

Letters

Native hopes build with appointment of Petter

With the recent B.C. cabinet shuffle, there comes perhaps a breath of fresh air. With the appointment of Andrew Petter from Aboriginal Affairs to Minister of Forests, hopes are running high. Will Mr. Petter be allowed to follow his heart and speak up for Native Land claims settlement in the Clayoquot, a settlement that should have occurred before a single tree was cut in the Sound.

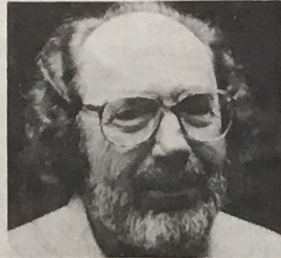
Clayoquot, Tatshenshini, Nechako, and the proposed massive hydro electric Dam in Northern Quebec have one thing in common: they all trash or could trash the human rights of the First Nations, the First Peoples, let alone the environment.

It's the government, federally and provincially, that is giving the permission for the trashing, but it's the large corporations, big industries that are doing the trashing: the logging industry, mining industry, and Hydro. These massive industries are taking from our resources, but are not making the return. And in the case of Clayoquot, since the government pur-

chased shares in Macmillan and Bloedel just prior to its giving permission for the company to log this the world's largest coastal temperate rain forest, it is just as implicated as this giant logging company. Since the share monies ultimately comes from the taxpayer, we are involved as well, as long as we support the present government.

In the case of the Tatshenshini, this would appear to be an environmental feather in the cap of the NDP government. The proposed copper mine in Windy Craggy near the Tat by Geddes Resources was halted. Much of the credit should go to Canadian environmentalists such as Ric Careless, but I believe what put the nail in the coffin of the windy Craggy development was the fact that acid mine drainage might impact on U.S. National Parks. Vice-President Gore spoke out against the development urging the B.C. government to protect the Tatshenshini. The Tat — or at least the Alesk R. would impact on U.S. rivers. Already, in the U.S., al-

COMMENT



by Father Charles Brandt

most 20,000 kilometres of rivers have now been killed by acid mine drainage. We have our own legacy of biocide on Vancouver Island. The Tat might well have turned out to be another Tsolum River, only on a much, much larger scale.

So it was refreshing to have Bobby Kennedy Jr. during his recent visit to the Clayoquot Valley speak out so forcibly for the human rights of the world's indigenous people like Tla-o-qui-aht Chief Francis Frank and the 2,500 First Nations people living there.

Contrary to TV ads recen-

tly sponsored by MacMillan Bloedel, showing several times in any given hour and reminiscent of the "Forst Forever" campaign of a few years ago, the First Peoples are not being consulted even though the ads state: "...the local community will have a larger share in what happens and how they are to be done..." and that there have been "four years of community input and negotiations..." It appears obvious that MacMillan Bloedel does not consider the indigenous people as part of the "local community" or that the "four years of input" has come from the First Nations. It is clear that the rights of the native people who own the land have not been taken into account in the exploitation of the resources of Clayoquot.

Canada is not immune from breaking treaties with the First Peoples, but in the case of Clayoquot, Indians have never had a treaty. They are fighting now for aboriginal title and control of the timber resource. If aboriginal titles are never settled the Clayoquot resource could

all but disappear. And so the importance of the recent appointment of Andrew Petter as Minister of Forest.

Why is it necessary for an outside force such as the Natural Resources Defence Council, for which Bobby Kennedy is a spokesperson, to come to the rescue of the First Peoples human rights as well as the resources they should be controlling? Why can't we find it within ourselves to settle their land claims, support their inalienable rights, and their wilderness homelands?

The Earth has a dream. Industry has its own dream. Unfortunately the two dreams don't coincide.

Today, industry is capable of breaking mountains apart, draining our rivers. The most luxuriant forests can be

turned into throwaway paper products. Without hesitation we pour toxic chemicals onto our fields. The soil eventually blows away with the wind. The speed at which we move natural resources through the consumer economy to the waste heap is really unbelievable. Supposedly we are creating a technological wonderland. In reality we are creating a wasteland.

The human community and the natural world must go into the future as a single sacred community. Otherwise we will perish in this wasteland. No one understands this better than the First Peoples. After all, they have lived in harmony with this particular part of the planet Earth for some ten thousand years.