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PROPOSED TFL TRANSFERS BIGGEST PUBLIC LAND GIVEAWAY IN B.C.'S HISTORY

A brief presented to Forests Minister Dave Parker
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In recent years citizens all over British Columbia have been protesting the mismanagement of our forests by the B.C. Government. By the government's own calculation of what constitutes a sustainable rate of cut, it is allowing our forests to be cut at a rate much faster than forests can be replaced. Even loggers' associations are beginning to protest this because they know the overcutting today will surely mean severe job losses in the near future. The Government is aiding a few multi-national corporations to gain excessive short term profits at the expense of the economic and environmental well being of the citizenry.

In view of the widespread protests of this overwhelming bias and abdication of the Provincial Government's responsibility, it is shocking that the Government is proposing to give most of the public forests to these corporations. The public forests are not the property of Government to be sold or given away; they belong to the commonwealth of B.C. The Government is entrusted with the responsibility of protecting and conserving the public's forests to create the most benefits for all people in the Province. This cannot possibly mean putting two-thirds of the forest land into TFLs to be controlled mainly by four multinational corporate groups and clearcut without regard to values other than maximizing corporate profits.

Presently the Ministry of Forests is making a grand show of gathering public input on the management of watersheds when in fact the same government is negotiating timber transfers which are totally disenfranchising the people of the Province from having any say in how the forests are managed. This proposed huge timber transfer is an affront to the people who elected this government to hold the forests and other commonwealth assets in trust for the public. It can only speed the economic and environmental disaster impending from overcut and abused forestland and it makes the resolution of native land claims and any further preservation of parks insuperably difficult if not impossible. When the government, which is supposed to be unbiased, has long turned a deaf ear to local input, the need for more park preservation and the requirement to settle native land claims, how dare it now put the many thousands of people who want a fair and just resolution of these matters at the mercy of a few large logging companies. The public's forests belong to all the people of B.C., not to the government and not to the corporations and that is the way it should and must remain.

The Essence of the Problem

Treating the forest simply in terms of wood production units results in little consideration for the critical importance of intrinsic wilderness qualities such as ecological diversity and stability. Driven by industrial interests, the Ministry of Forests has delegated management to professional foresters in the employ of an industry which is managed by accountants working under a mandate to maximize returns on stockholders' investment. Because the value of a dollar invested today in anticipation of a return not to be realized for 50 to 100 years is very low¹, corporate managers have been very reluctant to make long term investments. This is why the management of our public forests must be a public responsibility. Although corporations place low priority on long term silvicultural expenditures, the public is concerned for future generations as well as present jobs.

The Ministry has issued special permits to export raw logs and relaxed utilization standards which benefit industry while broader public interests have been neglected. Public input into forest management decision making has been limited to making submissions which are in no way binding upon the Ministry of Forests. These arrangements have produced short-term benefits to corporate licence holders while long-term ecological considerations and economic stability of communities have received little more than lip-service. All this has led to increased opposition to logging plans, confrontation, and civil disobedience. Altering this pattern requires major changes to outmoded concepts and institutional arrangements.

Instead of adding more of the same, we need effective changes which will incorporate increased public influence on policy making and management of our resources. Specifically, we need to expand B.C.'s park system and achieve better wildlife and fisheries habitat management. Throughout the Kootenays and across the Province, local communities are demanding changes which include less clearcutting, higher priority given to water in domestic watersheds, and much more effective visual management. Expanding the Tree Farm License system moves us further away from these changes which are crucially necessary to achieve sustainable development.

Tree farm license tenures concentrate corporate wealth and move management of public land further from the people.

Currently 29 percent of the timber cut from public forest lands comes from Tree Farm Licenses managed by companies while the majority of the province's forest land is still held in Timber Supply Areas which are publicly administered by the Ministry of Forests. The government's plans to increase TFLs to 67 percent of the province constitutes an outrageous violation of the public trust because most of the additional forest land will end up in the hands of the same four interlocking multi-national corporate groups which already control 93.2 percent of the allocated public forests (both TFLs and TSAs), and 81.4 percent of the provincial cut from all lands.² Expanding the TFL system would increase the control of these few companies over almost all of B.C.'s productive forest land. This could mean that other uses of the land, such as watersheds, trap lines, woodlots, wildlife management, fisheries, recreation, and tourism development would be substantially diminished, causing a decline in employment, reduction in small business opportunities, continued overcutting of our trees, and mismanagement of non-renewable resources including soil and water supplies.

The most recent Royal Commission³ which studied B.C.'s forest industry in 1975 recommended against issuing more tree farm licenses "if the effect will be to concentrate further timber rights in the few large corporations." At this time the four largest companies only controlled 27% of the annual cut!

