

So there we are an hour later, waiting for the light and waiting for the logging trucks. I wander onto the bridge and look up and down the river as shapes reveal themselves. As the mist swirls and rises, I have the sensation that the place is alive and breathing.

I anticipate spending a couple of hours on the blockade. Instead, we're there until after 1 pm.

First, the Macmillan Bloedel pick-up truck, carrying a process server from Victoria, doesn't arrive until 7:30, over an hour later than we expected. The day's blockade has been well publicized, and MacBlo and the RCMP know that they will have to be prepared for a long day.

When the truck arrives, along with two men carrying video cameras and followed by police cars, they are met by several hundred people sitting quietly in the middle of the road. Tzporah Berman, a graduate student of environmental studies from York University, and a campaign organizer for the Friends of Clayoquot Sound, greets the process

server from the top of a van parked beside the road. Her words are calm and well-rehearsed (she's done this spiel every weekday morning, all summer long). She introduces herself to the process server, addressing him by name. She explains, as she does every weekday morning, that the Friends are opposed to clearcutting in Clayoquot, and asks the loggers to turn the trucks around and go home. People cheer when she says, "Today no trees will fall in Clayoquot Sound."

The process server asks us to move to the side of the road. Nobody moves. A few begin to chant, "If none of us move, they can't arrest us all," but after a few rounds, people raise their arms and we "focus" back into silence. The process server reads an injunction order, issued a year ago at the application of MacBlo. The injunction prohibits

persons from interfering with logging traffic on the road. To defy it means risking a charge of contempt of the court that issued the order. This particular contempt charge was raised to the more serious "criminal contempt", for which the common law provides more serious sanctions.

The process server reads the injunction over a bullhorn, but the MacBlo truck is too far away for those at the back of the blockade to hear. After two attempts to make himself heard by everyone, he asks some protestors whether they could hear the order. Some have not heard it, so he takes a stack of copies of the order and distributes them, saying, "When in doubt, hand it out."

When the injunction is read, about half of the people sitting in the road get up and move away, standing outside orange lines thoughtfully painted on the ground by the police. This break with solidarity is disappointing to some of the stalwarts who remain sitting on the road, but the support is still there. For the next few hours, as wave after wave of protestors is arrested and carried to the buses, words of encouragement are offered from the sidelines.

The defenders who risked their freedom for the thousand-year-old trees that day, and who did so without encouraging tempers to flare, are to be commended. But the cops, too, deserve honourable mention.

Two of them appeared on the cover of the *Globe and Mail* the next morning, preparing to carry off a mother and her crying child. The photo implies, none too subtly, the heavy hand of the state being brought down upon the weak. The image conveyed was simplistic, incomplete and misleading, and does not aid the debate over the trees. Indeed, there may be some argument that the perception created by the blockade, that the issue is a confrontation between pro- and anti-loggers, serves nobody. My feeling, however, is that misperceptions are an unfortunate coincidence of a necessary campaign. The real debate is

about real dilemmas, such as the problem of how to conduct forestry in a way that sustains the rate of employment, maintains reasonable demand for wood and wood products, and preserves the old-growth.

So for ten hours we waited, and bore witness to the arrests. Twice, the buses chartered by the



RCMP (one bore the phrase "Forest Bus Tours" on its side) were filled and had to back out to the highway and dump the arrestees in a school in nearby Tofino before they could return for more.

The mist broke as the sun finally burned through. Helicopters hovered overhead; a Vancouver television station was getting its aerial shot for the next day's news. Food was served as the day wore on. Pro-logging, yellow-ribboned SHARE BC members chatted and argued with protestors who were not sitting on the road. There were speeches, chants, songs, drumming, even a woman playing mournfully on a didgeridoo.

All the while, video cameras panned the faces of people on the blockade. Throughout the day I was in and out of the area from which the injunction banned me, taking pictures myself. It's amazing how carrying a camera can excuse you from sanctions. I laughed at how the image of my face on videotape was so eagerly sought. I wondered if the cameras were even loaded, or if they were just another intimidation factor in the war.

