

VIEW FROM THE WEST

1992 - 2001

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DECIDING CANADA'S FUTURE

October, 1992

On October 26 concerned Canadians will be going to the polls to cast their vote on the Charlottetown Accord. If you are among these Canadians you will receive a ballot with the following question:

Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed
on the basis of the agreement reached on August 28, 1992?

The only intelligent answer to this question is NO.

You should vote no on this referendum for two reasons. Number one is that in Section V covering amendments it requires that changes to significant items in the Constitution can only be made by unanimous agreement of Parliament and the provincial legislatures. Unanimous agreement is too great of a burden to put upon the governing apparatus of democracy in a country as diverse as Canada. Such a clause would allow the smallest special interest group to hold the entire nation at ransom whenever changes were required in vital areas of the Constitution, and would surely guarantee that eventually either the country would dissolve through provincial secession, or that a new federal government would be formed by illegal methods which may or may not involve democratic process.

The second reason that you should vote no is that the agreement contains too many important and controversial items to have them voted on in one lump sum. The manner in which this referendum is being presented is an arrogant act of politicians who have no regard for the intelligence and ability of their constituents to make rational decisions on the future of their country. Their hope is that by putting in motherhood issues such as health care and predicting doom and disaster if the agreement is rejected, they will get us through either bribery or fear to accept things which we may heartily disagree with and know to be wrong.

The only fair way to put to a vote a document such as the Charlottetown Accord is to put it in a referendum where a yes or no vote is required on each and every subsection of the agreement. Whatever parts of such a referendum that were accepted by an overwhelming majority of the nation could then be used as a basis for building a national government that would be acceptable to the majority of Canadians.

Do not be scared or bribed into a rush job on deciding Canada's future. Tell the politicians to clean up their act and give us an election in which we can really voice our feelings on all of the important issues each on their own merits. Vote NO on October 26.

November 02, 1994

The issue of gun control is a topic that keeps surfacing across the country these days as the current Liberal government seems bent on following the policies of the late Kim Campbell and Brian Mulroney administrations regarding the disarmament of Canada. Currently proposed are gun laws so insane that should they be passed few

law abiding Canadians will be able to possess firearms for the protection of their homes and person.

The purported reason for these new proposed laws is to make Canada a safer society. The question is, safer for who? If the issue is about crime it is guaranteed that these laws would make Canada safer for criminals. Tougher restrictions on the legal possession of firearms by law abiding citizens will not even marginally reduce the numbers illegally possessed by criminals. Instead it will make the rest of us even more dependent upon the mercy of the thugs in society who would make us and our homes and businesses the target of their depravity.

If the issue is about accidental shootings and other non-criminal injuries from firearms, it is a phony issue. Only about 1 in 17,000 Canadians are injured each year in non-criminal firearm incidents. Compared to injuries caused by alcohol, tobacco, vehicles, or industrial equipment, injuries caused by firearms hardly rate any consideration at all.

Neither safety or crime is the real issue at hand for the politicians pushing this further encroachment upon civil liberties and human rights. The real issue is reaction to pressure from an assortment of special interest groups ranging from organized crime to reactionary elements in otherwise legitimate social, professional, and political organizations that have abandon civil liberty in pursuit of their own private agendas.

What should be done about firearms regulation? Almost everyone will agree that firearms do need some regulation. What is important is that these regulations be sensible and provide for the widest exercise of civil rights.

Firearms do not need to be tightly restricted, their possession and use does. Citizens should be able to possess shotguns, hand guns, rifles, and other non-fully automatic small arms without a plethora of regulations on magazine capacity, or allowable amounts of ammunition, and with regulations on storage and transport that are designed for functional safety not social control. What does need careful and strictly enforced regulation is who may possess firearms, and how they can use them.

Firearms users should be licensed in the same manner that motor vehicle operators, airplane pilots, and others who operate equipment requiring a special level of competence are licensed. Licenses should be classed according to the type or types of firearm that the licensee is entitled to possess with set levels of training and demonstrated competency required for each class of license. In all cases a background investigation should be required to weed out persons who are mentally challenged, have been convicted of misdemeanors involving the use of violence, or have been convicted of any felony. In addition Canadian citizenship should be a precondition for obtaining and possessing a license with the exception that non-citizens may obtain a short term, restricted license for the purpose of legitimate hunting under the supervision of a licensed hunting guide.

Penalties for possessing a firearm without a license should be severe. The minimum sentence for anyone convicted of possessing a firearm without a proper license should be five years in prison without parole, and in the event that a firearm is found in a private vehicle or private vessel where no one is properly licensed the vehicle or

vessel and all of its contents should be forfeit to the Crown. In addition any person convicted of a firearms offense that is not a citizen should be deported from Canada upon the completion of their prison term, and forever prohibited reentry into Canada under any status without a special act of Parliament.

Regulation of firearms in this manner would protect the rights of law abiding citizens while at the same time giving the police and the judicial system better tools to remove violent offenders from the streets. In the field of criminal justice both the Conservative and Liberal governments have followed similar programs of eroding civil liberties while increasing tolerance for criminal activities. It is time to reverse this trend and focus upon curtailing the people who commit acts of violence, not upon curtailing the civil rights of their victims.

December 07, 1994

Currently the Liberal government in Ottawa is planning to eliminate manned light stations along the coast and replace them with automated stations. The rationale for this move is that it will result in reduced operating costs and a smaller budget to go along with the current government's program of deficit reduction. The opposition to this move has countered that the savings would be minuscule while the decrease in coastal safety would be significant. Personally I think that cutting out manned light stations to trim excessive costs is like a fat man cutting off his fingers and toes to help solve his obesity problem. Perhaps if the dreamers of this ill conceived scheme were to clear their heads and look closely at the matter they might discover a lot more savings could be made by cutting back on the administrative staff in Ottawa instead of eliminating the vital services provided by our light station keepers.

No matter how many rationalizations the desk jockeys in the government can come up with, they can not obscure the fact that light station keepers save lives and prevent routine distress situations from turning into mega-dollar search and rescue operations. If anything the B.C. coast could use more manned light stations, not fewer ones. Most people who have spent much time in the remote areas of our coast can give first hand accounts of events where the light station keepers have either come out in their zodiacs to help someone in distress, or have provided crucial instructions by radio to vessels in unfamiliar waters. Automated light stations can not tow in a boater at dusk in a storm on an outgoing tide with a dead motor and no radio contact except for the nearby light station. Light station keepers do this as a matter of course.

The bureaucrats in Ottawa do not comprehend these kind of services. Their calculators can only tell them what a light station keeper costs to maintain, not the value of his or her service. How much is a human life worth? How many people have to be saved each year or each decade to justify the cost of a light keeper? How many ships on the rocks are acceptable before the need for a manned light station is cost effective? If anyone has a precise figure for that I dare them to stand up in a public forum and advocate it. If not then I suggest that perhaps the right answer is zero.

The real problem that we face on our coasts is not the cost of manned light stations, but the lack of adequate surveillance and protection. We do not need fewer light station keepers. Instead we need more light stations, more fisheries officers and more patrol vessels to not only save us from accidents and disasters, but to protect our resources and territorial integrity.

The best way to improve the situation on our coasts and to make coastal services more cost effective and efficient is to start by eliminating the Coast Guard entirely. Canada needs a strong Navy, not a civilian Coast Guard. The Coast Guard should be disbanded and its entire function turned over to the Navy. Light station keepers can be kept on as civilian employees while all other members of the Coast Guard can be given the opportunity to transfer into the Navy at an appropriate level, and continue on in their careers subject to military standards of performance and discipline. There should be a build up of smaller patrol vessels in the Navy to the point that every part of our coast is under frequent surveillance, and that any vessel in distress is never far from a helping hand. And, there should be either an increase in the number of fisheries officers with one or two assigned to each naval patrol, or the Navy should be trained and empowered to enforce fisheries regulations.

