

SUBMISSION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIAL
JUSTICE COMMISSION OF THE DIOCESE OF VICTORIA
TO THE STRATHCONA PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE, CAMPBELL

RIVER, B.C. MAY 27, 1988

presented by

Fr. Charles A.E. Brandt (yde)
R.R.1, Site 22, Black Creek, B.C.

The question before us is: should additional mining be allowed in Strathcona Park, prescinding from the question of the rightness or wrongness of the current mining taking place in the Park by Westmin and the environmental damage stemming from this operation.

The present committee should address itself to the question: whether or not mining is desirable in Strathcona Park and its recommendations should be based on this issue. The question before us is not compensation. Whether or not there is ever to be any compensation to Cream Silver or other mining companies will up to the courts to decide, not this committee, nor the government.

We have repeatedly been told by government officials that "We have no choice." "We are bound by the Supreme Court of Canada...to honour the present claims in the Park.....We would have to buy out all the existing claims at a cost we simply cannot afford."

In "A Public Statement Concerning the Future Direction and Management of Strathcona Park", the Honourable Bruce Strachan, Minister of Environment and Parks, on March 11, 1987, said:

The Supreme Court of Canada has recently ruled that by granting mineral claims in the past the Government has made a legal commitment. The Supreme Court has instructed that Government must either allow exploration to proceed or compensate the claim holders for the full value of their mineral deposits. Unfortunately, these claims are located in the centre of one of the Park's most attractive areas. Furthermore, this same area is strongly suspected to contain very valuable minerals. The Province simply cannot afford to gamble untold millions of taxpayers' dollars to purchase these rights."

Strachen is quoted in Feb. 9, 1986, The Vancouver Sun: "...it's possible" the cabinet's decision to allow a mining company to pursue its mineral claim in Strathcona Park was based on flawed legal advice. "I don't mind admitting that we have a lot more law now to look at on the question of whether or not we can hold up exploration activity," he said in an interview.

Actually the Supreme Court of Canada has said nothing in its recent ruling which bears on the question of compensation for mineral claims in Strathcona Park. There is no cause to raise the spectre of the Government having to gamble "untold millions of taxpayers' dollars".

What is the law with respect to the claims in Strathcona Park? It is this: The Supreme Court of British Columbia, contrary to the 1987 assertions of the Ministry of Environment and Parks, has held that the Tener decision (concerned with land claims in Wells-Gray Park before it was established as a Park) does not apply to the Cream Silver claims in Strathcona Park. Unless or until that decision is successfully appealed, this is the law of the Province.

If Cream Silver thinks this decision is wrong, that the Tener decision applies, they should get on with their appeal. If they win we won't have to guess about the amount compensation. At that time the government and the people of British Columbia can decide if that is a price we are prepared to pay. In this way there will be no gambling of "untold millions of taxpayers' dollars".

In the meanwhile the question before the Advisory Committee is whether or not mining is desirable in Strathcona Park. Its recommendations should be based on that issue.

It is a sad day when people have to be arrested to obtain a hearing, a hearing which the Government now calls "worthwhile and necessary". Without this exhibition of courage and standing up for wilderness heritage these hearings would not have been held.

But is mining desirable in Strathcona Park? From the same address as quoted above the Minister reaches this conclusion:

"The result is a park which includes fixed resource tenures which the Government is legally obliged to recognize even though such resource use clearly does not now accord to our society's view of acceptable park management." (at p. 2; emphasis added)

I suggest to you that mining is not desirable or acceptable and is not compatible with Strathcona Park...for the following reasons:

1) The Strathcona Park Act of 1911 states, "The tract of land... is hereby withdrawn from sale, settlement, and occupancy under the provisions of the Land Act, or any other Act with respect to mining or any other matter." The Park was set aside "as a pleasure ground for the benefit, advantage and enjoyment of the people of British Columbia. The Park since its inception has been abused with mining, logging, hydro development and various other industrial degradation. There has been no Park Plan.

2) Mining destroys the WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE. For John Muir, the great naturalist, wilderness was a restorative place, a place in which he could succor and restore his mental and physical well being. He often wrote of this quality of wilderness experience. In the mountains, "cares will drop off like autumn leaves." In the "great fresh, unblighted, unredeemed wilderness people will find hope...the galling hardness of civilization drops off, and the wounds heal ere we are aware." The noise pollution from the constantly passing ore trucks, the whine of the generator of Westmin heard as far away as Flower Ridge, the visual pollution of the of the exposed tree trunks at the south end of Buttle lake at certain periods of the year, the great and ugly scar from the open pit mine on the mountain side above Westmin's present site - all of this pollution destroys the possibility of meditation that the WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE permits. And all of this from a mine within the present park.