At last, the final line of protestors was carried away, including a man in his seventies who is famous for his career and writing in the field of selective (sustainable) logging. After he and his wife were led away, the trucks began to roll toward the bridge.

The third pickup truck in line skidded to a stop in the gravel. I heard the sound of a hand slapping on the hood, and looked up to see a man, wide-eyed and clearly panting with adrenaline, standing as close to the bumper as one could without being run over.

Dr. Ron Aspinall, a resident of Tofino, was led away, not for the first time. This time, he had obviously decided to make his statement with a little more drama, by darting into the path of an accelerating truck. Once aboard the bus, he leaned out the window and held court with the reporters.

In terms of arrests, it had been the largest protest in the history of BC, where civil disobedience (or at least highly polarized debate) is almost a way of life. We returned to the peace camp to pack our tents, but others were staying, newcomers arriving. We were due back in the "real world", where convictions of the heart are stayed by more mundane considerations. The fact that most of us have personal obligations outside and not directly related to that rainforest makes this year's Clayoquot protests all the more notable. People do care, and they will put aside everything else to say so.

**The rate of logging has tripled since 1960. "At the current rate of logging... there will be no substantial ancient forests left on the coast of B.C. by the year 2008." (State of the Environment Report, 1991, Federal Government of Canada)**



The next week I was in the law courts in Vancouver. Having done some research for the lawyers who were volunteering to represent the hundreds of arrestees, I dropped into the courtroom, where the Chief Justice was holding a pre-trial conference with defence and Crown counsel. The discussion was mundane and far-removed from the trees (scheduling trial dates) and full of arcane legal jargon (preliminary motions; blah blah blah). Once again the venue had changed; another chapter was being written. To what end?, I wondered. In one sense, a goal had been achieved: the level of opposition to the decision to log Clayoquot Sound was in the limelight. People were showing the government that they believed the Clayoquot compromise wasn't good enough. On the other hand, was the powerful gesture of being carried away by the police worth making?

Inevitably, I had to ask the question at a personal level: would I have made that gesture? While I had my reasons not to, the fact that others had, and seeing them holding hands on the line and crying with the fear which we had talked about, spoke volumes.

October 14: It's Thursday afternoon. I am working at Dalhousie Legal Aid when the phone rings. Dick, one of the lawyers, who left moments ago, is now calling me from a pay phone. Earlier in the week he predicted the sentence of the first arrestees to be tried. "Remember how much time I told you the protestors would get?", he asks. I answer, "A month — did you just hear some news?" "Yup", he says. "Forty five days. Plus a fine." The fine, as it turns out, is at least a thousand dollars per person. Ron Aspinall has been given sixty days and \$3,000 for his repeated offences, for his "discourtesy and disdain", and for his impotence.

After I hang up the phone, I realise that Dick, a person who spends much time defending the rights of the accused, was troubled by this. A couple of minutes' reflection and I, too, am troubled. Dick knew I would be. I'm carried back, to a day ten weeks ago on the edge of Vancouver Island, when the Earth seemed to breathe...

*Hugh Benevides is a third year law student. He has been known to hug the occasional tree.*

## Caravan to Clayoquot

Organized by The Sierra Club of Canada, an express train will leave Halifax on November 1 and will stop in seven major Canadian cities. The aim is to meet local groups, draw attention to national resource issues and develop a groundswell of support for protecting one of the last big stands of temperate rainforests in the world.

**Send-off Rally**

**October 30**

**1:00-4:00**

**TUNS lawn**

**Spring Garden Rd**

Rally organized by a Halifax coalition of environmental groups supporting "The Friends of Clayoquot Sound". This fun-filled afternoon will include musicians, puppeteers, speakers and a costume contest. Come dressed as something that lives in the forest. For information, call Carolyn at 492-4046 or Karen at 422-4276.