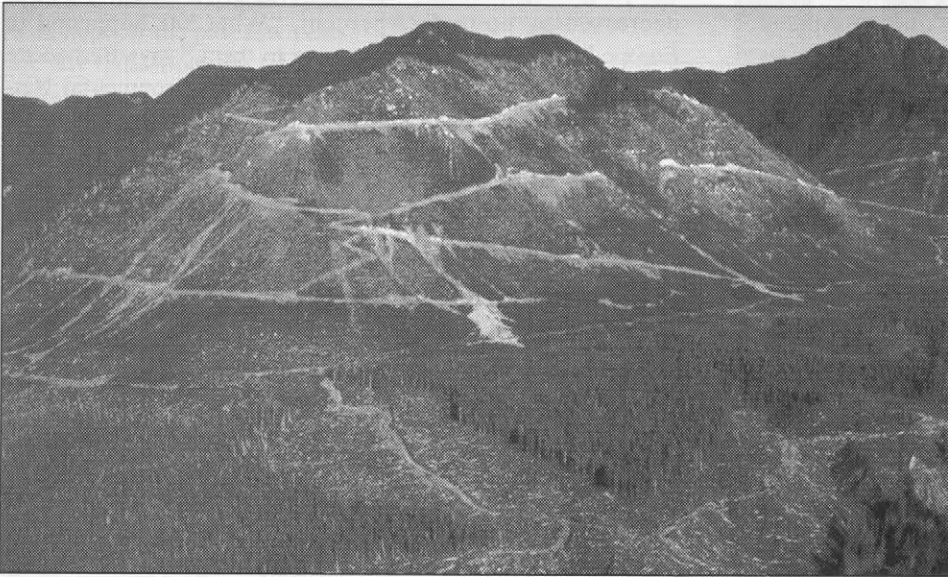
[Electromap, Inc.]

Summer of Discontent

For environmental groups, the government's attempt at a settlement is unacceptable; to ensure the survival of the rain forest ecosystem there can be no compromise. Once cut, old growth forests cannot be restored to their original state, and there is nothing that tree planting or natural reforestation can do to forestall this reality. As a result, most experts question the government's assertion that limited logging will preserve the Sound's delicate rain forest ecosystem.

"There is evidence to suggest that to have a genuine rain forest system, it must be large," asserts Jim Darling, research director of the Clayoquot Biosphere Project. "Once an area is reduced beyond a certain point, the natural biodiversity changes and the number of species declines."

Amidst predictions of such dire ecological consequences, protesters mobilized in support of the Sound in the summer of 1993. Demonstrations intensified outside the Vancouver headquarters of MacMillan Bloedel. It became a familiar sight on B.C. television news: young and old, professionals and students, came from all over Canada and Europe to block roads and prevent loggers from entering the forests.



Scarred remains of human activity: the devastating aftermath of clearcut logging.
[Adrian Dorst]

Since MacMillan Bloedel legally possessed the right to log in the Sound, they were able to obtain a court injunction banning the blockades. As a result, since April, 1993, in Clayoquot Sound alone over 1,000 people have been arrested, and many charged.

The controversy over Clayoquot Sound has drawn a plethora of environmental groups into the fray. The Friends of Clayoquot Sound, its 1,000 members based in the village of Tofino (near the Sound), has been a vocal leader in the movement to save the rain forests. The group has the support of many larger international organizations, such as Greenpeace.

Most of the groups advocate non-violent means of protest. There are, however, exceptions. Three protesters were arrested for setting fire to a logging bridge, and Paul Watson, head of

the California-based Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, promotes the use of tree-spiking (driving steel spikes into trees to damage chain saws).

More typical of the Clayoquot Sound protests is the B.C.-based Canada's Future Forest Alliance, which published a 36-page condemnation of Canadian forestry practices entitled "Brazil of the North" comparing the situation in Clayoquot Sound to the destruction of the Amazon rain forest. The Western Canada Wilderness Committee plans to tour Europe this year with a stump taken from a 1000-year-old tree that had been left to rot in the wake of a clearcut.

Protests over the Sound have generated considerable international support. On Canada Day (July 1st) in 1993, there were protests outside Canadian diplomatic missions in England, Germany, Austria and Japan. And in the 'Black Hole' in Clayoquot—an area logged and then burned in the 1980s that has become the camping ground for protesters—Australian pop group Midnight Oil held a concert in support of the Sound.

The Friends of Clayoquot Sound have designated April 13th as International Clayoquot Day, and across the world demonstrations of all kinds indicate that the tragedy of Canada's rain forest has attracted worldwide attention. Yet, the conflict over the Sound embodies much more than 'money-grubbing' corporations and 'tree-hugging' protesters. The indigenous peoples who live in the Sound are fighting a battle for their very homes.

Satisfying the First Nations

A crucial element in the struggle over Clayoquot Sound is Canada's indigenous population and their land claims in British Columbia. Not only is the integrity of an invaluable tract of old growth forest endangered, but the right of B.C.'s native peoples to control their resources is now at stake as well.