Worse yet is the loss of control of public resources to corporations headquartered outside B.C. An example is Fletcher Challenge, a multinational New Zealand corporation which now ranks as the third largest forest products organization in Canada behind MacMillan Bloedel Ltd., and Abitibi-Price Inc. Net earnings of Fletcher Challenge Canada increased 29 percent to over \$180 million in 1988 from \$140 million in 1987.⁴ This al-

ready huge company has applied for a TFL to log six million hectares of public forest land in northeastern British Columbia, an area twice the size of Vancouver Island, larger than the entire B.C. park system, and more than two-hundred times the amount of land in Indian Reserves.

Today, the government is proposing to expand TFL's because it has been instructed by industry to do it. The longer the tenure and the greater the amount of land that is involved, the more the public's land is worth to industry which has in the past been caught bribing government to obtain longer tenure and unsustainable allowable cuts. Example: In the late 1950s, B.C. Forest Products allocated \$30,000 to the Minister of Forests Bob Sommers to override the warning of his Chief Forester that the allocation would result in a dangerous overcut.⁵ Although Sommer was eventually convicted and jailed, BCFP continued to overcut TFL #22 until recently when Fletcher Challenge which now owns the license, reduced the AAC and laid off 425 workers⁶.

The present annual allowable cut must be reduced to a sustainable level before any additional long term tenures are given away.

The annual volume of wood logged in B.C. has accelerated from 33 million cubic meters in 1960 to 91 million cubic meters during 1987. During 1987, 78 million cubic meters of wood was cut on crown land managed by the Ministry of Forests, an amount which substantially exceeds the cut which can be sustained according to the level of long run sustained yield (LRSY) of 58 million cubic meters established by the Ministry of Forests in 1984. The Ministry recently increased the LRSY to 72 million cubic meters, despite the huge backlog of not-sufficiently-restocked (NSR) land, growing evidence of wasteful logging practices and the rapidly approaching fall down effect caused by the depletion of the best and most easily accessible old growth forests. Using the Ministry's current data, the sustainable harvest is currently being exceeded by 8% but in reality the overcut is much more, probably between 1.5 and 2 times the cut which can be sustained over the long run.

The annual cut from Crown Land in B.C. must be immediately reduced to a maximum of 58 million cubic meters. Furthermore, the Valhalla society joins many other groups in demanding that a comprehensive analysis of B.C. forest practices be commenced immediately in the form of a judicial inquiry with full public participation, subpoena powers and cross-examination of witnesses, and intervenor funding, to determine the actual sustainable annual allowable cut. The inquiry must include a detailed study of the remaining old growth forests in B.C. and a comprehensive evaluation of forest misman-

agement in existing TFLs. At least three studies⁷ of TFL #1 have revealed that industry and government have failed to meet statutory requirements for basic forestry.

In addition, greater efforts must be required of logging companies in practicing sustainable silviculture and additional emphasis and priorities must be placed upon adding more value to forest products exported from Canada rather than continuing to cut more trees while providing less jobs in the industry.

Our system of protected wilderness and parkland must be completed before any more long term tenures are given away.

The World Commission on Environment and Development recommends that protected areas on the surface of the globe need to be tripled.⁸ The Minister of the Environment's Task Force on Parks recommended that at least 10% of Canada needs to be protected.⁹ It is recognized that unless key areas are protected from development, the options to preserve the outstanding areas of remaining wilderness in B.C. will not be available to future generations and most of these areas will be lost to logging, mining and hydroelectric development within the next decade. It is recommended that the area protected in national and provincial parks, ecological reserves and wildlife sanctuaries in B.C., be increased from the present 5.2% to 13% of the land base by 1993, according to the comprehensive plan¹⁰ prepared by the Valhalla Society and endorsed by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Sierra Club of Western Canada, and Friends of Ecological Reserves.

Completion of B.C.'s system of protected wilderness and parks will be made much more difficult if more long term tree farm licenses are given to forest companies. Consider the South Moresby example. This area of the Queen Charlotte Islands constituted part of Tree Farm License #24. Although there were several possible methods of compensation through timber trades which would have cost the taxpayers nothing, the Provincial Government ignored these options and let the cutting go on until the Federal Government had agreed to pay an unprecedented \$106 million which included \$31 million compensation to Western Forest Products for 240,000 cubic meters of annual cut it could no longer log from the public forest. This extremely high sum was paid despite the fact that the company paid only a dollar for the TFL, had for years harvested millions of dollars of timber from the area and despite a much lower compensation estimate of \$6 to 9 million from a study commissioned by the Wilderness Advisory Committee.

Using the amount of ransom which was required to preserve South Moresby, it would require *billions* to purchase additional TFL land for parks. It is very unlikely that this much money could be raised to complete our system of parks and other protected areas.

In addition, history has shown us that tree farm operators are extremely reluctant to allow recreation to occur within their territories. MacMillan Bloedel took B.C. citizens to court last year for building a hiking trail among the giant Sitka spruce of Carmanah Valley, a globally significant temperate rainforest located on public land within TFL 44. The company simply acted like it owns the land, a behavior which is totally unacceptable. The forests must be returned to the people.

