

*The softwood lumber dispute between Canada and the United States and efforts to deal with bark beetle infestations have drawn the provincial and federal governments together in common cause against threats to British Columbia's forest economy. But these recent examples of federal-provincial cooperation are part of an often contentious history of policy-making that has seen Ottawa shift in and out of direct participation in forestry as priorities and economic circumstances changed. This article examines the contours of that process, one that highlights the uneasy relationship between Ottawa and Victoria in dividing the benefits and responsibilities associated with natural resource management.*

# A POLITICAL FOOTBALL:

## *FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL COOPERATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA FORESTS, 1930–1995*

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**C**anada's Fathers of Confederation awarded the provinces control over natural resources when Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia united in 1867, a pattern followed by British Columbia in 1871. Since that time, the federal government has played an important if intermittent role

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in B.C. forest conservation. Until 1930 Ottawa had a direct interest in the Railway Belt, but after the transfer of natural resources in the west to the respective provinces its direct involvement in forest management waned. Although scientific research in forest utilization, entomology, and pathology ensured an ongoing federal presence, henceforth Ottawa's main contribution to the provincial forest economy came in the form of a variety of cooperative agreements with Victoria.<sup>1</sup>

A theme of crisis dominates this account of Ottawa's erratic commitment to B.C. forestry, set against a backdrop of constant wrangling about jurisdictional rights and responsibilities. Massive unemployment set the stage for federal support of forest relief projects during the Great Depression, and the threat of incendiary

attacks against western forests legitimated the use of conscientious objectors for forest protection in the context of World War II. Industry pressure for federal support in harvest expansion and management planning to meet the demands of a roaring postwar economy revived federal-provincial cooperation in 1949. Then, in 1967, after almost two decades of participation in provincial inventory, reforestation, road construction, and protection programs, Ottawa again withdrew, citing constitutional arguments.

Not until 1979 did the federal government again rekindle its interest in B.C. forest renewal, this time in response to the prospect of timber shortages. Adoption of the National Forest Sector Strategy for Canada in the early 1980s signalled a period of real federal vigour, reflected in the Forest Resource

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Development Agreements that directed funds to reforestation and intensive forest management schemes. But in the mid-1990s Ottawa cut off the flow, contenting itself with support for scientific research, market development, and initiatives such as the Canadian Forest Service's Model Forest Program. The one consistent thread running through the uneven process is B.C.'s conviction that the economic benefits the federal government derived from the province's forests far outweighed its contribution to their protection, development, and renewal.

## RELIEF WORKERS AND CONCHIES

Canada's export-driven economy was highly vulnerable to the collapse of international commodity markets which triggered the Great Depression. By 1932 over one-quarter of Canadian wage-earners were unemployed, and western Canada suffered more acutely than other regions because of an overwhelming dependence on a limited number of export products. British Columbia's dominant forestry sector, devastated by slack world markets and high tariffs, sputtered along at less than half of capacity during the early 1930s. The calamity unleashed a flood of transients to engage in a restless quest for employment or relief. Because of its mild winter climate, B.C. attracted a large share of these men, unfortunates who occupied an unenviable position in Canada's rickety welfare system. Under the British North America Act, responsibility for health and welfare rested with the provinces, which shifted the relief burden downward to their municipalities. These local governments adopted strict residency requirements, disqualifying transients from eligibility beyond perhaps a meal and bed for a night's rest.<sup>2</sup>

Newly-elected Prime Minister R.B. Bennett refused to accept responsibility for the homeless, instead providing grants to the provinces while waiting in vain for his tariff policies to stimulate recovery. Such funds were used to initiate public works on a shared-cost basis, and in the fall of 1931 B.C. Premier Simon Fraser Tolmie established over two hundred relief camps for single unemployed provincial residents and transients, providing accommodation and road work for 18,340 men. The federal Parks Department also received funding for national park development in the west, but the cost of provincial public works projects prompted a general turn back to direct relief.<sup>3</sup>

Closure of many camps unleashed a flood of transients back to the cities, where mounting protest overcame Bennett's constitutional reservations in 1932. That autumn his cabinet approved a scheme for the Department of National Defence (DND) to administer a national system of relief camps for single homeless males. B.C.'s fifty-five camps held 7,000 men by 1934, representing over one-third of the total across Canada. Dominion Forester E.H. Finlayson succeeded in securing DND labour for the development of experimental stations in several of the country's forest regions but negotiations between federal and provincial authorities for a research area on the B.C. coast failed, limiting Ottawa's scientific contribution in the far west for decades. Nor did Bennett's relief program amount to anything more than a pale reflection of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a massive scheme that employed over 500,000 men at its peak in 1935.<sup>4</sup>