I have little doubt that the Coast Guard has embarked on this current fiasco under pressure to do its part in reducing the national budget, and that the people making the plans intend to keep the reductions as far away from their own jobs as possible. Cutting fat from budgets is often a good idea, but this time they are cutting meat. The Liberal government should take a very close look at what is going on here and rethink its coastal policies with an eye to the safety and security of our coasts and resources instead of to the interests of the drones and paper shufflers in the Coast Guard bureaucracy.

March 08, 1995

The problem in the forest is straight forward and documented. We are running out of trees. The forests on the West Coast of the Island take several hundred years to reach full maturity, and we are cutting them at a faster rate than they can grow back. Everyone concerned about the forest has to face this fact before any meaningful discussion can even begin to take place. Trying to solve the problems with the forest industry without first agreeing that we are currently over cutting the forest is like trying to solve navigation problems here without first agreeing that the compass points north.

The real solutions to the problems that we are facing are not concerned with whether or not we get more trees to cut. Anyone who wants to argue that we need more trees or at least the right to continue cutting as many trees as we are now is either blind to reality or has ulterior motives that are not necessarily beneficial to the long term interests of our region. The solutions that we need lie in getting more value out of our forest, in taking full local control of forest use in the region on both public and private holdings, and in implementing a long term economic plan for the region that looks forward over hundreds of years instead of only a few years or decades.

Trees that fall in our region should be processed in the region or traded for an equivalent amount of timber for our industry. There should be no net loss to the region in timber that goes out in raw logs, chips, cants, or in other unprocessed or marginally processed form. What should go out of our region is finished lumber, pulp, and paper; and as much as possible products manufactured here from our finished lumber, pulp, and paper.

There should be local public control over what can be done with every tree that falls in the forest, and in the manner that it is to be done whether or not that tree falls on Crown land, a native reserve, or a private holding. This control should be exercised by a body democratically elected in the same manner that we elect school boards and village councils, with adequate safeguards against conflict of interest on the part of board members.

The government is already projecting timber supplies over periods in excess of two hundred years. These projections plainly indicate that we can not sustain our current rate of cutting, and must reduce it if we wish to achieve a steady level of harvesting. These same projections also show the disappearance of high grade old growth timber in the timber supply, and its replacement by the less desirable second growth. Not only are we losing trees we are losing the quality of our fiber supply.

The facts in the government projections need to be addressed by the forest industry and reflected in published long range plans that show their proposed operations and levels of employment over the next century or more. Everyone has to begin thinking of the future here in terms of multiple decades and generations if we are to achieve any kind of regional stability.

Each of us needs to confront the fact that we are running out of mature trees. This is happening whether or not we protect a few more areas or sell Strathcona Park to the highest bidder. It is happening regardless of leaked memos, changes of government, blizzards of faxes, or masses of undulating yellow ribbons in front of any number of official buildings.

Do not be misled by those who would direct attentions elsewhere. It is easy to get up and curse the government, and a common ploy throughout history to lay the blame on outsiders in order to divert attention away from the real problems. The problems lie in our past forest practices and our failure to build a diversified economy. Our solutions lie in correcting these mistakes.

March 07, 1996

We all have opinions. Some of us have good opinions, some of us have bad opinions, but most of us just have well intentioned opinions that can use a lot of work to smooth off the rough edges. Our opinions play a major role in the way we act and think, and collectively the meshing of the opinions of many decide the direction of our society. A vibrant, democratic society requires a free flow of opinions and exchange of ideas. Without this free flow the democratic process is crippled, if not killed entirely.

All opinions are not alike. There is almost always more than one side to any story, and usually each side contains some truth. A healthy society seeks all opinions in order to find those truths. It is only by considering all sides of an issue that a society can make a fair attempt to act in a prudent and even handed manner.

Some people do not like diverse opinions. They see their own personal interests threatened by the legitimate interests of others and seek for ways to shut out view points other than their own. These people will rationalize that their position is the only valid one for whatever their reason of the day is, and they will use the this is being done for your own good excuse when they seek to stifle any point of view with which they do not agree.

A classic maneuver of those who wish impose their will on the rest of us is to single out any institution or individual with whom they disagree as a divisive or disruptive influence, and blame it for the instability in our society. Since most of us prefer stability to conflict, and most of us are always happy to have a hook to hang the cause of our problems on, this tactic is a powerful one that often sways us. It worked wonderfully on the people of Germany in the 1930 s.

There are other people who do not like diverse opinions because they do not like controversy. Some do not like the thought of anything that may threaten to bring change to either their physical or mental environment. Some are either just too lazy to think or too insecure to trust their thoughts, and want to level the playing field by not wanting anyone else to think either. This type often turns to fundamental religion or some other equally remote and esoteric source of authority that is seen to be beyond challenge, and thus beyond making demands on ones ability for critical judgment.

Dissent and the free flow of ideas are good for society. They lessen the strength and influence of concentrated wealth and power and cause us to consider ways of looking at things that otherwise may never have occurred to us. They empower us as individuals and provide the catalyst for social and economic change. Often times it is the dissenters and nonconformist thinkers who serve as the vanguard of social development and the instigators of improvements that later generations come to take for granted.

Without the free flow of ideas and the crucible of controversy and debate our society would be stifled and we would wind up either living in fear and terror as the Germans in the 30 s or the Chileans in the 70 s, or existing in a daze of banality, oblivious to all of the problems and opportunities of the world around us. Those who seek to silence debate as well as those who turn away from controversy do us no favors. The one would deny us our freedom, the other condemn us to mediocrity.

March 22, 1995

The sky is falling; just listen to the people, the sky is falling. Here on the West Coast we are sicker these days, stress is up, we have more family problems, and we are drinking a lot more too. This is the message that our local officials are spreading far

and wide to anyone that will listen, and they say that it has all come about because of government decisions.

Well, maybe the stress level is up, and some good people have turned down opportunities to move here because of the current atmosphere. But, this is not an atmosphere that can be rationally connected to the current government's attempts to correct decades of neglect and bring stability and long term planning to the management of our forests.

People are upset these days because they are being told to be upset, and they are being driven to hysteria by a well orchestrated program of fear and disinformation. If anyone is to blame for the current situation here it is the agitators of this hysteria, and the interest groups behind the agitators who are hoping to reap political and financial benefits by creating a volatile situation.

An interesting document to read is the WEST COAST COMMUNITY PROPOSALS TO THE PROVINCE OF BC. This short paper was presented by the mayors of Gold River, Tahsis, and Zeballos to the Minister of Forests on March 2. Apart from the obligatory pokes at the government this document contains some very good ideas, and requests the provincial government to enact even greater restrictions on the disposition of timber in the TFL than are currently in place. Among the mayors' requests is a ban on saw logs being used for pulp, a ban on the export of raw logs, and free rights to salvage sunken logs. The mayors also advocate that the TFL should be managed and operated by the communities, and that some of the timber licensees in the region should have their licenses removed. Very little is mentioned about parks or protected areas, and it is obvious from their place in the proposal that these items are of minor importance.

What is amazing here is that publicly parks and protected areas are being used to stir up a lot of turmoil when they are not one of the real issues at hand. Why is it that land tenure, logging practices, and community development which are a real issue, do not get a lot of serious discussion in public meetings? Why aren't local businesses putting up "No More Saw Logs For Pulp" posters in line with the mayors' proposal? The reason is that there is one other real issue at stake, and it is the one that is the driving force behind all of the knee jerk reactionism. This issue is one of provincial politics and bruised egos.

Failed Socreds like Gerry Furney, who was twice rejected by the voters of this riding as MLA, are having a field day crying fire in a crowded theatre and then trying to blame the government for the stampede. These people do not care about the forest or the community except to the extent that they can use it to extend their power and influence. Serious discourse on the issues in public meetings is anathema to them. It does not lead to the kind of wild emotions that inspire people to adorn themselves in yellow ribbons and provide crowds for Mr. Furney's pleasure at various locations throughout the province. It is on Gerry Furney and his ilk that we can lay the blame for the present miasma of uncertainty and fear.

