

SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

Timber company seeks injunction against protesters

BY PATTI EDGAR

VICTORIA (CUP) — Protesters blocking a logging road leading to an old-growth forest valley could soon face handcuffs if a timber company obtains an injunction against them.

Timber West Forestry Limited has applied to the Supreme Court of British Columbia for an injunction against the protesters, who have been camped out at the Upper Walbran Valley since mid-September.

Timber West's Steve Lorimer said the protesters are keeping his company from continuing road work and beginning logging in the area. He says if his company successfully obtains an injunction against the protesters, it will use it.

"We want to get our workers back to work as soon as we can," he said.

But organizer Ian Hunter says the five protesters — who have been in the area since September and camped out since Oct. 29 — are willing to be arrested for the cause.

"The only thing left after bureaucratic tricks and legal manoeuvres is to stand in the middle of the road," said Hunter.

The protesters are part of a larger group who want to see the area protected from logging, he added. They have organized

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demonstrations in front of the Ministry of Forests' building to raise awareness of the issue.

Although part of the Walbran Valley was protected in 1995 under the Vancouver Island Land-Use Plan, the Upper Walbran Valley was designated as a Special Management Zone, allowing companies to practice limited logging there.

But Lorimer said Timber West's logging plans include measures to protect biodiversity, fish and the area's recreation values — even though up to 90 percent of

the trees in the area can be harvested by loggers.

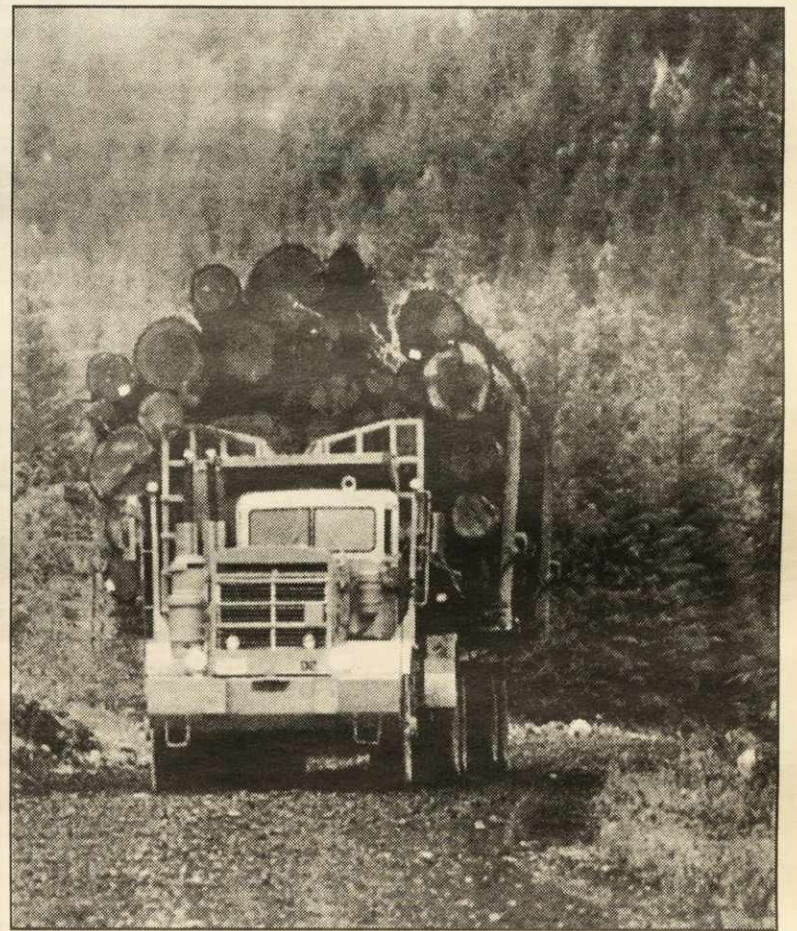
"We believe we are accommodating all three of those as this plan evolves, and obviously the Ministry of Forests concurs because they have given us our permits," he said.

Alison Spriggs, campaign coordinator with the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, said the term 'Special Management Zone' (SMZ) gives the public the wrong idea about what kind of logging is going on in the Upper Walbran.

"An SMZ is still about clear-cut logging," she said. "We are trying to put the message out that the Walbran Valley is being actively logged and southern Vancouver Island is being overcut."

