

P.O. Box 272
Moncton, N.B. E1C 8T6
Feb. 7, 1977

An Open Letter to Mr. W.R. Redel, Director of Lands.

Dear Mr. Redel:

The time has come to ask the question: "Whose hand is washing whose?"

On Jan. 17th Provincial Environment Minister James Nielsen granted approval of a foreshore lease through the Recreation Reserve (set up by Order-in-Council by Parliament in 1937) which is the estuary at the mouth of the Oyster River. This lease has been granted to Pacific Playgrounds. In July, 1973, the Greensheet and the Upper Islander carried a coloured insert describing the plans for this development of some 340 acres. Among the plans for this development there was described 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." In the Jan 28, 1977 edition of the Greensheet, Mr. McBeth, one of the developers, is quoted as saying that the cost of the marina project is likely to be around \$1 million, and this would include both private and federal money, that federal money would be needed for some aspects of the development.

Mr. Redel, is that where our federal monies are being spent, to help make possible such exclusive resorts that obviously wouldn't be the place for most of us? And remember, the granting of the foreshore lease is the first step towards such a development.

Mr. Redel, why have you withheld the Dr. Bentley Le Baron report until after the foreshore lease has been granted? In 1975, the NDP commissioned Dr. Le Baron to conduct a sociological impact study of the Pacific Playgrounds development. This was at the expense of the tax payer. It has still (at this writing) not been released to the public even though there have been numerous requests for it over a long period of time, some of them repeated requests: Karen Sanford, MLA-Comox, Three requests from the Regional Board, and many others - and all have been refused or ignored. WHY?

I happen to have some inside information on this Report. The Report makes it clear that the transmission of information to the public is a major part of the report. But yet this has never been transmitted. WHY?

Recommendation #1 I of the Report is clear and strong that on balance the Pacific Playgrounds access channel-breakwater proposal is not socially desirable and the foreshore lease should not be granted. And yet it has

been granted through Mr. Nielsen, and this prior to the Report being in the hands of the public who paid for it, before being in the hands of the Regional Board whose hands and minds were therefore tied and had no say whatsoever in the granting of the foreshore lease. WHY?

These are serious questions and they demand answers. To the Public, the Regional Board, and to the Legislative Assembly.

Also, the Le Baron Report opposes the Oyster River site in favour of what is referred to as the (Iron River) Oyster Bay site which is located $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of the Oyster River, the one time McMillan Bloedel booming area. This was our proposal on behalf of the Steelhead Society of B.C., presented in brief to the Comox-Strathcona Regional Board, April 30th, 1973 in Campbell River. This area provides a natural safety harbour, would have no impact on the environment, and would be truly a public marina and not a privately owned, big-money making institution.

From the Jan. 28, '77 article in the Greensheet it appears that members of the Regional Board have forgotten their original opposition to the development at the mouth of the Oyster River. I suggest they refresh their memories by re-reading our brief which is in their files. Norm Lysne is quoted in the Greensheet as saying that the original opposition had nothing to do with salmon. Norm, it had and has everything to do with salmon. Tracks need not be covered. They are still clear and fresh.

It was the conviction of the Steelhead Society that before the estuary be tampered with in any way an in-depth study be undertaken by Environment Canada over a a period of at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ years. Studies have been since then.. But had the Steelhead Society not intervened through the Regional Board the test channel would have gone ahead without these studies. I quote from a memo to you, Mr. Redel, from H.K. Kidd at that time: "In view of the controversy which has arisen because of this application it would perhaps be the easiest out for the Department to disallow the application even at this late stage, however, you will note that a great deal of study has been done both by private concerns and our Land Inspector and that the test channel are proposed to establish the desirability of building the proposed channel. In view of the foregoing, I would recommend that the applicants be allowed to proceed with testing. In the Meantime, we can approach the parks branch and obtain their comments with respect to the possibility of deleting the small area of the beach which will be crossed by the proposed channel." Mr. Kidd was the Administrative Officer in the Lands Department. Well, at least the Steelhead Society stopped that nonsense.

Mr. Redel, several times - in writing and in person I have asked you for a record of the original permission to the developers to open up the small channel from the Oyster River into the present boat basin. You could offer me none, no record, nothing. In the current issue of the Greensheet article Mr. Nielson is quoted as saying that the channel (future) would eliminate the need to gain access to the marina via the Oyster River - as now exists - and also stop dredging of the mouth of the river for a sufficient depth of water to accomodate boats using the marina. The real

solution is much simpler: simply fill in the present access channel (for which you can offer me no permission ~~for~~), close the marina. Then there would be no need for the constant dredging of the mouth of the River.

It is so obvious if money is to be granted for the development of a marina that this money should go to the development of the proposed marina at the Iron River site, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north, a perfect haven for boats in distress.

Finally, there is no reason why the Pacific Playground channel should be constructed through the Oyster River Estuary. Unless, of course promises have been made that we know nothing about. It is true that ecological studies have been made since the Steelhead Society's request for such studies. Mr. Nielson said that these studies have not revealed any substantive reason "Either environmentally or technically for denying" the deep-water channel application. But Mr. Nielson, have these studies revealed anything positive in favor of such a development? The importance of such estuarine intertidal zones such as the Oyster River estuary in maintaining salmoid productive is beyond measure: the estuaries provide an environment of extremely high food productivity for all marine life, especially for young salmon; the construction of a 1800 foot deep sea channel through this area, with the proposed breakwaters might well upset the delicate life balance of the area to the detriment of young salmon fry that spend a vital part of their lives in the area before moving out to sea. Name me ONE scientist who will guarantee that this delicate life balance will not be upset by the development of this mini-port, ONE! If there is such a chance, even the remotest, let us not take it. Will the Lands Department be responsible for mitigation if the project prove detrimental to the environment. Who will be responsible? It make take years before such ecological damage can be assessed, and then it will be too late. The luxury hotel ~~may~~ still exist in the midst of an ecological diaster. And that obviously ~~is~~ not the place for me or you.

No, let us take no chances with the last remaining still intact estuary on the eastcoast of the Island. Let us not violate the recreational Reserve set up by Order-in-Council by Parliament in 1937 for the recreation and enjoyment of the public, a violation in that that the channel would cut through the very heart of the Reserve.

Why has there never been a Public Hearing on this Development, especially since it has been demanded by almost all of the environmental and natural history groups of B.C. and beyond, by the Regional Board, by countless of the public. Why was the permission for the foreshore lease granted prior to the release of the Le Baron Report. Why has the Le Baron Report been suppressed. Why has the Regional Board had no say in granting this foreshore lease? Will the Le Baron Report be released?

Sincerely yours,

Father Charles A.E. Brandt
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