October 18, 1995

The political season is heating up as we start the count down to the Provincial election featuring the NDP, NSP, and OSP. Now we know who the NDP are, they are the same group with the same name that we elected in the last election. But NSP, OSP, who are they. Well, they are the splinters left by the guys who did not win the last round.

First we have the NSP, that is the New Socred Party masquerading as the Liberals. The appearance of this group reminds me of one of those science fiction movies where the things from outer space invade earth and occupy the bodies of humans. In this case they just came out from behind the trees and occupied the body of the Liberal Party, leaving the name the only thing liberal about it.

Next we have the OSP or Old Socred Party which calls itself the Reform Party of BC. These are the Socreds who find even the word "liberal" distasteful. At least they are honest enough to spurn the employment of cheap carnival tricks to confuse the voters as to who they really are or what they stand for. They stand for less. Less taxes, less spending, less education, less health care, less of everything that we have that makes Canada one of the best places in the world to live. If you live in a cave in the bush and disdain society you will love these guys.

The New Socreds or so called Liberals on the other hand are busy shucking and jiving all over the place in order to keep you from figuring out what they really stand for.

At the North Island delegate selection meeting in Campbell River on September 27 Liberal MLA Clive Tanner from North Saanich was quoted in the CAMPBELL RIVER MIRROR as saying that the main issues for the Liberals are to reduce spending, reduce government debt, and improve quality of education and health care. Comox Candidate Bill MacDonald jumped in with a me too and is quoted as saying that the people "want a government that will reduce spending, reduce debt, and reduce taxes in order to preserve health care and education."

This is a pie in the sky position if there ever was one. Education and health care are the big items in our budget, the rest is peripheral. Any cuts to spending and taxes are going to adversely affect the amount of money available to administer these vital programs.

Now, they may talk of more efficiency and diversification of systems, but when these words come from right wing parties such as the Liberals what they really mean is privatization. Yes, we can cut millions from health care and education. Dump them and let the private sector deliver the service. The budget looks good again and everyone theoretically saves a few bucks in taxes. Do not pay any attention to the fact that the average citizen will be paying more for private health care and private education than they were in taxes to support the public services.

Once the privatization genie gets out of the bottle there is no telling where it might end. If one is intellectually honest and committed to this philosophy it is but a short step to toll roads instead of public highways; private fire protection companies instead of local fire departments; and private security guards instead of public police.

As for tax reduction, which taxes are we going to reduce? Let us see a concrete proposal before the election. Are we cutting out regressive and bureaucratically cumbersome taxes like the sales tax and GST? Are we wiping out loop holes in the personal income tax? Or, are we just going to reduce corporate taxes and sheepishly offer up the promises of the trickle down theory?

In 1968 Richard Nixon told the American public that he had a plan. He wouldn't tell what that plan was until after he was elected, but he had one for sure. In 1995 Gordon Campbell danced around the issues on stage in Gold River, obviously a graduate of the Nixon School. What is he hiding?

Shortly each of us will have to make an important choice between the known and the unknown; between public services and private services; between a Canadian style society and an American style. Everyone needs to think carefully. I lived many years in the American model, it is truly inferior.

DECIDING CANADA'S FUTURE II

November 15, 1995

Immediately following the defeat of the referendum in Quebec on October 30th many of the radio commentators began making remarks that now we are going to have to make some fundamental changes in the Constitution. They were speaking as if this was a sudden realization that had not dawned on anyone prior to this date, and was an outcome of this latest crisis. The Reform Party too, jumped on the band wagon and started talking about a need for "national overhaul."

Back in 1992 following the defeat of the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord when everybody and their dog immediately decided that the constitution was no longer an issue to deal with I published an editorial in THE RECORD plainly pointing out the need for a national overhaul with fundamental changes in order to settle the constitutional issue. If the people in power had had the foresight to continue on at that time until an equitable national arrangement was reached we would not have had to suffer through this last episode of M. Parizeau's egoistic maneuvers to become the father of his country.

My arguments in 1992 are still valid and timely now, and I present them below in their entirety. (See October 1992 editorial)

February 09, 1996

On January 30th the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks issued a press release, published in this edition of The Record, on an agreement with three forest companies that addressed environmental damage caused by past logging practices in the San Juan watershed of southern Vancouver Island. The statement reflected well on the companies and their undertaking to restore the environment and to enhance fisheries in the drainage, and it gave credit for the fact that the companies had already been working on doing some of this for the past three years.

On January 31st in The Province columnist and spin doctor Brian Kieran took this item and attempted to twist it into an attack by the government on the forest companies. Kieran's, and by extension the forest companies', position on the issues in this matter were that in the first place this whole thing should have never happened because it was not playing fair to dig up instances of bad forest practices that were years old, and were within the old rules of the day. And, in the second place this was an excuse to impose the Forest Practices Code on private forest lands, as if to do so was some odious act.

One can not but interpret this whole hysterical explosion by Mr. Kieran as a message that the forest companies are taking the position that they should not be held responsible for any damage that may have happened in the past, particularly if the rules in place at the time did not prohibit it, and how dare anyone presume to require them to adhere to environmentally sound practices on their on private fiefdoms.

The fact is that the damage is there, and it is not benign. No matter what the rules were, there is some responsibility. Every day that the damage is not repaired it further weakens our fishery and allows for further degradation in the sustainability of the forest. The companies have agreed to undertake the repair and should be commended for doing so.

As for the whining and sniveling about private lands, the point still remains that these damages did take place in part on private lands under rules that almost everyone now will agree were insufficient. To not put enforceable rules in place that would prevent this type of abuse in the present and future would be an act of irresponsibility by the government. Our forests and forest industry are much too important to us, whether they be in public or private hands, to not have their responsible management mandated by law rather than by voluntary agreements.

It is obvious that Brian Kieran's devotion to the corporations is greater than his commitment to the processes of reason and logic when he writes about this issue.

On an hilarious side note to this whole episode Port McNeill's Mayor, Gerry Furney, published a letter to Brian Kieran in the February 2nd edition of the Campbell River Mirror. After rambling on about the usual bogeymen, patting his own back a few times, and stroking his favorite Campbell doll, Gerry thanked Kieran for the enlightenment provided by his column, and announced that it convinced him to stand for the Liberal nomination on the North Island. Some enlightenment!

April 17, 1996

On page 09 you will find a press release issued by SHARE BC in Ucluelet. There are several amazing things about this item, and the first one is that Gerry Furney and I agree on it.

I received the release with a public letter from Gerry that has been published in other papers. In that letter Gerry opposes Mike Morton's call for a boycott of California farm products in response to some California cities' opposition to purchasing BC timber products.

I too oppose such a move, and although Gerry may not agree with me, I find SHARE BC's logic in this and other matters a product of brain dead thought processes. Mr. Morton's proposal is akin to the philosophy that you can best get at your enemy by shooting your friend who lives next to him.

The cities that are in opposition to using BC timber products do not produce the farm goods that the boycott would target. They consume them! A boycott would have the potential of driving down the prices of these perishable goods in the California markets to the benefit of the same cities that Mike would punish. The farmers on the other hand, would get mad at BC and also stop using our timber products. With groups generating ideas like this it is no wonder that we have problems in the forest industry.

May 25, 1996

The traditional summer of hot and heavy Tyee fishing in Nootka Sound appears to have been cooled off by an anticipated absence of fish and new DFO regulations mandating non-retention of chinook on the west coast of the Island.

The decline in the fish stocks has been going on for years from California to Alaska, and should be of no surprise to anyone. Since almost everyone has been saying for quite some time that something had to be done, the latest action by the DFO should not be too surprising either.

As this paper goes to press there are still discussions going on between the DFO and some stake holders, and the final outcome may still be open for adjustment.

