



The meeting ends divided between those who want to take direct action and those who see the negative effects it brings. It is felt that, while blockades are newsworthy, they bring only a sensational few minutes on TV and fail to portray the full complexities of the issue.

And there is one other reason why civil disobedience is not wholeheartedly supported: anyone who has been incarcerated with criminals charged with manslaughter is probably not willing to repeat the experience.

WHAT IS IT about British Columbia that makes sensible decision making apparently impossible? Why do people feel they have no recourse but to participate in civil disobedience to save forests? And why is a company like Fletcher Challenge with a good environment record in New Zealand regarded by some as a pariah on the other side of the Pacific?

As good a place to start looking for the answers to these questions might be the state of British Columbia politics and the way in which B.C.'s resources are parcelled out. For 100 years British Columbian politicians have regarded the province's forests as an inexhaustible resource. As people have become aware that the forests will not go on forever, the provincial government's response has been to allow the rate of logging to increase.



The ecological consequences of logging such as this by Fletchers in the Atleo River, Vancouver Island, are hotly debated. Locals have charged that such logging wreaks havoc on streams, causing salmon populations to plummet. Photos: Gerard Hutching, DAC Communicate (salmon)

People power

The meeting starts with an impassioned plea from a FOCS spokesperson who asks whether the group is prepared to stand by while the forests are "butchered and raped." In 1984 and 1988 "people power" had stopped logging in two areas near Tofino, he reminds the audience.

In response a unionist warns against any blockades. He claims the union wants to change the companies' logging practices. After a five minute address he rises to leave; shortly after, the other loggers and their wives depart, leaving behind a disappointed and disillusioned meeting. This attempt to create a dialogue between the two camps appears to have failed.

Still remaining, though, is a writer who works for logging company MacMillan Bloedel. He is prepared to discuss the environmentalists' concerns with management. He also warns against any blockades: "It feels potentially explosive at Kennedy Lake," he says (Kennedy Lake is a nearby logging site).

Tree farm licences

Logging rights have been handed out in the form of Tree Farm Licences (TFLs), huge areas which are leased for 25 years and are almost automatically renewed. Critics charge that the timber companies have been granted the licences gratis, while small timber businesses which want to fell small areas for downstream processing have to pay.

FCC's Don McMullan takes issue with the criticism. He responds that the large companies pay a stumpage when they fell a tree, and they have to pay for roads and reforestation. In 1990 Fletcher Challenge Canada planted 14 million seedlings in B.C.

What does anger environmentalists is the fact that TFLs, having been virtually given away, suddenly become worth millions of dollars when an area is protected. Under state law, only 5 percent of a tree farm can be withdrawn from cutting. Anything more and compensation has to be paid to the company involved. In the case of the creation of South Moresby National Park in the Queen Charlotte Islands, companies were promised \$31 million Canadian (\$NZ49 million).

Because of the high stakes involved with the granting of TFLs, the temptation for some

