



Clayoquot

A Memoir By

"The best and the brightest will go to the blockades this summer. My heart will go with them."

Clayton Ruby
Globe and Mail

The minstrels strolled through the camp at about 3:30 A.M. Friday morning. I was awakened by a strumming guitar. It had come all too quickly but this was what I had come to do so I proceeded to grope for the clothes that I had laid out only a few hours earlier. I slid clumsily out of the tent and gathered with other emerging people and together we made the trek to the common area of the peace camp. A young bearded man tapped my shoulder. He asked me if I was new here. I said that I had gotten in the previous evening.

"Welcome home," he said.

Dawn was breaking. The view that I had ever seen. Nearby, trees rose towards the heavens. Some stood over 250 feet tall. Then the rumble of trucks approached and the dawn silence was shattered. Glimpses of television memories rushed forward into my consciousness. This is why I had come. I reached for my camera. But I stopped because somehow it just didn't seem appropriate. We sang and we chanted. Banners, placards and flags adorned the logging road.

Tzaporah Berman, the barricades organizer and representative of the Friends of Clayoquot Sound finished her last words of encouragement. She asked that we show respect for the loggers, the police, and any other people who came. We weren't to resist. We were making a clear statement about protecting the forest, we weren't here to question anybody's integrity or morality. And besides, the local jail only held one person.



I wasn't sure how I would react. I had crossed the country to do my part and to test my resolve. I wasn't afraid, but I never knew that I would be capable of so much emotion over something some might believe to be trivial. I was practically overwhelmed when people who I had just met were arrested. There were about half a dozen, including a young family of three people. They were to be charged with violating an injunction against blocking the road.

On April 13 the provincial government of British Columbia made an announcement that it would allow logging in two thirds of Clayoquot Sound. The plan was to permanently protect one third of the area while allowing either limited logging or outright clearcuts in the remaining two thirds. The statistics have been debated but there is some general agreement that the facts provided by the government fail to mention some details (from the Friends of Clayoquot Sound and reproduced in the August 16 edition of MacLean's). Firstly, much of the land that is to be "protected" has already been logged, much of this in Pacific Rim National Park. Only one intact primary watershed over 5000 ha will be protected. Environmentalists and scientists acknowledge that 500,000 ha are required to maintain a viable ecosystem. Moreover, Clayoquot Sound is one of the very last stands of remaining old-growth temperate rainforest left in the world and only 3% of old growth forest is protected on Vancouver Island. The plan only protects about 10% of old growth forest in Clayoquot Sound as

much of the protected area is scrub or marsh. Finally, the old growth cannot be regenerated because of the impact logging will have on the area. While trees can be regenerated, forest cannot with intact biodiversity. Dead standing trees, moss, lichens and the animals that make their habitat there all contribute to maintaining a forest. More importantly, this old growth could never possibly be reproduced in our lifetime or the foreseeable future. Trees here are hundreds of years old and some red cedars are over 1000.

Perhaps the single most contentious issue surrounding the Clayoquot Sound debate is one of jobs. The logging companies and their employees see the environmental movement as a serious threat to profits and jobs. The present standoff at Clayoquot is simply another chapter in the economics/environment debate. There are some very high stakes in this debate and it would be worthwhile to examine the larger issues in order to settle this one.

One must ask if the wood products are absolutely needed. Are we using what we need or can the products be derived alternatively either from different forests, recycling technology or simply reducing waste? Secondly, does it make sense to continue to do something that may be wrong for the sake of economics? Why do we outlaw certain drugs? Such an industry could surely be profitable, but we recognize that it has serious sociological impacts. Finally, we must come to recognize that environment is economics. Just ask those who make a living off cod fishing. If we fail to protect resources which are not truly renewable in the common sense of the word, surely the resource industry will eventually suffer or perhaps collapse.

I arrived at the peace camp in the middle of the week to be greeted by rain and clouds. Despite this I received a very warm greeting from some people at the information booth that served as the front gate of the camp. The clearcut (pictured) stretched as far as I could see and was littered with charred stumps. Someone told me that it was fifteen years old and that it had been replanted. I looked up to the banner that proudly proclaimed their purpose here; to protect Canada's temperate rainforest. Below the banner was a collection of various tents along an old logging road.

"Are you going to stay?" somebody asked me. I nodded. "Come have something to eat and I'll show you around."

Protestors began gathering in one location this summer with the intent of making information readily available as well as bringing media attention to the world. The peace camp was an initiative of a number of environmental organizations and was located in a clearcut named "The Black Hole". It is located about 20 km from Tofino on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. The peace camp began with a handful of people on Canada Day as a means of drawing attention to the situation in Clayoquot Sound. It was meant to be a completely separate demonstration than the blockades of the logging trucks although campers generally made their way to the blockades every morning.

The camp itself became far more than a simple event to attract attention. It became a living, working attempt to live in a truly ecological fashion. All Holy Grail references aside, the camp was run according to anarchy-communist principles (better described as social ecology by the philosopher Murray Bookchin). The camp activities were planned twice daily "circles" in which the population of the camp gathered to make announcements, consider ideas and discuss relevant questions. The camp worked on consensus, that is, every person had to agree before resolutions were passed. With those rights came a number of responsibilities. There was no charge at the camp. Food was donated by supporters and campers were asked to work 4 to 6 hours daily staffing the information booth at the front gate, maintaining the camp facilities or preparing vegetarian, organic meals for all the campers.

In addition to "labour" campers had to agree