While the CCC flourished under benevolent administration, Bennett's DND projects quickly gained a reputation among their

inmates as "slave camps." B.C.'s camps erupted in a 1935 general strike for better conditions, higher wages, and an end to military control, culminating in the "On-to-Ottawa Trek." The trek ended in tragedy in Regina, where a peaceful July 1 rally erupted into violence when the RCMP moved in to make arrests. The ensuing riot discredited the DND scheme, and Mackenzie King's Liberal government would close the camps in 1936.<sup>5</sup>

But in B.C. a more innovative approach modelled along CCC lines came into existence in 1935. T.D. Pattullo's Liberal government introduced its Young Men's Forestry Training Plan [YMFTP] that spring, providing a few months of summer work experience at nominal wages for carefully selected young male residents of the province. A master-stroke of public policy, the YMFTP would provide useful employment, enable the Forest Branch to initiate much-needed protection and development projects, and prepare enrollees for work in the forest industry.<sup>6</sup>

*Cowichan Leader* editor and independent Member of the Legislative Assembly, Hugh Savage originated the process leading to the YMFTP's creation in February 1935, proposing a program of "Hope Stations" around the province. Chief Forester P.Z. Caverhill followed up by suggesting the establishment of crews to clear forest protection trails and develop the Branch's Cowichan Lake, Green Timbers, and Aleza Lake experiment stations. An allotment of \$80,000 from the province's Unemployment Relief Fund was approved, restricting eligibility to physically fit unmarried men in "necessitous circumstances" aged 21 to 25, resident in the province for at least ten years, with a high school education.<sup>7</sup>

Roughly five hundred enrollees would work from mid-June to mid-September at a daily wage of \$1.75 per day, less 75 cents a day for board, transportation and blankets. Supervisor Kenneth McCannel organized three fifty-man crews at the experiment stations and sixteen smaller crews assigned to clear trails and build patrol cabins in the province's five forest districts. Another group, drawn from neighbouring communities, assisted Rangers at stations around the province. Determined to avoid trouble, officials incorporated forestry training and recreation into the schedule at the experiment stations. Enrollees began to enter the field in early June, and Forest Branch personnel reported general satisfaction with their charges. Food and camp conditions prompted grumbling within some crews, but the YMFTP experienced no organized protest during its first season thanks to the government's screening efforts, a tolerant approach to work supervision, and the enthusiasm with which enrollees tackled their duties. The fifteen trail crews rehabilitated or cleared 382 miles of pack-horse trail, put in miles of telephone line, and built several patrol cabins. Those at the experiment stations made progress on water systems, telephone lines, and fire lines. B.C.'s New Chief Forester, E.C. Manning described the enterprise as a "complete success in every respect."<sup>8</sup>

The Pattullo government created work and training opportunities for some five hundred enrollees in the summer of 1936, the second season of YMFTP operation. Similar in general outline to the previous edition, it also featured a major project at Campbell River devoted to developing Elk Falls Park. Meanwhile, hoping that Dominion funds would be available to initiate a national forest conservation scheme in 1937, Dominion Forester D. Roy Cameron entered into negotiations with provincial forestry officials. Now completing a second season of his YMFTP projects, Manning cautioned against undertaking too ambitious



*Young relief workers pause while picking cones at the Cowichan Lake Experiment Station during the Great Depression.*

an operation, destined to “become just another relief scheme, with its attendant waste and adverse criticism.”<sup>9</sup>

When Manning reported to the legislature in November 1936 he drew attention to the YMFTP’s social value in rehabilitating unemployed youths, declaring that the province had received “100 percent value” on the \$100,000 expended. Another five hundred men had contributed their labour to trail, road, bridge, cabin, and lookout construction; further enhanced facilities at the experiment stations; eliminated the slash hazard at strategic points; and begun developing the recreational potential of Elk Falls Park. The legislature’s forestry committee recommended that the YMFTP be continued the following year, but in the interim Manning would have another, more difficult relief plan to administer.<sup>10</sup>

Mackenzie King’s decision to close the DND camps in July 1936 without long-term provisions for transient relief triggered another crisis in Vancouver that autumn. The threat of disorder resulted in a federal-provincial agreement to share the cost of a