Spriggs said there is not enough old growth forest left on southern Vancouver Island to sustain a viable population of old-growth-dependent species, including threatened species such as the marbled murrelet and the goshawk, as well as wild salmon.

Only 6.6 percent of Vancouver Island's low elevation forest is protected from logging, she added.



The lumber industry juggernaut rolls on and over protests.

Dal researchers find defective Niemann-Pick gene

New genetic breakthrough needed especially here in Nova Scotia

BY ANDREW GILLIS

Dalhousie researchers have made a scientific discovery that will let Acadians in Yarmouth County breathe a little easier.

A team at Dalhousie's clinical research department has identified the gene that causes Niemann-Pick variant type "C" disease in Acadians in Nova Scotia's Yarmouth County. The south shore county has the highest rates of Niemann-Pick disease on earth, with 23 cases being reported in the last 30 years.

"Niemann-Pick disease is a recessive disorder, and that means that in order to get the disease, you have to inherit the defective gene from both parents," says Dr. Wenda Greer, associate professor of Pathology and head of the research team that made the breakthrough.

The disease hit Nova Scotia after a group of Acadians moved to the Yarmouth region from France in the early 1800s. At least one person in that group was the carrier of the Niemann-Pick mutated gene.

If a small number of people move to a region and one of them has the disease, the group will end up with a higher number of people affected as it grows.

And since the tendency of Acadians to move out of Yarmouth County is low, as is the tendency for others to move into the county, the number of carriers there increased as the population expanded.

Previously, there was no biochemical test to distinguish carriers from non-carriers. Because of the work at Dalhousie, however, scientists have been able to identify the mutation in the Yarmouth County population. The research team has also developed a carrier test that can detect the mutation in a blood sample.

"[A person with Niemann-Pick] is born with no symptoms, but by the time they reach school age, they start to show neurological problems," Greer says. "Some have difficulty writing or talking. Eventually they have problems swallowing and walking, then are confined to a wheelchair and have to be fed through a feeding tube.

"Sufferers usually die in their teens."

Trevor Boudreau was one such victim. He was diagnosed with Niemann-Pick when he was eight years old. He loved movies, television and country music. Kenny Rogers was his favourite singer. Trevor died this year on his 19th birthday.

"He was normal, just like a normal little boy," said Angie Boudreau, Trevor's mother.

"He would climb trees and beat up the neighbours' kids. When he would walk, he was clumsy. We didn't think anything of it; we just

"[A person with Niemann-Pick] is born with no symptoms, but by the time they reach school age, they start to show neurological problems. Some have difficulty writing or talking. Eventually they have problems swallowing and walking, then are confined to a wheelchair and have to be fed through a feeding tube... sufferers usually die in their teens."

thought he was clumsy. In school, his printing would get worse instead of better. Then Trevor just kept getting worse."

Trevor stayed in elementary school because his doctor said it would be easier for him to be there while in a wheelchair. He stopped going to school three years ago after being an honours student in grade six.

"His mind was there, but the body wasn't," Angie Boudreau said. "There was nothing wrong with his mind, nothing.

"He wouldn't watch anything sad on television. He was a tender-

heart. If a nature show was on TV, and it showed a gazelle being eaten by a lion, he'd cry. Mickey Mouse was number one with him."

Boudreau says she was happy when she learned about the Dalhousie discovery.

"We think this is great news," Boudreau says. "If they can pinpoint this, others should get checked.

"If they had this test twenty years ago, and they said, 'Hey, you're Acadian, there's this disease going around. Do you want to be tested?' I'd be the first in line."

Especially given the rate of Niemann-Pick occurrence in Yarmouth, Wenda Greer agrees.

"If you are in a high-risk community like Yarmouth, where the carrier frequency is high, one should get tested," Greer says. "If you marry an individual who is also a carrier, a child will have a 25 percent chance of getting Niemann-Pick."

Boudreau's other two children

have been tested. Her daughter Tina is a carrier, but her son Jason is not. Tina's and Jason's children do not have the Niemann-Pick disease.

Back at Dalhousie, Greer takes pride in the results of her research.

"It is quite satisfying being in a project that helps people directly," says Greer. "A lot of basic science research has long-term consequences, and you don't get to see the results of your work. Knowing that this will set people in Yarmouth's minds at rest makes me very pleased."

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