Discontent with the Clayoquot decision was compounded by the fact that the B.C. government made no attempt to clarify what consideration had been given to native land claims. The 3,000 natives in the Sound represent nearly half the population in the area. They

opposed the government's April, 1993 decision to permit logging while their land claim dispute remained unresolved.

Francis Frank, elected chief of the Tla-o-qui-aht band, is spokesperson for the First Nations living in the Sound. He invited Robert Kennedy Jr., son of the former U.S. Attorney General and a senior lawyer for the Washington-based Natural Resources Defence Council to the rain forest in the summer of 1993.

In 1991, the Council—working with Cree Nations in Quebec—helped block a massive expansion of the James Bay hydroelectric project. Mr. Kennedy's appearance in Clayoquot Sound successfully focused media attention not only on logging in the area, but on land claims as well.

Angered that the provincial government was not giving the issue of land claims due consideration, native groups



"Clayoquot Sound is in your backyard too!" a Vancouver resident recreates the destruction of the rain forest. [Gloria Loree]

threatened to take court action to forestall logging in Clayoquot Sound until their grievances were addressed. The First Nations certainly had legal precedent on their side.

In 1984 and 1985, Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousat natives stopped loggers from landing on Meares Island (part of Clayoquot Sound). In March, 1985, the B.C. Court of Appeal banned logging on the island until the natives' land claims were settled.

The Meares Island experience and the fact that the NDP government has been slightly more receptive to discussing land claims than their Social Credit predecessors (whom they defeated at the polls in 1991), had an impact on the accord reached in December, 1993. This two-year agreement created a joint management board involving the native community and the province.

The new Central Region Board is to be composed of representatives from all of the First Nations living in the Sound, as well as from the province. It is intended to oversee the logging and tree harvesting in certain areas of the forest. In addition, the deal established a program to train natives in various aspects of forestry management—such as forestry standards inspection and park stewardship. Tourism and other economic opportunities in the area will also be developed through a joint effort.

The Board was seen by many as an attempt to drive a wedge between the natives and environmentalists in the fight against logging in Clayoquot Sound. The agreement with the government granted the natives an advisory role in the management of the very logging activity which environmentalists oppose. Nevertheless, groups like the Friends of Clayoquot Sound support the natives' land claims and consider the continued logging of the Sound unacceptable while negotiations are still in progress.

The protests of the B.C. First Nations has drawn support from native groups around the country, who have their own land claims to resolve. When Kennedy visited Clayoquot Sound, he was joined by a group of Cree from the Saskatchewan Canoe Lake band. As Cecilia Iron of Canoe Lake expressed the fears of natives, loggers "don't seem to understand that we want to preserve our land for our children and their children. All they think of is money."

"Share" The Wealth

In response to these characterizations, logging companies have embarked on a public relations campaign designed to enhance their image as good corporate citizens. The industry has funded "SHARE" groups across Canada that unite people opposed to the demands of environmentalists. SHARE groups promote the new sense of corporate responsibility adopted by MacMillan Bloedel and other loggers.

To this end, forestry companies are quick to point out the changes they have made to their logging operations: the size of clearcuts has been substantially reduced; techniques for building logging roads have been improved; and measures are being taken to protect the wildlife inhabiting the rain forest. According to Mike Morgan, executive director of SHARE B.C. and a former MacMillan Bloedel employee, "We want to see sustainable development in the forest that will benefit everyone."

Despite these efforts, protesters appear to be having an impact on MacMillan Bloedel's international sales. The company has already lost major U.K. contracts with Kimberly-Clarke and Scott Paper, and since the international boycott campaign began it is estimated that sales in Europe have decreased by up to five percent. "What has happened in Europe has been very embarrassing to them," says Bernadette Vallely of the London-based Women's Environmental Network. "Customers have told them they cannot buy their pulp any more because it's too controversial." The Canadian Pulp and Paper Association has since opened an office in Brussels where promotional efforts can be directed at protecting foreign markets.

Preserving The Diversity

Regardless of the impact on the industry's sales in Europe, MacMillan Bloedel is still able to log 26 million cubic meters a year, or approximately 280 truckloads every day. And, as long as the logging continues, the natural biological diversity of the forest will change, risking the destruction of the most spectacular territory within a province that is marketed to the world as "Beautiful British Columbia."

A symbol of harmony in diversity, Clayoquot Sound has captured the imagination of those people around the world who wish to see its beauty and richness take precedence over something as transient as industry. Environmental problems are slowly asserting their importance on the international agenda. As the notion that habitats like Clayoquot Sound represent more than the complaints of a few militant environmentalists takes hold, the twenty-first century may yet see a revolution in the way that humans interact with their 'home.'

Suggestions for Further Reading

- Mark Collins (ed.), *The last rain forests: a world conservation atlas*. (Oxford University Press, 1990).
 Suzanne Head and Robert Heinzman (eds.), *Lessons of the rainforest*. (Sierra Club Books, 1990).
 Edward Goldsmith and Nicholas Hildyan (eds.), *The Earth: the essential guide to global ecological issues*. (Price, Stern & Sloan, 1988).