\$1.5 million forest development relief scheme to run from November to April, 1937. The pact called for the establishment of forestry camps to employ 2,000 men who would be paid thirty cents an hour. Each man would have a portion of his wages held back, to be paid at \$4 per week after leaving the project. All those who could prove arrival in B.C. prior to November 15 were eligible, a compromise designed to discourage further migration to the province.<sup>11</sup>

A total of twenty-one Forest Development Projects (FDP) camps operated in the coastal region that winter, eleven of them on Vancouver Island. Protests, strikes, and general discontent plagued the FDP camps from the onset. The Relief Project Workers Union challenged the wage deferral policy, workplace discipline, and camp conditions, but continuing high unemployment prompted a decision to extend the projects until early June. Although seventy-five were discharged, and another fifty quit in sympathy, McCannel described the majority of the 3,800



A Youth Forestry Training Plan crew moves a Cowichan Lake Experiment Station boathouse in 1938.

who occupied the camps as “willing workers” who “returned to their homes and places of domicile across Canada better fit to secure employment.” In addition to continuing the work begun by the YMFTP at Elk Falls, FDP crews undertook development of Capilano, Little Qualicum Falls, Englishman River, Skutz Falls, Harrison Lake, John Dean, and Thetis Lake parks. Forest protection projects on the Vancouver, Victoria, and Nanaimo watersheds occupied almost 30 percent of the personnel. Work at the Green Timbers and Cowichan Lake experiment stations went ahead, along with protection improvements on various provincial forest reserves until the FDP projects closed in early June to make way for a third season of YMFTP activity.<sup>12</sup>

Ottawa introduced a \$1 million Youth Training Program in the spring of 1937, permitting the YMFTP to operate on a shared-cost basis with the province for the first time. The Dominion government allotted \$100,000 to B.C. for training in forestry and placer mining, allowing 585 enrollees to participate through the summer and early autumn. Nationally, some 16,000 young people received some form of training by year’s end.<sup>13</sup>

The usual flood of transients to Vancouver that autumn prompted provincial and Dominion officials to continue sharing the cost of another wintertime FDP scheme for the single homeless. Roughly 5,000 men participated that winter, and once again Forest Branch officials were confronted with a number of protests led by the project workers union. The deferred payment plan was a particular point of contention, especially the provision that men would be laid off when they had accumulated sufficient funds to carry them through to May. Authorities held that the resumption of industrial activity in the spring would absorb the unemployed, but the economy remained mired in Depression. Running out of deferred pay, the single unemployed launched a May campaign to have the camps kept open, occupying the Post Office, Art Gallery, and Hotel Georgia in Vancouver. The sit-in

lasted for a month, ending on June 19, “Bloody Sunday,” when RCMP and city police evicted the men in a violent confrontation. Faced with mounting civic unrest, MacKenzie King agreed to take financial responsibility for the non-resident transients who accepted transportation back to their provinces of origin. Pattullo accepted the offer, but continued pressing King to adopt a national public works program to ease B.C.’s transient problem.<sup>14</sup>

The YMFTP, now called the Youth Forestry Training Plan (YFTP), operated once again during the summer of 1938. Ottawa and B.C. shared the \$135,000 cost of the four-month program, which employed about six hundred residents of the province. Another hectic edition of the FDP followed that winter, but rather than endure a repeat of the previous spring’s events several projects were extended in duration through the summer of 1939 to avoid mass demonstrations during the visit of King George V and Queen Elizabeth to Vancouver.<sup>15</sup>

The Dominion government’s most ambitious Depression-era effort to merge forest conservation and relief objectives came in the spring of 1939 with the introduction of the \$1 million National Forestry Program (NFP), intended to “combine training and employment of young unemployed men with protection and development of Canadian forest and wildlife conservation.” Separated into provincial and federal sections, the NFP directed \$400,000 to the Dominion Forest Service for projects on its experiment stations and the national parks. The agency also had the right to approve provincial projects, supported by the balance of the federal funds on a shared-cost basis. Unemployed men in “necessitous circumstances” aged eighteen to twenty-five were eligible for the NFP program, which operated throughout the summer of 1939. B.C. enlistees received \$1.75 per day less a 75 cent board charge, and a deferral system limited the monthly draw to \$10.00. Borrowing freely from the CCC as well as B.C.’s YMFTP, the National Forestry Program