In regards to the proposal of catch and release on the chinook this season, it is my opinion that if the fish are so endangered that we can not afford to keep them, then strict measures need to be put into place to insure that we do not even incidentally catch very many of them.

No matter what anyone says, we all know that catching and releasing a salmon is stressful for the fish, and will result in an increased mortality rate due to both physical damage from being captured, and easy predation by seals and dogfish when exhausted.

I have heard it reported that some of my fellow guides have said that catch and release is no problem. They will let their clients catch the big fish, mangle them with their nets, haul them out of the water for photo opportunities, and then toss them back. This is absurd!

Any guide with half a conscience and even a smidgen of respect for the chinook will do their utmost to see that their clients never hook one to begin with. If they do hook one they will get the fish in as fast as possible and release it beside the boat with as little contact as possible. Forget the mug shots.

If the DFO is truly serious about protecting the chinook this summer they will also outlaw barbed hooks on the west coast, and prohibit down riggers, heavy weights,

and other devices designed to facilitate deep trolling. You do not need to troll for groundfish, and what coho there are out there are readily taken near the surface.

This situation that we now face is a product of greed and stupidity. We have lost our salmon stocks to the greed of fish processors who want ever more and cheaper fish; to allowing technology in the industry that has made more and cheaper fish possible while putting thousands of traditional fishermen on the beach; to land developers who see spawning and rearing grounds as building sites; to forest companies who blithely desecrated untold numbers of watersheds because doing so was cheaper than acting responsibly; to industries that thought our waterways made fine and dandy sewers; to our diversion of water for hydro and irrigation; and to all of us who found little bits of polluting here and there to be easier and cheaper than looking after the environment.

There are lots of things that need to be done to protect our fishery and our fishing industries, both commercial and sport. A closure on chinook this summer is only one small patch on a gaping wound, but it may help. Let us not approach it with the same attitudes that got the fishery into this jam in the first place.

June 16, 1996

STEAM ON, CAPTAIN CLARK

Troy Lanigan of the Canadian Tax Payers Federation would have us close lighthouses to save money. From his arguments one would gather that the sum of \$1.1 million is worth more than a life or even a number of lives. Of course he does not present it exactly that way. Instead, he places the burden of proof on the proponents of manned lighthouses by saying that there is no evidence to suggest that "safety would be jeopardized by automating lighthouses."

Mr. Lanigan's reasoning is a classic example of the philosophical viewpoint that has become the curse of the late 20th century, and the main reason that modern nations are running aground on the shoals of social and moral decline.

Mr. Lanigan is a believer in the bottom line, a bottom line measured in dollars and cents. This philosophy has no social conscience and places very little value on the welfare of the group, whether that group be the village, the province, the nation, or the world. It is a philosophy of greed and individual selfishness.

When people like Larry Gillanders, the late and unlamented leader of the Social Credit Party, talk about government based on business principles, this bottom line philosophy is the principle that they are talking about. When other politicians and theorists talk about unfettered free enterprise, lower taxes, and less government, this is the philosophy that they are rooted in. It has become the philosophical foundation of the amoral segment of the business world, and the prevailing ethic of modern corporations.

Do we want to follow Mr. Lanigan's lead and incorporate this philosophy into our view of how we should be governed? Do we want to put dollar values on our lives,

our security, and our social well being? At what price should we be willing to sell off the things that make us one of the best and most admired societies in the world?

In the case of lighthouses what proof is there that automating them would not result in a reduction in maritime safety? Given the figure of \$1.1 million, the cost of maintaining manned lighthouses is less than five cents per Canadian per year. Is this too much to ask for providing an intelligent and responsive presence on our dangerous and rugged coast?

Even when using Mr. Lanigan's own perverse philosophy, the case for manned lighthouses may be made when analyzing the true costs involved. The \$1.1 million that would be saved from putting a bundle of lighthouse keepers and supporting staff out of work could easily be eaten up in increased costs in other areas.

From first hand experience I know that lighthouse keepers have effected rescues of distressed boaters in minutes, and have provided invaluable verbal support to vessels in foul weather searching for a haven. What is the cost of one search and rescue attempt for a small craft lost at sea? How much savings do we gain in the health care budget because drenched and battered seamen get immediate attention at a lighthouse before being shipped on to a medical facility? How many extra lives are put at risk mounting a full scale rescue operation because there was no lighthouse keeper to give immediate response in a crisis?

Mr. Lanigan's tide is the tide of monetary greed threatening to wash away the foundation of public security and safety. I am mighty glad that Captain Clark has decided to steam against it.

FRBC - A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

October 10, 1996

The FRBC affair steams on as opposition politicians and rural communities all scream and holler at the government, the former hypocritically, the latter mostly out of fear, but no doubt with some greed tossed in. The government, on the other hand, has its feet firmly planted in a pile of wet cow pies on this issue, and no doubt by now wishes that it had done a little more ground work before going after the excess funds.

The opposition party can be written off in this debate. They were not in favor of FRBC in the first place, and would like to give all of the stumpage fees back to the big corporations to use for dividends and six figure bonuses for top management. To hear them defend FRBC is ludicrous, and only further accentuates the juvenile mentality of opposition in this province.

The forest companies' objections pretty much mirror those of their lackeys in the opposition. Even though the increased stumpage rates are probably saving them from economic action by the U.S., they do not like the thought of "their" money going anywhere except back into their coffers. To them, if they have to have FRBC, the best use of the funds would be to reduce their operating costs by paying for projects that they would otherwise have to pay for themselves.

The rural communities are another story. They are looking at a declining industry, no matter what is done, and the off loading of programs from the province to the local governments. They are very concerned with jobs and a secure tax base. They do not care if FRBC is returning more money than expected as long as they get it back into their communities in one form or another.

All the while the government diddles around. FRBC money has accumulated in amounts that would cause even King Croesus to turn green with envy. This of course is the peoples' money as the trees belong to all of us, and using this logic the government wants to give it back to all of us by paying off our public debts. Not a bad idea except for two things.

The first mistake is that they promised that they would only use the money for certain purposes when they set up the program. To deviate from that promise without first going to the forest communities and getting an agreement is a breach of faith. It is an act of arrogance.

The second mistake is the failure to develop a creative vision of direct public involvement in the renewal of our forests. To set up a system that relies primarily upon the submitting of proposals by various entities to fulfill the task of forest renewal is shortsighted at best. And, in our modern era of suspicion and mistrust of everything public, it leads exactly to the backlog that we have as the bureaucrats take every precaution to make sure that they do not authorize any projects that might adversely reflect on their competence or honesty.

The philosophy that it is better to do nothing than to do the wrong thing seems to prevail at FRBC. As any veteran can tell you, sometimes doing nothing is the wrong thing.

Giving grants for projects should be only one facet of the FRBC mandate. Another facet should be the active and direct renewal of our resources and the environment upon which those resources depend.

A massive amount of the FRBC pie should go to fund a new agency that is arm's length from day to day political control. This agency, let's call it the BC Resource Renewal Agency, should have the mandate to seek out and repair environmental damage that is degrading our resource base. There is no end of watershed restoration and other projects that desperately need to be done in this province. An agency such as this could hire the personnel necessary and get on with the job without the blizzard of red tape and labyrinth of hoops that are now required to fund such work through FRBC.

Hiring preferences could go to displaced forest workers and fishermen first, and wages could be indexed to current union wages for similar work so that the fear of cheap labor would not be a roadblock. In addition the work centers and administrative facilities could all be located in rural communities to help off-set the local economic effects of declining timber and fish harvests.

Some critics will say that an agency such as this would be a boon to the corporations who would be able to duck their responsibility for repairing their damage to the environment. That problem can be addressed quite simply. Wherever

environmental damage can be attributed to any person or corporation, or group of such, they should be required by law to repay the province the full cost of repair plus a percentage.

