

Holy Earth has Value beyond Economics

By CHARLES A.E. BRANDT

COMOX VALLEY — I HAVE put down some reflections about the recent boundary changes and reclassification of areas within Strathcona Park, the oldest provincial park in British Columbia. These changes were made by the Provincial Government without public hearings despite promised hearings by 3 successive ministers of Environment and Parks.

I suggest that mining and logging as practiced today in many parts of B.C. are not only incompatible with parks but incompatible with lands outside of parks as well. Immediately there comes to mind Mt. Washington Copper and Westmin. In addition the ongoing logging of the Oyster River watershed by McMillan and Bloedell.

NOT LONG AGO, I attended a conference in Campbell River on Acid-Mine-Generation. I was told that it was held in Campbell River because we are surrounded by examples of acid-mine generation: Mt. Washington and Westmin.

were being leached from open pit mines up above the underground mines.

With a pumping system and settling ponds the problem is now contained. But eventually when Westmin leaves, these open pit mines must be sealed. It is questionable that this can ever be done satisfactorily. The cost will be astronomical. There is a potential for acid generation from this mine for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years.

LOGGING OF THE OYSTER RIVER WATERSHED: This, to me personally is one of the great

McMillan and Bloedell's earnings for the first quarter of this year was 60 million dollars. This massive profit is due — I learn from the media — to "streamlined operations" and "a buoyant market."

Today, throughout the earth we seem to have unleashed powers that

earth and its peoples?

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. To realize this we must discover our own spirit.

Look Around Us

All we need to do is look around us to see how the earth has been exploited in our own Comox Valley through uncontrolled mining and logging. We say that mining and logging are not compatible with Strathcona Park or any park.

What we really have to do is build a human society of full meaningful employment in harmony with the natural world. It is both possible and necessary that we restructure our economy, political system, community lives and personal living upon the ethics of peace, reflected in concepts of sustainability, participation and justice.

How do we do this? I believe that we have to use reason and analysis. But these alone will not free us from our alienation no matter how accurate or profound. We have to TURN AROUND.

We hope that the present government will turn around in its decision not to allow a public hearing on the proposed boundaries and



Rev. Charles Brandt

we can no longer control. We have exploited our natural resources so wantonly that we are in danger of exhausting them by the time our

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grandchildren have reached maturity.

Because of these grave threats to the continuation of life on earth we are drawn together in the cause of peace. We seek peace with all peoples of the earth and with the earth itself.

We find ourselves alienated not only from ourselves, but from our sister and brother, and from the very roots of reality. We find ourselves alienated from the earth and its natural resources. Instead of living in peace and harmony and unity with the earth, we find ourselves exploiting it and performing acts of violence that degrade and spoil it.

We used to think that our natural resources were inexhaustible. Now we know that the end is in sight. So the question arises: how can we enjoy, utilize, harvest these resources without destroying them? How can we moderate and neutralize the powers that we have unleashed? How do we become true stewards and bring peace and unity to the

reclassification of Strathcona Park. This will be a step towards an even greater TURNING AROUND of all society.

It is necessary that we undergo a TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS in order to realize that the earth is not merely a resource for human exploitation but is a sacred gift of worth far beyond its value as an economic commodity.

The way to this transformation of consciousness is through meditation, in discovering our own spirit in the cave of our heart. It means that we will have to enter into silence to discover our spirit and to subject everything else to it: possessions, possessiveness, desire and honour, body and mind.

I believe that if everyone would meditate twice a day, 20 minutes in the morning, and 20 minutes in the evening, that we would come to a deeper wisdom and fulfill our destiny: to live in peace and unity and harmony not only with other nations and peoples of the earth, but with the earth itself.

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In My Opinion

In my opinion Quinsam Coal and Nuspar Resources pose a threat to their respective watersheds. In addition, the opening up of the Gem Lake and Faith Lake watersheds to mining, as well as Cream Lake — all in the park — are frightening possibilities of acid-mine generation which could release heavy metals into their respective watersheds thus poisoning the streams for salmonids and invertebrate life while affecting our drinking waters.

MT. WASHINGTON COPPER: This open pit mine on the east face of Mt. Washington was opened in 1964, abandoned in 1966, unreclaimed, with tons of overburden (ore) exposed to water, oxygen and bacteria. After a few years this ore generated acid which release heavy metals, chiefly copper, into the Tsolum River system.

For all intents and purposes the Tsolum is a dead river, poisoned by copper from the mine. The salmonid stocks have been decimated along with invertebrate life. It will be

tragedies of our area. I have lived on the Oyster River for over 20 years and witnessed its gradual degradation, primarily due to the clearcut logging in its upper reaches. Adrian Creek, an important tributary of the Oyster, has been logged right to its banks by McMillan and Bloedel.

RUNOFF CARRYING SOIL AND SILT into the creek is directed into the lower reaches of the Oyster River, which destroys invertebrate life and suffocates the eggs deposited by various salmonid species. The salmon runs have decreased drastically. Also, since no vegetation remains to absorb rainfall, flooding is rampant and the river bottom continues to be scoured of spawning gravel by uncontrolled flooding.

Ratepayers along the lower sections of the river will be paying for the damage from flooding for the next 18 years. A group of interested people who live along the river and desiring to enhance it have developed a spawning channel alongside the main channel.

This too is threatened by the

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possible to reclaim the mine at a cost of approximately one million dollars (estimated) to the tax payer. But can the river and its fish stocks ever be reclaimed?

WESTMIN — IT WAS DISCOVERED that heavy metals were getting into Buttle Lake and into the Campbell River. At first it was believed the metals were coming from the tailings that had been dumped into Buttle Lake by the mine. Then it was discovered that the situation was identical to Mt. Washington Copper: the metals

possibility of acid-mine generation from coal mining by Nuspar Resources currently doing exploratory work on another tributary of the Oyster, Woodhus Creek. And now, finally, Strathcona Park itself becomes a threat with the opening up of the Gem Lake watershed to mining, the very headwaters of the Oyster.

THESE BIG COMPANIES PROVIDE JOBS. But they seem to offer us a false equation: human welfare versus wilderness; and the government: jobs versus parkland.