*The Green Timbers Nursery and Experiment Station in 1942, where Alternative Service Workers assembled before dispersal to the camps.*

shared the cost of a standard uniform with participants.<sup>16</sup>

All nine provinces took advantage of NFP funding to employ almost five thousand young men across the country. B.C. conducted both NFP and Youth Forestry Training camps for single men resident in the province for at least five years, the former taking in 555 enrollees from urban centres. Together with the 305 youth training enrollees and the roughly one thousand transients employed in the eighteen FDP camps, over two thousand men toiled on a wide variety of forest conservation projects that summer. Sixty-eight percent of the trainees' time went into forest protection measures; clearing trails and access roads; building lookout towers; felling snags; establishing fireguards; and burning slash. Progress in the development of parks, nurseries at Green Timbers and Campbell River, and the Cowichan Lake Experiment Station also continued in 1939, while Game Commissioners supervised projects in stream clearance and work at fish hatcheries. The larger NFP and YFTP crews received some training in forestry, Malcolm Knapp of UBC providing the lectures. Rangers also gave occasional talks, and a minister delivered instruction in citizenship and "personal and sex hygiene." Dominion Forester D. Roy Cameron came away impressed from an inspection tour of the B.C. program, which was "not surpassed elsewhere in Canada."<sup>17</sup>

Over five years 3,100 young men received forestry training in the province under the various Depression-era programs, making a valuable contribution until the B.C. government closed the relief camps in September 1939. With World War II now underway officials offered transportation to those who wished to enlist in the armed forces. Cameron pressed for a renewal of the NFP in 1940, but enlistments and economic revival spelled the end of this phase of federal-provincial cooperation in forest conservation.<sup>18</sup>

World War II terminated the relief projects, then, but the conflict soon provided another source of labour in the form of conscientious objectors. Knowing that some form of service would

be necessary, Mennonites and other members of pacifist religious sects sought work that made no "direct contribution to the war effort." By the end of 1940 Ottawa had agreed to the principle of alternative service, and in June 1941 the Mackenzie King government authorized the creation of civilian work projects for conscientious objectors. Camps were established on the western national parks that summer, and the Dominion Forest Service also secured "conchie" for development of its experiment stations.<sup>19</sup>

The bombing of Pearl Harbour that December prompted a call from the B.C. government for Dominion help in defending against the possibility of Japanese incendiary attacks. Forest fires would curtail production of lumber vital to the war effort, argued Minister of Lands A. Wells Gray in proposing the use of troops in a Forestry Battalion. The DND denied this application, but the Department of National War Services agreed to divert up to a thousand conscientious objectors from the national parks to B.C. The Dominion government would pay for transportation, wages, and allowances in placing the Alternative Service Workers [ASW] under Forest Branch administration for fire fighting and forest development on Vancouver Island and the lower coast.<sup>20</sup>

A total of 740 ASWs reported for duty between May and December 1942, all arriving at Green Timbers before being despatched to one of the eighteen camps. They received training in fire fighting early in the season, served as suppression crews, and engaged in forest development work during periods of low hazard. At most camps snag falling occupied much of their time, but crews also opened up old railway grades for truck travel in a campaign of "fire-proofing" cutover lands. "The Alternative Service Workers are applying themselves to jobs assigned them with energy," Dominion inspector George Tunstell reported in July. "The BCFS is well pleased with this class of labour and considers it to be above the average available for forest improvement work." By the end of the year they had fought 145 fires, cut over

250,000 snags on 24,500 acres of cutover land, cleared many miles of road and trail, and planted over 600 acres of new forest.<sup>21</sup>

The Dominion Forest Service supported B.C.'s claim for a renewal of the program for 1943 but the federal Department of Labour, now responsible for the ASWs, felt heavy pressure from farmers anxious to secure their services. Wells Gray pointed out that the forests west of the Cascade range produced half of Canada's lumber, warning "against a fire season that would seriously embarrass defence, bring the whole industry to a standstill, destroy much irreplaceable logging equipment, and otherwise do irreparable damage to...lumber production for the duration of the war." Chief Forester C.D. Orchard and Wells Gray rallied support from military officials and industry leaders on the west coast, but the Dominion government remained reluctant to continue paying the cost of fire protection in B.C. When Ottawa suggested that B.C. share the financial burden equally Wells Gray balked, but eventually committed the province to paying one-third of the cost of keeping up to six hundred ASWs on forest protection duty.<sup>22</sup>