Our environment is in trouble, and there is no good excuse for not taking FRBC funds and fast tracking a response to this serious problem.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT HERE?

November 14, 1996

Leading into and during the last provincial election much was made of the province's bond rating, Mr. Clark promised not to raise taxes, and everybody preached debt reduction. Now we hear screaming and moaning because the bond rating is dropping, there appears to be a budget deficit, the government is contemplating using excess FRBC funds to pay off part of the debt that everyone seems to despise, and there is much wailing and gnashing of teeth because expenses are being cut back along with transfer payments to the local governments.

What is important here? It is time that we all think seriously about what kind of a society that we want to live in, and that we be honest with ourselves about the cost of that society. Debt reduction, balanced budgets, and low taxes are noble goals, but they are being used as a smoke screen by political interests who really want an end to public services, fair wages, and a viable democracy.

The achievement of a zero deficit and a balanced budget through the cut back of services and the selling off of public assets such as land and crown corporations will lower the quality of life for most people in the province, and weaken the power of the mass of society in favor of that of the wealthy elite.

Quality of life will be less because needed services will not be there except at a much higher price than that which the average person was paying in taxes. And, even worse, once the market place takes control of services the outlying areas can expect the level of services to drop considerably. Add to this the fact that the public will not have near as much control over the quality or content of the services offered once the right to make decisions passes to private owners.

The raise in the price of services will also see an increase in the transfer of wealth from the middle class to the wealthy. The transfer of this wealth will be compounded if lands and infrastructure are sold off and privatized. The selling off of provincial assets would be analogous to a young couple selling their house in order to settle in to a lifetime of paying high rents to a landlord.

Once the transfer of wealth is accelerated the decline of political power will follow. The wealthy will be able to use their advantage to buy more and more elections, and make it harder for poorly funded opponents to be heard. This will lead to more and more laws favoring wealth, such as laws lowering wages, laws breaking unions, laws lowering safety standards, laws limiting responsibility and other laws that give large corporations even more of an edge in commercial enterprise.

The current economic path that is being followed by several of our political parties is a path that will lead to a new ordering of society. This new ordering will not be

entirely new though, it has a name and a historical precedent. Five hundred years ago we called it feudalism. This time, however, instead of military barons we will have corporate barons, and instead of mainly serfs on the land most of us will be wage slaves.

What can we do about this? If we let it take its natural course in the end the wage slaves will revolt, the barons will be slaughtered, and it will all start over again. The good news is that we can avoid that scenario by taking remedial action now.

Mr. Clark's biggest error has been to buy into the fable that says that we can not have tax increases. We have to have tax increases. Improving efficiency is good, and it will save us some money. Finding waste is good, and it will save us some money. But, neither one of them will find us enough money, and cutting services is generally counter productive to building a more just, equal, and secure society.

The question is not whether to raise taxes or not, but where and how to raise them. Taxes like the GST, PST and many user fees are regressive and fall heavily upon the poor and middle class who pay a much higher percentage of their wealth into these taxes than the rich who hardly notice them. These taxes also impose an unfair burden of accounting and book work on small and medium businesses who could better use the time and resources to be productive. Regressive taxes should be repealed.

Income, land and other assets are a different story. Here we can find excess personal wealth that can be used for the benefit of society. Everyone needs to have a certain level of income protected from taxes so that they can live, and everyone needs a certain amount of property protected from taxes so that they can have a place to live in. Beyond that the rest is gravy.

The income tax should have a hefty minimum deduction to protect people with marginal or sustenance incomes. This will help those in the lower income brackets to make ends meet, and will save a bundle in tax administration by reducing the number of taxpayers that the system needs to pay close attention to. Above the line of the basic deduction there should be a graduated scale that approaches ninety percent once you get into mid six figure incomes. World wide income should be taxed.

Property taxes should function much in the same way as the income tax. A basic deduction should be allowed, and other allowances made so that people can be secure with a modest home and small farm or business. Then, the property should be taxed on a graduated scale that is a function of the total property owned by the taxpayer world wide.

Property and income taxes must be an obligation for all citizens, and citizenship must be a requirement for property ownership. Failure to pay taxes should result in a loss of both citizenship and all property in Canada.

Fairly graduated taxes would make small and medium businesses more competitive, and would increase the size and the well being of the middle class. Tax increase is only a dirty phrase if the increase is unfair.

As for the bond rating, who cares? The bond rating only matters if we want to borrow money. Are the opposition parties crying now because they want us to borrow more money? I thought that reducing the deficit was the rage.

January 08, 1997

For almost thirty years I have held that the primary villain in society is greed, and that this greed is a natural component of pure, unfettered capitalist enterprise. Greed is the foundation of capitalist economics and has become the defining force in shaping our society into one that places its highest values on excessive profits and the mindless accumulation of wealth, regardless of the side effects.

It has been frustrating over the years to watch the process as the system of greed keeps expanding its influence and eroding the values of community and family that we once relied on to survive as a people. To see entire governments such as those of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, Augusto Pinochet, and other even less savory thugs come to power based on the gospel of greed has been disheartening. What has been even more frustrating is to have seen serious criticisms of the this value system down played, ignored or even vilified, and to have seen the ideas and values that have a real concern for community and social well being marginalized and dismissed without serious consideration. What is uplifting is the fact that maybe the worm is turning.

More and more on the radio and television, and in the print media the fact of the widening gap between the rich, who are getting richer, and everyone else, who are getting poorer, is being noticed. The value system of unfettered avarice is finally starting to attract some serious questions, and the criticisms that those who value people and the environment over money have carried on for so long are finally gaining some credence. This is not happening without the threat of reactionary response, however.

The practitioners of greed have a lot to lose if more democracy and a heightened social conscience should gain wider ground amongst the common people. In some areas of the world stopping this spread has a straight forward solution. The greedy kill anyone willing to stand up against them. Here the preferred manner for dealing with populist ideas is to use the control of wealth to shape opinions by either ignoring or dismissing dissenting viewpoints, and by promoting those ideas that reinforce the privileges of the wealthy.

Money dominates the major political parties, and the granting of that money is contingent upon the pursuit of certain policies and specific government actions that favor the donor. For small parties and parties that eschew corporate donors the policies and actions that are expected by the supporters are those that favor the common citizen and protect them from the unbridled power of wealth. For the major parties who take corporate funding the expectation by the donors is that policies and actions will be carried out in a manner that enhances the donors opportunities to increase their wealth at the expense of the common people.

Money also dominates the area of information, and by controlling what information is available the wealthy can shape the course of debate. Every day more media outlets fall prey to a centralizing force that is concentrating the control of what we read and hear into fewer and fewer hands. As the mainstream outlets for ideas become more agglomerated the questions on wealth and greed that now have been finally starting to rise up in public debate may be submerged once more, or may be discussed in a context totally irrelevant to the real problems at hand.

The fact that the questions of wealth and greed are finally being taken up as serious components in the debate about the problems that we are facing in society is encouraging. And, maybe the fact that the forces of greed are so aggressively concentrating their control over the media to compliment their control over the major political parties is a signal that society as a whole might finally be receptive to the idea that some people have too much, and that the common good might be a better goal than personal profit.

As resources dwindle while the population grows, and the gap between the wealthy few and the rest of us spreads ever wider, rough and turbulent seas could lie over the horizon for our social and economic system. It is time for all of us to look deep inside ourselves and ask what really are my values.

July 08, 1997

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August 20, 1997

Like a noxious odour that no amount of air spray can seem to wipe out, the topic of two-tiered healthcare keeps stinking up the atmosphere of public discourse. This past month the doctors of Canada met at the annual general meeting of the Canadian Medical Association, held in Victoria, and took up debate on this malignant concept once more. Fortunately for all Canadians, common sense prevailed, and a majority of the doctors voted down this idea brought forward by their more selfish and avaricious colleagues.

