



Forest lovers and workers band together at last weekend's rally

PETE ROCKWELL

back down those roads as a full logging truck stared us down, filling the windshield with the view of its grill—and loving it. I still use those roads now too, to go to old Forest Service Recreation sites to camp or to hike. I remember the smell of the mill in Chemainus as we drove past; my dad worked there when he was in his twenties. I've known loggers, and I know loggers now. I like them. They're industrious, hard-working types who love being outside. They like hiking and beachcombing and exploring the natural world; they like their jobs precisely because it allows them to be outdoors. But aren't they, in the simple act of going to work in the morning, taking away these things we love and appreciate? Well, that's where the ambivalence comes in.

If Canada were to suddenly ban logging, the entire infrastructure of much of B.C. would collapse. Thousands of people like those loggers—good, well-meaning people—would be out of a job. Their families would go hungry. Then what? These aren't people with a lot of options. It's not like they can just pop down to the local temp agency to check the job postings. Entire communities like Sandspit, Quesnel and Gold River (to name only a few) would become ghost towns if resource-based industries stop.

But what of the alternative? Do we keep going with this unsustainable rate of deforestation? Where's the balance? (Is there a balance?) I'm sure there's someone out there trying to find it; there are probably lots of people. But as average people, we usually only hear about the extremes. On one side, there are the developers behind outfits like Bear Mountain; on the other, there are radical hippy types shaking their fists and placards. Is there anyone in the middle? I, for one, want to hear ideas that come from neither side of this debacle, ideas that speak to everyone. I don't know if there can (or will) be a solution to this problem until we appease everyone involved; and frankly, as far as I can tell, that means we need to come up with ideas that make money. Lots of money.

One idea I've heard bandied around a few times is to keep logs local—encourage people to start building furniture and houses and sun decks and anything else out of the wood we

Will it be the forest or the trees?

By MATT J. SIMMONS

chop down here. That way at least we're maintaining some jobs and losing a little of the reliance on our big brother to the south. Perhaps a government grant or similar incentive might nudge this along. But is it really a good idea? What about the single parent who can't afford not to buy her furniture from Ikea or some other cheap manufacturer? I mean, let's face it, not many of us can afford to buy a \$1,900 handmade dining room table made from Haida Gwaii cedar by a local craftsman.

This is a big deal. I went for a hike up Mt. Finlayson shortly after the Bear Mountain project kicked off (unbeknownst to me while I was in another country—some treat to come back to!) and saw the view I cherished from my childhood completely gone. I was livid; I still am. I understand that some development needs to happen—we're a growing population—but let's find a better way: in-fill the city, make it easier to walk or bike to work, offer some kind of mass transit to the Western Communities, pedestrianize parts of downtown, build more self-sufficient pockets like Dockside Green. That's a start. Then, find the middle ground and appeal to the greed of the developers. No one will listen to a protest without a solution.

The recent rally down at the legislature was a good step in the right direction—both sides were represented and the ultimate goal was clear. Protection of old-growth forests and a ban of raw log export were the two points on the agenda for the 1,300 people who attended. Over a thousand people—that's the biggest environmental rally in 15 years, since the Clayoquot Sound protests of the 1990s. Between environmentalists, politicians and representatives from the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada and mills in Crofton and Nanaimo, the ralliers seem to have sent a pretty clear message to the government. The Western Canada Wilderness Committee, organizers of the rally, outlined exactly what they expect and it wasn't just a full-on ban on logging. They suggest a more conclusive move to second-growth forestry, a solution that allows the industries to still remain but preserves the old-growth ecosystems. It's a start, and it seems the important thing is that everyone has to get in on it.

This is a problem to which I don't know the answer but, like anyone who loves our forests, I'm hoping someone out there finds it soon. What I'm really asking for is a new idea, a balance, a solution... perhaps even a miracle. **M**

Matt J. Simmons is a regular Monday contributor who hopes there will still be forests left in B.C. when his daughter grows up.

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Public Meeting DOUGLAS STREET BUSWAY

The Victoria Regional Transit Commission is hosting a Public Delegation Meeting:

**Thursday, April 3 • 7pm • Blanshard Room
Holiday Inn, 3020 Blanshard Street**

Persons interested in speaking about the Douglas Street Busway Proposal must register by email, phone or at the door before the meeting. Speaking order will be based on the order of registration.

Speakers are asked to keep their comments within the time established by the Commission Chair. The time allotment depends on the number of speakers registered. Groups or organizations holding similar views should submit a list of members or supporting organizations. Victoria Council, Saanich Council and Ministry of Transportation staff have been invited to attend the meeting. A record of the meeting will be sent to them to assist in their deliberations on the Busway proposal.

Persons wishing to speak can register at the door, by email: brt@bctransit.com or by phone: 385-2551 and ask for Busway registration.

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