The diversion of ASWs to agricultural work in 1943 reduced the average enrolment to 450, organized in twenty camps. While the replacements for those who returned to prairie farms proved less adaptable to the work, the ASWs continued to draw praise. "My impression of the men in the camps was high," reported a Dominion official. "They are capable of a full day's work and the great majority are wholly sincere in their effort to assist in the war within the limits of their convictions."<sup>23</sup>

The federal government announced its intention to withdraw from the agreement, set to expire the following spring, in December, 1943. The shortage of experienced agricultural labour had become acute, and Ottawa intended to allocate the "conchies" to this purpose. Wells Gray replied that the danger of incendiary attack remained high, but the Forest Branch had to close the camps by April 1944. The province made a last-ditch effort to reclaim ASW labour in May, Premier John Hart citing the urgent need for labour to plant some ten million trees that autumn. Mitchell expressed sympathy with the province's plight, but by this time the existing federal ASW camps were populated only by a couple of hundred men. The national parks later received a new supply consisting mainly of Hutterites and Jehovah's Witnesses, but Ottawa declined to entertain B.C.'s request for reforestation workers. Ironically, Japan launched a massive incendiary attack against western American forests late in 1944, sending some 9,000 balloons carrying incendiary bombs across the



BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVES PHOTO # NA-19622.

*Bell helicopter used in aerial survey work by the B.C. Forest Service under the Canada Forestry Act in 1955.*

Pacific. Damp forests doomed the project to failure, but hundreds of the balloons reached the United States.<sup>24</sup>

## POSTWAR COOPERATION

Federal forestry enjoyed new vigour in the immediate postwar decades. Increased funding supported a much expanded role in wildfire science, forest inventory, and silviculture research, and at long last Ottawa adopted a national policy of cooperation in support of provincial forestry programs. Passage of the Canada Forestry Act ushered in a two-decade period of growth for the federal Forestry Branch, which administered shared-cost agreements to ensure that provincial inventory, reforestation, forest protection, and access road development initiatives met national standards.

Pressure from industry, provincial governments, and forestry organizations for more accurate inventories of Canadian forests to facilitate postwar expansion played a key role in passage of the Canada Forestry Act in December, 1949. The B.C. Forest Branch had begun using aerial photographs for forest surveys in the 1930s, but lacked an up-to-date inventory of the resource as the province adopted a sustained-yield forest management policy after the 1945 Sloan Royal Commission. The B.C. industry welcomed the Act, which promised funding assistance "for the protection, development, or utilization of the forest resources." During 1950 the federal Forest Branch carried out negotiations with the provinces on implementation, and in May, 1951 Minister



*Camp for planting crew at Skutz Falls on Vancouver Island, typical habitation at postwar B.C. Forest Service reforestation projects.*

of Resources and Development R.H. Winters announced Ottawa's intention to support provincial inventory and reforestation projects. Ottawa made it clear that federal contributions were intended to "supplement provincial expenditures, rather than to replace the normal appropriations made by the provinces," which would be responsible for carrying out the projects.<sup>25</sup>

The federal offer gave priority to the inventory work needed to promote postwar industrial expansion, making provinces eligible for 50 percent of the costs of completing surveys over the next five years. B.C., New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia signed agreements by July 1952. B.C.'s agreement, signed on December 4, 1951, allowed the province to double its program, encompassing an area of roughly 91 million acres of productive forestland. Prior to the agreement the province had inventoried only about 13 million acres to a standard that could be revised to meet the required specifications, and the Forest Service urgently required a fuller understanding of the forests under its jurisdiction.<sup>26</sup>

The original plan called for the inventory to be carried out at a rate of 12 million acres per year, requiring a significant expansion in personnel and equipment. The B.C. Forest Service employed over two hundred on its field crews during the early 1950s, but it soon became clear that it would be necessary to lower standards in order to complete the project within the five-year period. Poor photographic weather conditions contributed to the slower than anticipated rate of progress. A five-year extension of

the agreement signed in 1956 allowed the inventory to proceed, also providing for a maintenance survey that would permit re-examination of the entire province over the 1958–1967 period.<sup>27</sup>

By 1958 the B.C. Forest Service had compiled an initial inventory of all forested land in the province, the federal government contributing \$3 million towards the \$8 million cost. The agency embarked on its maintenance inventory that year, but required further assistance to carry out intensive management surveys. Ottawa agreed to extend cooperation in 1960, allowing B.C. to commence a long-term program the following year.<sup>28</sup>