Citing waiting lines for treatment and other problems in the delivery of healthcare, profit centered physicians, right wing fringe organizations like the Fraser Institute, and others hoping to get rich off of the cash cow of private healthcare, have been engaging in scare tactics to convince Canadians that opening the door to so called free enterprise is the only solution to our healthcare problems.

Most Canadians have exercised some intelligence in this matter and have not bought into these lies and distortions. A recent Angus Reid poll found that two thirds of Canadians do not want a private healthcare system.

There is no doubt that we have problems in healthcare. There is no doubt that our system is underfunded. And, there is no doubt that it is also one of the best healthcare delivery systems in the world. If you think that it is bad, you should try another one somewhere else.

Prior to emigrating to Canada in the mid 80 s I was a participant in the US healthcare system. I was enrolled in an HMO in the San Francisco Bay Area, and paid a monthly premium to cover my basic medical needs. At that time I was paying more in Canadian dollars to the HMO than I am now to BC Med, and that does not account for inflation or the fact that my BC Med payments cover two people where the HMO covered only one.

What did I get for a bunch more money? Not nearly as much as I get from BC Med. I had user fees every time I went to see a doctor or nurse practitioner. I did not have as wide a freedom of choice on which physician I would see. I had fewer items covered than I have with BC Med. I had inferior healthcare compared to that which I receive in Canada. So much for free enterprise.

So what do we do about improving our healthcare system? Currently the media is full of articles and editorials about trimming costs, rationalizing administration, making better use of what we have, and so on. These are not bad ideas, but you can only push them so far until there is nothing left to gain from them. We may have already maximized most of the savings to be had in these areas.

The next logical step is to increase the funding to the healthcare system. This is what we need to do, and this is also what free enterprise is all about. The big difference between the public and private methods of operation is that in the public method the burden of funding will be spread across the whole society, and to an extent will be proportional to the ability to pay. In the private method the burden will be passed on immediately to everyone who comes into contact with the system in the form of higher costs for treatment and/or insurance premiums. And, unlike under the public model, the burden imposed on each individual will be in inverse relationship to the ability to pay.

Public healthcare is a service. Private healthcare is an industry, and is a vehicle for moving wealth from the middle class to doctors and corporate investors. It is a double boon to the wealthy because as doctors and investors they not only profit from increased fees and profits, they save money through lower taxes.

We will all see lower taxes directly related to healthcare if the system is privatized. The problem is that because some of our taxes are progressive, based on wealth, the

tax savings by many Canadians will be less than their increased healthcare costs. The rich, on the other hand, will be happy to pay more for their health since they will still be paying less than the taxes that they save.

It is time that the people start demanding, and government start looking at increased taxes to fund healthcare. It is time for the province to look at the premiums charged by BC Med and consider an increase. It is time that the federal government think about setting standards for healthcare insurance nation wide, and mandating that all provinces institute a provincial health plan. It is time that all of us start thinking about how and why we use medical services, and how we can take preventive measures to have healthier lives that lower the demand on the system.

It is time that we show appreciation to those doctors who stand up for public healthcare, and heap scorn and contempt on those who keep calling for privatization which puts the pursuit of profits and wealth ahead of the well being of society and the health of their patients.

August 31, 1997

Recently Mayor Lornie of Campbell River circulated a resolution to the “leaders” of the North Island with a letter asking them to endorse it as “another important tool in the struggle to insist upon responsible action on the part of environmental groups.” The Gold River Council gave a rubber stamp endorsement to Mayor Lornie without any serious thought on the matter. According to the *Comox Valley Record* the Comox Council also endorsed it, but with reservations. The problem is that Mayor Lornie’s points are contentious and are partly based on erroneous perceptions. Giving endorsement to this position without serious qualification and criticism only serves to abet the campaign of hate and disinformation being pursued by the provincial government, the forest corporations and their subsidiary organizations such as the various “share” groups that they have helped to organize and fund.

The issue in the forest is not the environmental groups, it is not the short term economy, it is not even the forest corporations, it is forestry practices and the sustainability of old growth forests and a bio-diversified forest environment. Mayor Lornie is not a stupid man, so he knows what the real issues are, and this latest maneuver by him is an attempt to get people to avoid the issue by shifting focus from the message to the messengers. It is a classic ploy recorded time and again in history throughout the ages.

In his resolution Mayor Lornie has seven statements of fact upon which he bases his attack upon those he would ask us to condemn for not sharing his corporate view of our forests. His resolution (in italics) and my comments are as follows:

***WHEREAS** British Columbia is blessed with an abundance of natural resources (forests, minerals, oil, gas, wildlife and spectacular geography), and*

We can all agree with the abundance of resources to a degree.

***WHEREAS** the harvesting of these resources is carried out in a sustainable and responsible manner, as regulated through a series of recent government reforms including the tough and unprecedented Forest Practices Code, the Timber Supply Review which ensures the long-term sustainability of harvest levels,*

and the Protected Areas Strategy through which we are meeting ambitious and international endorsed targets for wilderness habitat protection, and

That harvesting is being carried out in a sustainable manner is highly debatable, particularly in light of all of the past reviews over the last twenty years that have almost always stated that we are over cutting our forest and need to reduce the AAC. The fact that recent reforms are “tough and unprecedented” is beside the point. How tough and how effective they are is still an item of serious contention.

***WHEREAS** the value of these resources has enabled government to provide high standards of healthcare, education, recreation and social services, along with an extensive network of roads, bridges, ferries and airports serving hundreds of communities spread throughout its vast geography, and*

There is no doubt that the value of the resources is the foundation for our prosperity, however, the question remains, are we exploiting them wisely or are we selling out our children’s future for short term profits? Mayor Lornie would have us sever the economic contribution of resources from any moral or ethical considerations arising from their extraction. Using his argument one can easily justify the growing of cocaine in South America, the growing of opium in Asia, and the whole apparatus of the international drug trade.

***WHEREAS** the issue of sustainability has brought together BC communities, governments, labour organizations, First Nations and resource industries to achieve consensus through negotiation in open, democratic processes, and*

Saying that we have consensus on sustainability is a joke. The print media is filled with letters and editorials that are in adamant opposition to each other on the issue of forest practices and sustainability. And, almost daily, groups on both sides of the debate are issuing statements and reports whose content and tenor prove that consensus on this topic is only an illusion.

***WHEREAS** the North Island Mayors recognize the Central Coast First Nations Protocol on the Environment, and*

Asking the North Island Mayors to recognize the so called Central Coast First Nations Protocol on the Environment is asking the Mayors to participate in a scam. My investigations seem to indicate that this bogus protocol was cooked up by a Vancouver public relations firm which does a lot of propaganda work and spin doctoring for the forest corporations, and was paid for by funds provided the Nuxalk Nation by the Ministry of Forests. The Nuxalk are in fact divided on the issue of environmentalists in their territory with hereditary chiefs actively backing the environmental cause.

***WHEREAS** in spite of the fact the great majority of British Columbians are satisfied with the changes undertaken by government and industry toward sustainability, still certain international activists misinformation campaigns continue to raise funds through false blanket claims of unsustainable forest practices in BC, and*

The satisfaction of many British Columbians is also at question. Mayor Lornie ignores widespread provincial support for environmental protection, and polling in Port Hardy at the time of the Greenpeace demonstrations there showed that although most people had some problems with the methods, most also felt that the issues that Greenpeace was forcing attention on were valid issues that needed to be addressed. As for accusations of

misinformation campaigns and blanket claims, it certainly looks like a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

***WHEREAS** workers, their families and their communities are being seriously affected in their ability to live normal lives under the pressures generated by these false claims,*

This is a scare statement that tries to shift the blame from forestry practices and corporate policies to “false claims.” Of course there is no proof of false claims as the whole issue is still one under debate.

