

IDENTIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT IMPACTS

The past belief in the superabundance of Nature has led to the current situation where rapid expansion in the extractive industries - especially logging and mining - has resulted in such extensive allocation of lands and resources that little slack exists to meet preservation needs. Given the level of land base dependency that now exists in most of Canada south of the 60th latitude, proposals to protect specific areas are often perceived to imply diminished resource supplies for established industrial users and their work force. This has led to wide-spread fear that employment will decline due to preserving specific sites and systems completion. This job loss fear is probably the leading impediment to the preservation of natural areas in Canada today.

Often such concern for job loss, while genuine, is based more in fear than fact. For example, whereas the B.C. forest industry originally worried that systems completion could result in loss of 10% of the overall annual wood supply, studies undertaken by Simon Fraser University and the forest industry itself, indicated that the impacts would be two-thirds lower: i.e. 3.5% of the annual allowable cut; and that any jobs lost could be more than offset by new jobs created through more intensive silviculture and higher-value added processing of wood.²²

Nevertheless, the pristine areas agenda has become mired in a jobs versus environment controversy. This polarized debate misses the point that **somehow Canadian society must find the means of providing both for present employment needs citizens and the future ecological needs of coming generations.** This requires conservation and resource users alike to move beyond the current confrontation/stand-off mode. Instead solutions-oriented cooperation must be achieved to determine the actual rather than perceived implications of system completion. This means determining the actual volumes of timber, for example, to be affected by specific proposals and calculating the real economic implications. From here job conversion strategies should be developed to ensure that protected areas completion leads to minimized employment impacts.

OFFSET STRATEGIES AND JOB CONVERSION

To do this therefore, protected areas generated job conversion studies should be undertaken federally and provincially to identify the employment considerations of completing the pristine areas system. The federal government should undertake such job conversion assessments at the national level and also for the territories (in concert with the territorial governments). As for the provincial studies, the federal government's role could be to provide funding and staff assistance, as well as to convene a