The initial round of federal-provincial agreements also provided for reforestation assistance, Ottawa contributing one-fifth of provincial expenditures in restocking Crown Lands and establishing new nurseries. B.C. took less advantage of this option, federal aid amounting to only \$71,000 in the eight years preceding 1964. This represented only two percent of provincial expenditures on reforestation, a showing Deputy Minister of Forests R.G. McKee attributed to the lack of adequate forest protection and access roads. "There is no use spending a fortune on tree planting in the interior unless we are sure of protection from fire," he explained.<sup>29</sup>

B.C. and national forestry organizations pressed Ottawa from the outset to make the provinces eligible for forest fire protection aid under the agreements. Premier W.A.C. Bennett presented B.C.'s case to Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent in 1954, pointing out that in the 1952–53 fiscal year alone the federal government had collected over \$250 million in corporate and personal income tax from the province, making a "negligible contribution" to conservation in return. Ottawa had devoted only \$75,000 to reforestation in the 1951–52 fiscal year, compared to the province's \$460,000 investment, and nothing the following year. Forest inventory costs were shared more equally, but the 1951 agreement made no provision for financing fire protection, "the primary problem affecting the conservation of the forest resources of B.C." Citing Ottawa's interest in a resource that figured so prominently in "national production, national income, and federal tax revenues," Bennett urged the Dominion to accept an equal share in financing forest protection.<sup>30</sup>

Provincial forestry officials and industry leaders also demanded federal help in building access roads, appeals justified on protection grounds but having more to do with economic development than conservation. Ottawa responded favourably in the second round of agreements, including fire protection in 1957 and road construction the following year. Under the former, the Dominion



A road construction crew working on Willow River Road east of Prince George opens up central Interior forests for development in 1956.

supported capital expenditures on fire prevention, detection, and suppression equipment, improvements such as buildings and airfields, and the hiring of aircraft. The access road program featured an equal sharing of the cost of approved projects. New two-year agreements negotiated in 1962 featured one condition; provinces claiming their entire allotment had to allocate at least 40 percent of the total to access road construction.<sup>31</sup> In the early 1960s B.C. received \$1.8 million annually in federal funds, participating in the four main phases of the program. Provincial officials were thankful for the assistance, but McKee pointed out that the province's investment in 1961 alone amounted to \$6.9 million, not including the \$4 million cost of fighting fires. Indeed, the federal contribution to inventory, protection, access roads, and reforestation between the mid-1950s and early 1960s represented just 15 percent of provincial spending on these endeavours. McKee, now retired, complained in late 1965 that the federal government was "milking our forests for all they can get their hands on."<sup>32</sup>

Ottawa offered the provinces another two-year extension of the forestry agreements in 1965 but the heyday of federal forestry cooperation was passing, signalled in 1966 when the Department of Forestry's six-year existence as an independent entity ended. Later that year Liberal Finance Minister Mitchell Sharp announced that his government would not renew the agreements when they expired on March 31, 1967. The need for federal involvement had passed, Sharp asserted; Ottawa would continue to promote sound forest management and industry welfare "within the framework of federal jurisdiction and responsibility." Federal expenditures under the agreements between 1951 and 1967 reached almost \$64 million nationally. B.C. spent over \$6 million of these funds on inventory, a similar amount on access road projects, over \$4 million on fire protection, and just \$217,000 on reforestation, for a total of \$17,429,589.00.<sup>33</sup>

## FALLDOWN AND FRDA

The newly-named Canadian Forestry Service (CFS) fared poorly during the late 1960s within the Department of Fisheries and Forestry. The agency's fortunes continued to slide after the 1971 creation of Environment Canada, as across the country evidence of a forthcoming wood supply crisis mounted. Cutting outpaced reforestation in all the provinces, creating a massive backlog of not-satisfactorily restocked land (NSR). In B.C., where only 120,000 of the 500,000 acres cutover each year were planted, almost a million hectares of productive forestland had been classified as NSR in 1978.<sup>34</sup>

By the late 1970s the absence of a meaningful national forest policy drew increasing criticism from foresters. Ottawa responded in 1979 with a National Development Policy for the Forest Products Industry. While the program emphasized cost-sharing incentive grants to the provinces for plant modernization and infrastructure development, funds were also earmarked for silviculture. This awakening to the need for greater federal participation fostered a rebirth of cooperative endeavours to increase forest productivity and generate employment in support of B.C.'s dominant forest sector.<sup>35</sup>