***NOW THEREFORE** be it resolved by the undersigned community leaders that the organizations carrying out these unfair, unwarranted and unwelcome attacks on the credibility of the people of this province and the communities in which they live, be asked to cease and desist their hurtful campaign, and instead work with all British Columbians toward promoting sustainability in its broadest and most widely accepted sense, taking into full account ecological, economic and social values.*

Mayor Lornie’s actual resolution based on his spurious statements of fact simply aims at vilifying people whom his backers in the forest industry find irritating and an impediment to their unfettered enjoyment of public resources. It also is used to plug the ill conceived idea that economic and social values are on par with environmental integrity. It does nothing to make an intelligent contribution to the question of how to solve the problems facing us in the forest.

This move by Mayor Lornie is not an isolated event. It goes hand in hand with propaganda being put out by the Forest Alliance, a front group sponsored by the forest corporations and designed by a public relations firm, and by the IWA who has knuckled under to industry on this issue. Mayor Lornie uses the pronouncements of the Forest Alliance as facts to justify his resolution while the Forest Alliance uses Mayor Lornie’s resolution to reinforce their so called facts. What we have here is a song and dance routine put on for the benefit of the large corporations to distract British Columbians from thoughtfully considering the serious issues in the forest.

January, 18, 1998

California is 100% smoke free in workplaces as of January 1, 1998. This includes all bars which have employees. Restaurants are already smoke free. When the law went into effect there was the usual moaning and groaning about impending lost business and the spectre of financial ruin for publicans. Of course it was mostly smoke. Eighty percent of Californians do not smoke, and in San Luis Obispo and Marin Counties where earlier bans were in place it is reported that business actually improved in the watering holes.

Another ridiculous complaint that was being wailed high and low to all that would listen was the misguided claim that laws like this take away smoker’s rights, and that smokers were going to smoke in defiance of the law. What rights? Many restaurants have banned cigar and pipe smoking for years. What justification is there for this? Doesn’t this also infringe on smoker’s rights? If people were really serious about smoker’s rights they would protest by smoking cigars and pipes in places where they have been prohibited, not wimpy cigarettes.

The right to smoke ends when it affects somebody else’s right to breathe, and the right to breathe clean air pre-empts any right to smoke, anywhere! If a person has a place open to

the public then everyone has a right to be there, and people who do not want to breathe smoke have the right to smoke free air. Likewise, employees in a business or any other organization have as much right to smoke free air as they do to safe working conditions, fair pay and freedom from harassment. To say "if you don't like it, leave," is not a solution that anyone without a mental deficiency would seriously put forward.

To deny people the right to smoke wherever they please is in the same category as denying them the right to defecate wherever they please, or dump their toxic waste wherever they please. Discriminating against smokers is morally just, and is an imperative to protect the general welfare of society.

Smoking is a disorder on par with compulsive behaviour such as gambling addiction, and physical addiction to drugs. In fact nicotine is an addictive drug, and smokers are in the same pool as those hooked on heroin and other habit forming substances. In some ways smoking is worse than these other aberrations because it also is assaulting and an act of battery against all those who are affected by the smoke.

The grossest and most vile act of smokers is to smoke in the presence of children. To allow a child's lungs to be inflicted with smoke is a violation of trust by a parent, and a subtle, yet hideous act of child abuse. It should be legally treated as such.

The right to smoke is the right to smoke in private where no one but the smoker is subjected to smoke's debilitating effects. Smoking in public or in anyplace that children or others are liable to come in contact with the smoke should be considered an attack upon the rights and well being of society.

For California smokers the time has come to butt out. For Canadians it is time to put more pressure on governments at all levels to follow suit and put an end to public butt sucking.

Smoking Facts

70% of Canadians over 15 years of age are non-smokers.

In 1994 Canadians spent \$8.12 billion on tobacco products.

1991 health care costs from smoking related illnesses was \$2.5 billion.

Projected smoking deaths for the year 2000: 46,910.

Sitting two hours in a smoky bar is the same as smoking 4 cigarettes.

There is no safe level of exposure to chemicals in cigarettes.

Funds allocated annually to anti-smoking enforcement programs: \$10 million.

February 21, 1998

Politics and governments these days seem to be focused around budgets, deficits and economic performance to the neglect of most other items. Great concern seems to be shown about whether or not budgets are balanced; about how much growth is taking place; and about what the economic indicators are pointing at. What seems to have been lost in the shuffle is what government is really about.

Economics is important, no doubt, and nothing, whether it be fish stocks, forests or bank accounts can exist in a perpetual state where depletion exceeds the ability to replenish, but economics is not the reason for government. Governments exist to

provide public security and social stability so that we do not revert to animals, robbing and killing one another as our whims and our greed takes us.

Social stability and security can be achieved in many ways, but the best way is by creating a society in which all members are fairly equal in rights and freedoms, and in wealth. A society where everyone has the opportunity to reasonably obtain a fair share of the wealth, and where no one is permitted to acquire and retain a disproportionate amount is the ideal society. It is the duty of good government to manage and lead towards this ideal. It is the duty of good government to serve as an equalizer of wealth.

When we allow ourselves to get caught up in a nebulous discussion of growth and profit margins and start acting out of a fear that good government might have negative impacts on these things, then we have allowed ourselves to be trapped in a snare set by the greedy and the socially deviant amongst us.

By looking at the bottom line through an economic filter, particularly a filter that measures success in the size of the profit margin and the monetary return on investment, we dehumanize ourselves and ignore the more important indicators of social well being. Our bottom line should be measured by whether or not everyone has enough to eat; by whether or not everyone has a decent place to live and clothes to wear; and by whether or not healthcare and education are freely accessible to everyone. These things are more important than any GNP or GDP or market index. They are certainly more important than any one individual's right to accumulate wealth beyond basic needs.

Achieving this ideal state locally or regionally in a global world is difficult, but it is an achievement that government should continually strive for. In a place like British Columbia, which is resource rich and has a small population, it is more easily achieved than in other places. With good government we can insure that the majority of the wealth from our resources stays here to serve all the people, and not get exported as profits to foreign exploiters.

By arranging the economics to fit our social needs rather than by arranging our social needs to fit our economic greeds, we can build a stable and secure society based on the equitable distribution of wealth.

March 23, 1998

RUNNING ON EMPTY, that was the title story on the front page of the *North Island Weekender* on March 21 that also featured a photo of an almost empty booming ground in front of the Gold River Pulp Mill. GOLD RIVER RUNS DRY was the feature title on page A3 in the *Times Colonist* of March 23. These and various other shock headlines have been common in the media the last week or so. It is probably the most publicity that Gold River has ever gotten at one time in its existence. What does it all mean?

Despite years of discussion about the fact that Gold River is at serious risk because of its excessive dependence on the forest industry, not much was ever done that

successfully changed the situation. The majority attitude in the village remained one of insouciance and avoidance of the obvious facts that loomed over the region. This attitude was fed and perpetuated by the “forests forever” fairy tale that became the stock in trade propaganda item of companies and unions hell bent on extracting the most dollars from the woods at the fastest pace possible.

Add to this the development of computers, instant global communications and a modern global transportation network. These factors freed large corporations from local, regional and even national considerations, and made it easy to look upon the world as one unified market place. A development that did not bode well for places like BC with both considerable resources and a high standard of living.

BC’s high standard of living made the cost of processing resources less competitive than in those third world countries where various forms of serfdom are the norm, and presented the corporations with two choices: spend lots of bucks developing secondary and tertiary processing plants for resources in BC, a decision that would be good for the province but bad for maximum profits; or treat BC like a colony and ship the resources off shore to be processed for a higher return. It was a no-brainer for the corporate executives. Instead of focusing on making paper, paper products, pre-fabs and other manufactured wood products at home, they concentrated on exporting pulp, raw logs, cants and lumber with as little value added as possible.

All the while that this was happening technological advances kept driving down employment numbers in the woods. This allowed industry to create the job loss bogeyman which it uses to pressure the government for more trees and fewer restraints. The end result is that now even the Forest Alliance, a propaganda arm of the forest corporations, is admitting that the cream of the forest has been chopped, and that companies are now facing higher costs as they go after the less profitable “guts and feathers” of the forest that remain.