Native Indian Land Claims must be settled before more long term tenures are given away.

The World Commission on Environment and Development calls for "the recognition and protection of aboriginal peoples' traditional rights to land and the other resources that sustain their way of life. Disappearance of these people is a loss for the larger society which could learn a great deal from their traditional skills in sustainably managing very complex ecological systems." As said by the former Canadian Environment Minister Tom McMillan "the relationship of Canada's native peoples with the natural environment provides a model in sustainable development." Participants to the BCEN conference agreed that the negotiation and fair settlement of the long standing aboriginal land claims in B.C. is essential, not only to maintain aboriginal culture in the province, but also to preserve the best models of environmental management. Highest priority must be placed in negotiating a fair settlement of their aboriginal land claims before more of their land is given away to large multinational corporations.

In its recently published policy statement Regionalization, Framework for Action¹¹, the Provincial Government supports the recommendations of the U.N. sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development which call for managing resources to serve the needs of future as well as present generations. Unfortunately, the B.C. Government either has failed to read the Commission's report Our Common Future, or it is attempting to fool the public that the Government believes in the necessary changes called for by the Commission while it fails to act towards implementing them. Fully integrating environmental considerations in economic development decision making will require much more significant reorganization in the structure and administration of government.

New Zealand - Positive Change in Resource Management

In New Zealand, the newly created Department of Conservation was given "hands on" management responsibilities for approximately one third of the nations land mass and virtually all of its coastline including all protected areas and native bush not in private ownership. In addition, DOC was mandated to promote conservation both on and off the lands it has jurisdiction over. In the Conservation Act of 1987, the New Zealand government defined conservation as "the preservation and protection of natural and historic resources for the purpose of maintaining their intrinsic values, providing for their appreciation and recreational enjoyment by the public, and safeguarding the options of future generations." The newly created Ministry for the Environment was mandated to "Ensure that, in the management of natural and physical resources, full and balanced account is taken of: The intrinsic values of ecosystems; All values which are placed by individuals and groups on the quality of the environment; The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi; The sustainability of natural and physical resources; The needs of future generations."¹²

Summary

Specifically, the Brundtland Commission calls for tripling the protected areas in the world, increasing public input and local control of resource management, and sharing in a sustainable way, the world's finite resources among *all* of the people and other life on planet earth. Expansion of forest land managed by large multinational corporations for the purpose of maximizing shareholders' short term profits, forecloses necessary present and future options to preserve more land, achieve fair settlement of outstanding aboriginal land claims, and will make it much more difficult if not legally impossible to reduce the annual allowable cut to a sustainable level. Placing more land in the control of these already huge corporations will make the already rich even richer at the expense of the majority of citizens. For these reasons and others cited above, increasing TFLs in B.C. goes against the recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and what the people of B.C. want and need as optimum resource management.

Given the magnitude of changes needed in British Columbia to achieve sustainable development, it is a shame that the public is invited to hearings held by the Minister of Forests on how to continue the present government trend of increasing corporate control of the public's finite resources. What we should be doing together is working on meaningful and appropriate change,

not increasing the already too large portion of the Province in corporation controlled Tree Farm Licenses.

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¹The present value of one dollar realized 50 years from the present is only 2.1 cents and much less than one cent after 100 years.

²Privateering in the Public Forest? A Study of the Forest Industry's Expanding Role in the Management of British Columbia's Forest Lands, MA Thesis, Bill Wagner, University of Victoria, 1988.

³Timber Rights and Forest Policy in British Columbia, Report of the Royal Commission on Forestry, Dr. Peter Pearse, Commissioner, 1976.

⁴"Record Sales for Fletcher", Castlegar News, February 8, 1989.

⁵Stumped, The Forest Industry in Transition, Ken Drushka, 1985.

⁶"Fletcher Challenge Curtails Operations", Castlegar News, February 19, 1989.

⁷Forest Management Practices in the Nass Valley, Summary of Technical Evaluation Prepared for the Nishga Tribal Council by Silva Ecosystem Consultants, Ltd., March 1, 1985; The Nishga Tribal Council and TFL #1, Public Report #4, Ombudsman of B.C., June 1985.

⁸Our Common Future, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.

⁹Our Parks - Vision for the 21st Century, Report of the Minister of Environment's Task Force on Park Establishment, November 7, 1986.

¹⁰British Columbia's Endangered Wilderness, A Proposal for an Adequate System of Totally Protected Lands, The Valhalla Society, 1988.

¹¹Regionalization, Framework for Action, Province of British Columbia, September 1988.

¹²New Zealand's New Environmental Administration, The Quest for Sustainable Development and Economic Efficiency, Part 1, Alex G.S. Grzybowski, Earthlife Canada Foundation, Institutional Reform and Sustainable Development (IRSD) Discussion Paper Series, Paper #1.