



Feb. 3, 1989
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NEWS RELEASE

BACKGROUND ON THE PROPOSED TFL ROLLOVERS

Currently 29 percent of the timber cut on public forest lands come from Tree Farm Licences. Most of these TFL's are located in coastal B.C. and combine some private land with larger amounts of public forest land. TFLs are long-term land tenures administered by the companies.

In the past the Forest Service played an active role in manage TFLs. Today, through Subsidiary Agreements and Letters of Understanding, the government has assigned the companies near total authority over their TFL lands. This means the public has lost the right to manage its own forests.

The majority of the province's forest land is still held in Timber Supply Areas (TSA). This is public land administered by the Forest Service. The Forest Service issues Forest Licences to forest companies to cut specified quotas of timber on the TSAs.

In September of 1987 forest minister Parker announced that TFL holdings would be more than doubled and would soon account for 67 percent of the province's annual cut. The TFL extensions and new TFLs are to be taken out of land currently held in TSAs.

Current TFL holders and companies holding timber quotas under Forest Licences can apply for expanded or new TFLs. TFLS are awarded free to the successful applicants, but the licence then becomes part of the company's assets.

For example, when South Moresby National Park Reserve was established, it took over part of a TFL held by Western Forest Products. The company was allotted \$31 million in compensation for the 240,000 cubic metres of annual cut it could no longer log from the public forest.

Using South Moresby as a guideline, the provincial TFL giveaway proposed by the minister will give the multi-nationals an estimated \$14 billion in additional assets.

Yet Western Forest Products claim its TFL assets in South Moresby were worth more like \$150 million. Using that figure as benchmark, the proposed turnover of public forests into TFL's would be worth an estimated \$42 billion.

Much of that new found wealth would flow to corporate shareholders located outside of British Columbia, including such places as New Zealand, U.S.A. and Japan.

(Over)

Corporate concentration already is a fact of life in British Columbia. As of 1985-86, four interlocking multi-national companies controlled 93.2 percent of the allocated public forests (both TFLs and TSAs), and 81.4 percent of the provincial cut from all lands.

Expanding the TFL system would simply solidify their hold on the province, giving them full control over almost all the productive forest land. Almost any other use of that land could be precluded, from trap lines to woodlots to tourism to wildlife management to watershed protection.

If one particular TFL application is approved, it would see over six million hectares of public forest land in northern British Columbia come under the control of one company, Fletcher Challenge. This extremely ecologically sensitive landscape, which includes all the land in the Parsnip and Finlay Valley, and at the Williston Lake reservoir, is twice the size of Vancouver Island.

The question is, why would the minister even consider giving away such a remarkable landscape?

And what happens in a few years if the people of British Columbia decide to expand the provincial park system or allocate more forest land to small-scale logging operations? If the land is tied up in TFLs, the people will be forced to pay very high rates of compensation to get their land back.

The same holds true with native land claims. If the courts and governments finally acknowledge the validity of these claims, but the land is locked up in TFLs, the compensation issue would be formidable.

Sierra Club chairman Peter McAllister states that British Columbia shouldn't even be considering tying up its precious forest land for single-use corporate forestry.

McAllister believes that corporate forestry typically gives us spiralling rates of cut, spiralling rates of corporate profit, and a dangerously degraded environment. But what corporate forestry doesn't give us," notes McAllister, "is guaranteed long-term jobs -- or a fair return to the public purse through competitive bidding for timber cut on the public's forests.

Corporate forestry is based on logging all the old-growth timber and replacing it with a match-stick economy, says McAllister. But match-stick forests won't support wildlife, or fish, or water systems, or recreation, or the economy the way old-growth forests can.

Clearly, a fair and open-minded Royal Commission is urgently needed to take a fresh look at everything connected with forest land use in British Columbia.