The Canada/B.C. Subsidiary Agreement on Intensive Forest Management, signed on May 17, 1979, emerged out of a widespread acceptance that the province would soon face the inevitable consequences of the "falldown" effect; a situation in which second-growth forests would provide less timber annually than the previous forests. The five-year \$50 million pact committed Ottawa and Victoria to share equally in the cost of an initiative designed to strengthen the job-creating potential of the forest resource, increase wood yield, and thus ensure a sustained rate of harvest. The agreement directed \$11.5 million to reforestation in hopes



*Avenger aircraft drops the fire suppressant Bentomite in 1962. While welcoming federal support for such protection advances, provincial officials called for more.*

of reducing the NSR backlog by up to 25,000 hectares. Juvenile spacing, designed to hasten the growth of superior trees, received a \$30 million allotment. Up to 40,000 hectares would be fertilized at a cost of \$5 million, and a \$1 million investment was scheduled for the protection of treated stands from fire.<sup>36</sup>

As the dollars began flowing into B.C.'s burgeoning silviculture industry, Ottawa's 1981 Forest Sector Strategy for Canada heralded a new era of federal-provincial cooperation. The timing could not have proved more opportune, as a deep recession during the early 1980s curtailed provincial forestry investments. The slump also produced massive layoffs in B.C., demoralizing many forest-dependent communities. Ottawa spent over \$9 million in support of intensive forest management in the province in the first two years of the agreement, but unemployment rose sharply in the second half of 1981 as export markets constricted. The following year unemployment averaged some 12 percent.<sup>37</sup>

The provincial and federal governments responded in June 1982, throwing together the Canada-B.C. Employment Bridging Assistance Program (EBAP), a \$40 million one-year job creation initiative permitting jobless forest workers to augment their unemployment insurance benefits by participating in silviculture, protection, range improvement, and recreation projects. The program, described by CFS Pacific and Yukon region Director D.R. Macdonald as an "overwhelming success," employed over 6,000 people on some 570 projects during the summer of 1982. Provincial funding for EBAP continued until July 1983, but federal monies kept it operating until the end of September.<sup>38</sup>

The CFS assumed the responsibility for forestry-related regional economic development from the Department of Regional Economic Expansion in September, 1982. Staff at the agency's Pacific Forest Research Centre [PFRC] took over administration

of the Subsidiary Agreement, and over the next year its personnel worked with B.C. Ministry of Forests representatives to draft a new agreement to carry forward when the original expired in March, 1984. In the end, the two sides gained approval for a one-year, \$11 million extension that focused on reforestation of the NSR backlog and related research. Hoping for a more lasting commitment, the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters described the extension as inadequate to address the province's reforestation needs.<sup>39</sup>

Negotiations over the following year culminated in the long-awaited \$300 million Canada-B.C. Forest Resource Development Agreement (FRDA), the largest such agreement ever signed. Signed by federal Minister of State for Forestry Gerald Merrithew and B.C. Minister of Forests Tom Waterland on 25 May, 1985, FRDA committed each government to spend \$150 million over the next five years on reforestation and intensive forest management. Merrithew called the deal, which represented a six-fold increase in Ottawa's financial support, "an investment in the future of Canada." Blending immediate employment benefits and forest renewal in a potent political package, FRDA was anticipated to create up to five hundred long-term and 15,000 short-term jobs and reduce B.C.'s estimated 644,000 hectares of NSR land by at least 150,000 hectares.<sup>40</sup>

The \$22 million spent in the initial year of FRDA permitted reforestation and intensive forestry activities to be carried out on nearly a quarter of a million acres. Spending doubled the following year, and by mid-1988 Merrithew proclaimed the program an "unqualified success." B.C. Forests Minister Dave Parker claimed that such agreements were essential to forest renewal in the province and expressed hope for a federal commitment to another FRDA as it passed the half-way point. A 1988 summary



In the 1980s federal-provincial cooperation centered on reforestation and intensive forestry activities. Signed in 1985, the \$300 million Forest Resource Development Agreement created jobs and reduced the NSR (not-satisfactorily restocked) land by 35 percent.

pointed to a 25 percent reduction in the NSR backlog on good and medium site forestland over the first three years of FRDA, but the NSR backlog had actually increased in the Kamloops and Prince Rupert forest regions.<sup>41</sup>

