

# Moratorium on Oyster River

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(Secretary, VICSS)

This story was submitted by Father Charles Brandt as a letter to the editor of one of Campbell River's other newspapers. It was a response to an eight-page advertising supplement in those newspapers during the week of June 25. The letter did not appear in last week's paper and Father Brandt was informed that it probably would not be published. The Mirror respects Father Brandt's opinions and we are happy to

give him the opportunity to express them.

I live on the Oyster River. I chose this river among all rivers on which to live. There is hardly a portion of her banks from the estuary to the snows that I have not travelled by foot. Her music, her rhythm are a constant background to my life and work. I would like to see this river and her waters preserved, protected, and used forever by the whole

community of recreationists, foresters, fishermen, hunters and naturalists. In the past, the Department of Forestry has shown only minimum concern for other users. Today, one vital part of this river, the estuary, is gravely threatened by another single user, the recreational-developer.

The eight-page color insert in last week's edition of the Courier, the Greensheet, and the Upper Islander must have cost a pile of dough! Only a multi-million dollar development which the insert describes can put up

that kind of money. This development is at the mouth of the Oyster River. The article describes the many attractions of this 340 acre complex, among which is the future Hideaway Resort Hotel: "The hotel will be an exclusive resort - the kind of place where you don't ask what it costs because if you did, it obviously wouldn't be the place for you." And so on!

Mr. W.A.C. Bennett promised the citizens of B.C. the greatest prosperity this province has ever seen flowing from the recently

completed dam (the Bennett Dam) on the Peace River. Of course he didn't mention the ecological disaster that followed to the Peace-Athabasca delta, the irreversible damage to the Wood Buffalo National Park, to the buffalo and the wildlife and the fish in the delta. His government promised prosperity but it did not promise mitigation would be available for corrective measures should the project prove to be detrimental to the environment. Mr. Bennett was a single user.

## plan attacked

The colorful eight-page insert in last week's paper does not mention that Pacific Playgrounds is under attack by all of the environmental groups in the area, among which are the Steelhead Society (province-wide), SPEC, the fish and game clubs of the various communities, the Natural History groups, the Tyee Club and by the majority of the resort owners and private citizens of the Saratoga Beach area who feel that the proposed channel through the Oyster River delta may well forever destroy the lovely sand beach of Saratoga. And should this occur, Pacific Playgrounds does not promise mitigation of any kind. But the possible destruction of the Saratoga Beach by the proposed channel and the three proposed breakwaters is only one of the concerns of the environmental groups.

The attractive brochure is reminiscent of the one that M and B distributed by mail to thousands of B.C. citizens when they were under attack by various ecological societies for their destructive and degrading logging practices on the White River watershed. Well, it didn't work. Subsequent to their attractive brochure, Mr. Bob Williams slapped a moratorium on all logging in the upper reaches of the White for two years.

We are not here at this time concerned or criticizing the overall Pacific Playgrounds development. I, personally, am a strong advocate of free enterprise, and can objectively admire

and appreciate how the brochure was put together, its attractive presentation, and the evident planning that has gone into the whole operation. We, as environmentalists, are concerned primarily with one aspect of the whole: The estuary and its possible degradation.

Mr. Ward, in the colorful supplement, states that the environment is protected in the area's overall concept. He states, "that the application to dredge will have no adverse effect on the Oyster River at all, that the company's hydraulic studies show that everything coming from the Oyster River flows north - the Oyster River has no effect on anything south of the mouth of the river." But on page eight of the engineer's report (Willis, Cunliffe, Tait and Co. Ltd.) - a copy of which lies before me - the very engineers Mr. Ward hired to make the study clearly state that the

river mouth could shift to the south...some additional precaution should be taken to ensure the river does not shift south of spit or too close to the proposed entrance channel". His engineers (see report File L127, Oct. '72) proposed that the Oyster River mouth be confined to the north side of the delta by "a 150 foot rock groin downstream of the present entrance channel." And at the same time Federal Fisheries "note that the installation of a groin just downstream of the present marina access channel as recommended by the Consultant may cause a northward extension of the present meander in the river, thus causing further erosion of the UBC lands of the north bank." And yet Mr. Ward states that the Oyster River has no effect on anything south of the mouth of the river?

## F & W opposed

Mr. Ward states that the provincial government has found nothing to conflict with their proposal in the application by Pacific Playgrounds. Pacific Playgrounds has had in their possession for several

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hemlock and balsam, hugging the streams, controlling the water temperatures, assuring an even and gentle run-off by their millions upon millions of intricate rootlets which formed a giant sponge to absorb the rainfall and then release it. The gulf was alive with myriad life forms. The air was sweet and clean with the scent of salt and balsam and fir. Those were the days we thought would never end - until the white man came with his lordship and concept of single use in the name of progress that would lead to a greater and more abundant life. Now we know that the end is in sight. But we also know that much that has been destroyed and lost can be regained. I do not agree with Rod Haig-Brown, despite all of our present knowledge, that Paradise can ever be regained, at least not in the physical sphere. But I think that we can take mighty steps in reclaiming our rivers and forests and estuaries and the life forms dependent upon them.

## property loss

The upper watershed of the Oyster has been stripped of its timber, causing silting and flooding and the breakthrough of the river just above the new Oyster River bridge this past January, causing loss of property. Her water supply is threatened by the demands of the greater Campbell River water board. Most of the lower reaches of the river have been channelized by heavy equipment, ruining fish habitat. And now the ESTUARY! And threatened it is, perhaps the most vital part of the whole river system. Now is the time to think about this and make a decision. We will not complain about a hotel that is planned nearby which will be an exclusive resort - "the kind of place where you don't ask what it costs because if

you did, it obviously wouldn't be the place for you." No, what we are concerned with is preserving and safeguarding the vital estuarine delta zone adjacent to the mouth of the Oyster River, preserving it so that it may be used in the best interests of all the users of our natural resources and not be relegated to a single-use, that of the recreational-developer with the possible degradation that may follow from such a use. We ask for a moratorium on this estuary. We request that Environment Canada along with the Fish and Wildlife Branch of the provincial government make a five year in-depth study of this vital area and, at the end of this study, guarantee that a deep sea channel through this estuary will cause no harm to this habitant, then we will listen to and respect their findings. This will be true progress, not the kind of progress that is hastily thrown together. Then we can be assured that we will all be co-users of the estuary, allowing the Oyster River with her main arteries and countless veins to live and flow and sing under the sun from the hills to the sea.