To further add to industry woes marketing decisions were made with the abandon of a high-roller at a craps table. Instead of constantly working to build a balanced marketing portfolio of diverse customers that presented a mix of risk and profitability, a big chunk of the BC boys plunked most of their money down to win on an Asian market that promised easy returns. The Asians rolled snake eyes and the loss reverberated back through the BC economy, stopping many forestry dependent communities dead in their tracks.

The forest industry is a major force in the BC economy, and with a significant portion of it in distress tax revenues fall and economic indicators take a dive. With the NDP in power this leads to further complications. The oligarchs and reactionaries that dominate corporate society have a disdain for popular democracy and social responsibility, and hate the NDP and any other political force that seeks to protect the common welfare and exert public control over economic activity. When their markets fall apart and there is no easy money to be made they are not above making things worse by withholding investment and sowing fear to get tax breaks and labor concessions.

All of this and more is the path that led to the situation in Gold River as well as many other parts of the province. To a degree it has happened before, so it is really

nothing new, but this time the recovery may not be as full as others were in the past. The way to the future is to change directions.

Tax breaks, lower stumpage rates, lower environmental standards, fewer workers, lower wages and reduced rights and benefits, this is what industry wants in order to continue. It is a dead end solution that will only perpetuate a bad system until it totally collapses. No matter whether industry gets what it wants or not we are looking at a decreasing and more difficult harvest and fewer traditional jobs. We are looking at foreign competition that works under standards so low that sub-standard does not adequately define them. We are looking at treaties and trade deals that threaten our very ability to set our own agendas and protect our way of life.

It is time to face up to these facts. It is time to face up to the fact that the forest has a limit and that the industry as we have known it will not sustain us much longer in the future. It is time to seriously start looking for better ways to utilize our resources and to capture their maximum value close to home rather than export it overseas. It is time to demand more accountability from those who would exploit our resources, and to demand no trade deals or treaties that do not set high global standards for employment and the environment.

There is more to a forest than trees, and there is more to trees than the few crude products that we export. It is time to increase our vision of what is possible here.

May 14, 1998

Those who read some of my editorials know that from time to time I have challenged the quality of the opposition in this province and have likened them to spoiled little children based on the style and content of the positions which they often take on the issues. I did not think that it could get much worse until I heard about a stunt that they pulled in the last sitting of the legislature. A stunt that did nothing for the governance of this province, wasted valuable time in the legislature, and probably wasted valuable dollars too.

A couple of weeks ago I attended a dinner with Dennis Streifel, Minister of Fisheries, and during the conversation he mentioned that the Liberals tied up debate for hours, carrying on about whether or not to recess for dinner. I thought that such juvenile antics were incredible for people elected to help govern this province, so I went to Hansard to find out what happened. Here is what I found.

Just before 6:00pm on June 09, Joy MacPhail moved in the House that there be a recess until 6:35pm. A motion to recess is a debatable motion and Opposition House Leader Gary Farrell-Collins rose and said "I will be the first of probably a long line of speakers on this side of the House. . . ." He was not kidding. Gary spoke until almost 6:30 when Mike de Jong took the floor for a few minutes before a fifteen minute recess was called for procedural reasons.

M. de Jong took the floor once again after the recess and continued to chatter for about half an hour. He was replaced by fellow Liberal R. Coleman who prattled on past 7:45. D. Symons next arose and said "It's a pleasure to get up and speak on this

particular topic this evening,” and carried on to almost 8:15. Symons was followed by Hawkins who said “I’m quite pleased, actually, to rise and join in this debate. I’ve also been listening for the last couple of hours, and I’ve listened very carefully. . . .” Everyone got to listen to her until 8:45.

Dale Lovick rose on a point of order and challenged the relevancy of continuing the debate, but the opposition carried on. April Sanders spoke next, then Christy Clark, C. Hansen, and finally M. Coell who opened with “I’m pleased to be here to offer a few comments on the motion to recess, which at this point seems a little redundant.” After Coell there were no more speakers and the House adjourned at 10:08pm following over four hours of one-sided debate by the Liberals on the merits of recessing for dinner.

It gets worse. On June 29, just before 6:00pm, Minister MacPhail once again moved to recess until 6:35. G. Abbott rose saying “I rise to speak to the motion to recess,” and was followed by I. Chong, C. Clark, A. Sanders, P. Nettleton, G. Hogg, K. Whittred, J. Dalton, M. Coell, D. Jarvis, R. Neufeld, L. Stephens, and D. Symons. The House was adjourned at 11:50pm after almost six hours of debate.

The farce was repeated again on July 08, and the speeches went on for over two hours until Gordon Wilson took the floor. Making comments such as “. . . it’s a little bit like watching a Warner Brothers cartoon,” and “. . . when we get to debating a recess, it gets a little silly,” Wilson went on to move that the question be put. The Liberals of course challenged the appropriateness of Wilson’s motion, and managed to drag things out for a few more minutes before being overruled by the Speaker. Finally, the House voted just before 8:45 to recess at 6:35pm.

To me government is a serious business, and I would hope that everyone who enters into it would have some appreciation for the responsibility that they are taking on. Any one, no matter what party they belong to, who engages in silly antics like these, should be ashamed of themselves. By dragging on moot debate for hours at a time they are abandoning their responsibilities and playing childish games hardly worthy of intoxicated and hormone crazed college frats.

February 27, 2001

The other night at the Council meeting in Gold River Liberal candidate Rod Visser told everyone that if his party formed government neither BC Hydro, ICBC, or BC Rail would be on the selling block. I wonder about BC Ferries. He also did not state what he would do should he be elected and be in the government party and the government did put any of these on the block or attempt deregulation or any other foolishness which most people in this province do not support. Given some of the critical statements that Mr. Visser has made in the course of his yearlong campaign, we voters are entitled to know this too.

I wonder if he is really gullible enough to believe what he said, or maybe just ignorant of the nature of the party he is a part of, or was it lies as usual? Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals have long been on record as favouring deregulation and privatization. Their campaign coffers ooze with funds supplied by big

corporations and special interests who are waiting in the wings to profit from gaining control of our publicly owned services. Does anyone think that there will be no pay-offs to supporters should the opportunity arise? California style hydro rates and health care will be very good for the backers of Mr. Campbell and his cohorts.

Mr. Visser represents a party that for more than six years has had no visible platform other than they are not the governing party. They have put forward very little in the way of constructive criticism or functional alternatives to whatever government policy they were crying about at the moment. Does anyone really know what they have planned for BC? I think that we all deserve to see some specific details.

We need to know what Mr. Campbell meant when he told the Canadian Institute of Energy that “the move to deregulation in the energy sector is a global reality.” We need an explanation for his other statements to them in favour of deregulation and competition. We need to know who he is feeding a line of BS to, the voters or the energy companies.

Where are Mr. Campbell and Mr. Visser on the export of bulk water? Will they continue the moratorium held in place by the present government or will they give in and sell off the resource? Will they continue to defy Sunbelt who is suing us under NAFTA for refusing to let them have the water? In fact, will they stand up against NAFTA as it is currently written, or will they follow their financial backers and fellow Liberals in the federal government and acquiesce in this infringement of our local and provincial sovereignty?

If Mr. Campbell follows the example of Mr. Klein in Alberta we know where it will lead. Electricity costs will at least double for starters, but education and health care spending and wages may well go down.

And taxes? Mr. Campbell’s plan will take from the poor and give to the rich. His tax cuts will benefit those who have plenty already, while his spending cuts will gut health care and other social services that we all depend upon. Even his own kind, like banker David Bond, have seen the fallacy of Campbell’s proposals and have said so publicly.

The people of this province deserve to have the Official Opposition come clean with them now so that they may make an informed choice in the coming election.