3) "Metal concentrations in the South Buttle Lake basin at times exceeded criteria for drinking water and for aquatic biota. Concentrations

in downstream lakes were significantly lower, but at times exceeded objective concentrations for drinking water. Levels of dissolved metals in the Campbell River would be toxic to native juvenile rainbow trout. Water quality in the Campbell River has reached a critical state with regard to the wellbeing of salmonids native to the river." These are quotes from a 1985 Ministry of Environment document entitled "Effects of Dissolved metals on the Aquatic Biota of the Lakes of the Campbell River Watershed". Westmin is acid-generating. At present this problem is contained. The control of this is maintained at the cost of over \$1,000,000 a year. Who will maintain this control after Westmin is gone? Possibly for the next 500 years? How can we even consider additional mining in the Park which can only increase acid-mine drainage with its consequent effects?

TSOLUM RIVER: quoting from the Strathcona News: "The consequences of uncontrolled acid mine waste have been demonstrated at the abandoned Mount Washington Mine on the Park's eastern boundary. Fish populations in the Tsolum River have been all but eliminated. Though the geology of Eastern Strathcona Park varies, there is a strong likelihood any mining in the area would produce acid waste".

4) LOGGING: The effect of clearcut logging can be devastating to any watershed. The Oyster River is a prime example. Upstream, clearcut logging has created downstream flooding with the loss of homes and property, bad silting and the scouring of the spawning gravel. This can happen in the Park.

5) THE EARTH IS IN CRISIS. There should be some areas of the earth that are safe-guarded against man's exploitation and consequent degradation. Let's begin with Strathcona Park. Scientists project that in a little over a decade - by the year 2000 - these changes will have taken place on our planet:

- Almost $\frac{1}{2}$ of the world's forests will have been cut down.
- $\frac{1}{5}$ of the world's current plant and animal species will become extinct, primarily the result of disruption and destruction of their natural habitat.
- The spread of man-made deserts will claim an area $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the size of the United States.
- The air we breath will contain $\frac{1}{3}$ more carbon dioxide.
- Acid rain will have destroyed hundreds of lakes, and with them

most of their aquatic life. And then there is acid mine drainage, the greatest mining problem in B.C.

- . Regional fresh water shortages will be up 35%.

Somehow we must come to realize that the earth is not merely a resource for human exploitation, but that it is a gift, a holy gift, that has a vastly deeper worth than its value as purely an economic commodity.

These big mining companies and logging companies and the government do provide jobs. But they seem to offer us a false equation: human welfare values versus wilderness; and the government: jobs versus parkland. And what we need to do is build a human society of full meaningful employment in harmony with the natural world.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Advisory Committee's mandate is inadequate: it doesn't involve all of B.C.'s citizens. It ignores native land claims.

2. We agree with Mr. Jim Rutter, a member of the Advisory Committee, who is Ex. Director of the Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C. and who wrote to Mr. Strachen two weeks before he was appointed to the Committee, that "the Review was inadequate". We would like to have a Section Two Judicial Inquiry which would make it possible to subpoena and cross examine cabinet and others involved in the changes in Strathcona Park.

3. All so called 'recreation areas' which allow resource exploration and extraction should be abolished, and the park boundaries be restored to what they were before a 1987 cabinet order-in-council.

4. All land trades should be frozen.

5. There should be independent studies on water quality and environmental impact before decisions or recommendations are made. That information should be presented in a public forum. These studies should especially be concerned with ACID MINE DRAINAGE.

6. If you, the advisory committee, on the basis of the submissions before you, find that mining would enhance the Park, you should recommend it. If, however, you find that it will not enhance the Park and might even cause permanent damage, you should recommend that no mining activity take place.

CLOSING REMARKS

John Muir: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe...No particle is ever wasted or worn out, but eternally flowing from use to use."

Thomas Merton, from his final talk, delivered two hours before his death: "The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another and all involved in one another."

Strathcona Park is a Living Organism. Each part is related to every other part. All of the living beings in the Park are interdependent and touch each one of us. Expose pyrrhitic ore to water and oxygen in an open pit mine at Westmin in the Park and the life forms in the Straight of Georgia are affected. Visual or audible pollution in the Park destroys the Wilderness Experience. Users of the Park who might never enter a man made church tell me that the Park is their Cathedral. Would you be able to worship in a Cathedral where there is acid mine drainage destroying aquatic life and polluting drinking water, a Cathedral through which a continuous stream of heavy ore trucks is moving, a Cathedral disfigured by the ugliness of exposed stumps and a mutilated and scarred open-pit mountain side? This is not longer a cathedral, but instead an exploited wasteland. Compassion has had no part here.

BUT IT IS STILL NOT TOO LATE. WE CAN BEGIN AGAIN. WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.