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The purpose of this paper is to shed some understanding of a serious problem developing in North America — the erosion of the forest land base. This lack of understanding stems primarily from two classes:

1. The forest industry has failed to adequately voice its concerns, and
2. The specialized single purpose parameters of an individual's career, (e.g. the R/W agent's job is to negotiate for and to purchase land for a specific purpose within the primary interests of his/her employer. The possibility of knowing the concerns regarding forest land loss would not be great.

In consideration of those who are not familiar with Canada, the Province of British Columbia, nor the importance of the forest industry to our economy, a brief geographic description and economic profile is warranted.

Canada's area of 3.8 million square miles makes it the second largest country on this planet. The Soviet Union is the largest.

# The erosion of the forest land base: a Canadian example

by L.G. Hayley, SR/WA

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*The British Columbia Ministry of Forest has estimated that the commercially operable forest land could be reduced by 25% by the year 2000.*

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Within Canada there are ten Provinces and two Territories. British Columbia is the third largest province. To emphasize the size of British Columbia we can compare it to approximately three times that of the State of California. California, however, has the approximate population equal to all Canada.

The landscape of British Columbia is dominated by vast, variegated forests, and is rich in natural resources that play a role in economic life and the natural environment unmatched elsewhere in the developed world.

Another conspicuous feature of this Province is its extreme terrain. The full range of topographic conditions is found.

Mountain ranges bracket extensive interior plateaus, major rivers bisect them; and, in the west, sinuous fjords cut deep into the coastal mountains.

These extreme topographical influences, combined with the climatic patterns of British Columbia, which can change from a coastal rain forest to semi-desert conditions in just a few miles, produce some of the most varied forest environment on the North American continent.

## **Importance of the forest industry to B.C.'s and Canada's economy**

Canada's economy depends on the

exporting of its natural resources, and none have contributed as much as the forest resource.

When it comes to earning foreign currency through exports, forest products make the largest single contribution to Canada's trade balance. Its share is larger than metals, food and agriculture, fisheries and the automotive industry combined. Converting the timber into hundreds of useful products creates more incomes than any other Canadian manufacturing activity. The forest industry employs more people and pays more wages than any other sector of the economy.

British Columbia's forestland constitutes more than 50% of the commercially available timber reserves in all of Canada. This is primarily due to British Columbia being blessed with a forest resource which covers approximately 50% of the total land base, 75% of which is under sustained yield management. Sustained yield simply means managed for a perpetual supply of timber.

Nearly all the timber harvested in British Columbia is manufactured in the Province. Log exports average only about 2% of total production. By far the most important product in terms of the volume of timber logged is lumber. The pulp and paper industry is the next largest user of wood with approximately 2/3 of its raw material in the form of chips

produced as a by-product of sawmilling. The third major manufacturing process, considerably smaller than the other two, is the veneer and plywood industry.

To further illustrate the economic importance of the forest industry to British Columbia, let us examine MacMillian Bloedel Limited, an integrative forest products company. Formed in 1911, the company now directly employs 16,000 people worldwide. It is Canada's largest integrated forest products company.

Through major land acquisition and company merger programs, MacMillian Bloedel Limited developed a substantial raw material base. On British Columbia's West Coast we have over 400,000 acres of private fee simple land and 2.6 million acres of government granted long term forest tenures.

The Company, by integration over the years, has developed worldwide forest holdings, including converting and manufacturing facilities, transportation and marketing facilities, along with its own research department.

Today, the Company has the capacity to produce *annually*:

1. enough lumber to build 110,000 average sized homes,
2. enough newsprint to publish all of Canada's newspapers,
3. enough bales of pulp to reach more than 487 miles into the sky, (Mt. Everest is only about 5½ miles high),
4. enough corrugating medium to pave a road more than 9 feet wide and 423,000 miles long. The average distance to the moon is about 240,000 miles.

Now I have just thrown at you a number of statistics which should indicate the economic importance of forestry to Canada, and particularly British Columbia.

Of course we can make statistics do anything we want, statistics are like bikinis — what they reveal is suggestive — what they conceal is vital.

But these statistics should not hold any surprises for us in British Columbia and other forest dependent regions of North America. We can see what ripple effect the economic downturn within the forest industry has had on British Columbia, it has seriously affected most

sectors of the economy, especially government revenues.

With guarded optimism, the forest industry should reach stability again by the end of the decade. We must remember, though, that external economic influences will continue to dictate the level of activity within our forest industry.

Assuming we will again be a vibrant industry, the long term future of our forest economy depends upon the careful management of the forests. These factors will help to ensure a healthy forest economy in the years to come:

1. Principle of sustained yield,
2. Realistic tree harvesting specifications,
3. Increased forest protection against insects, disease and fire,
4. Prompt regeneration of logged-over lands,
5. Improved genetic and silvicultural techniques, and
6. *Protection of the forestland base for future harvests.*

#### **Erosion of the forest land base**

In this area of "high tech" and electronics it is easy to overlook the economic importance of this industry.

The future of forestry hinges upon our ability to meet the challenge of developing effective means of reconciling industry forestry with other forest uses and social objectives. To realize the full range of potential values requires improved public understanding.

We also have to recognize that as we plant forest crops that will take a century to mature, history contains many examples of technological and other change that have undermined economic dependence upon a particular natural resource, e.g. Sugar.

But, there is a growing problem that has to be nipped in the bud. If not, it has the potential of a disastrous effect on the mainstay of the Canadian economy, especially that of British Columbia. It is the loss of prime forestland to single purpose uses. Examples include parks and hydro lines.

#### **Forest values and pressures for change**

MacMillian Bloedel recognizes that the forests of British Columbia produce many products and service other than timber:

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