With FRDA nearing its expiration date, B.C. forestry interests clamoured for renewal of the agreement. The Association of B.C. Professional Foresters and Western Silvicultural Contractors Association lobbied Ottawa, but federal and provincial representatives could not agree on a shared-cost formula. As FRDA concluded and the negotiations dragged on, an independent evaluation declared that the agreement's objectives had been met. The planting of about 163 million seedlings on 138,400 hectares had reduced the province's NSR backlog by 35 percent. Reforestation and intensive forest management would likely add 555,600 cubic metres of wood to the annual long-term sustainable yield, and create over a thousand permanent jobs. FRDA had generated some 31,000 short-term jobs, provided the impetus for the development of a significant silviculture industry, and contributed to the economic stability of several communities.<sup>42</sup>

Some questioned this rosy evaluation of FRDA accomplishments. Estimates put the remaining NSR backlog at roughly 483,700 hectares, and a Pacific Reforestation Workers Union official suggested that the Ministry of Forests had altered stocking levels to reduce the amount of NSR land, dropping medium sites considered inoperable from that category. Timber industry officials indicated that further agreements should focus on intensive forest management rather than the NSR backlog. UBC professor F.L.C. Reed, who had helped develop the FRDA program

during his tenure with the federal government, supported this position. "We are in a jam on timber supply," Reed explained. "NSR or rehabilitation work won't give us a thing we can harvest in the next forty to fifty years. If we intervene in a middle-aged stand we can push these stands forward in the harvesting queue by ten to twenty years." Those involved in the silviculture industry hoped for a continued emphasis on reforestation, but all agreed on the importance of federal funding in support of silviculture in the province.<sup>43</sup>

B.C.'s Social Credit government upped its investment in silviculture after the expiry of FRDA in March 1990, allocating \$182 million under a new Sustainable Environment Fund. But Ottawa balked at B.C.'s request for a \$700 million FRDA II. Wishing to reduce its contribution to a second agreement, the federal government offered only \$100 million. "I don't really think the federal government is going to muster consistent long-term continuity in funding silviculture," Reed declared. "I wish this were not the case." Victoria reluctantly agreed to the proposal for a \$200 million, four-year shared-cost agreement, hoping for additional funds from the recently announced federal Green Plan. The April, 1990 announcement of FRDA II received a lukewarm reception. Industry criticized the provincial government for not sticking with its original \$350 million commitment. "Silviculture funding is a political football," concluded the *Truck Logger's* John Doyle, "routinely punted back and forth between the federal and provincial teams."<sup>44</sup>

FRDA II, officially titled the Canada-British Columbia Partnership Agreement on Forest Resource Development, consisted of seven programs. The lion's share of the funds—\$133.5

million—was reserved for sustainable forest development, a category that included spacing, fertilizing and pruning, integrated resource management, and silvicultural systems. Remaining funds went to small-scale forestry on municipal, private, and Indian lands, education and technology transfer, inventory, and research. “We want to improve the value, quality, and health of our young stands through tending, and we want to improve our current forest management practices on federal, provincial and private forest lands,” said B.C. Forests Minister Claude Richmond. The new agreement proceeded on the assumption that 1987 changes to the Forest Act placing the responsibility for reforestation on holders of major tenures, coupled with the progress made under FRDA I, would solve the province’s NSR problem. Thus, FRDA II supported incremental silviculture practices to “intensify the growth and quality of the younger forests.”<sup>45</sup>

An economic downturn during the early 1990s and another shift in government priorities cast doubt on the future of federal-provincial cooperation even as FRDA II gathered momentum. Fiscal restraint in both Ottawa and Victoria froze investments in silviculture and reforestation, and in 1993 federal cutbacks reduced the agreement by \$19 million. The Conservatives coupled this measure with an announcement that the FRDAs would not be renewed. Provincial and private sector activities had “matured to the point where more limited federal government activity is warranted,” in what was, after all, an area of provincial jurisdiction. Ottawa’s impending withdrawal caused consternation in B.C. forestry circles. Finance Minister Glen Clark suggested that the cancellation discriminated against B.C. taxpayers, and urged the central government to find an alternative way of cutting expenditures. Extended by one year, FRDA II ultimately invested \$184 million in sustainable development of the B.C. forest resource, shared equally by the two governments. An evaluation found that the agreement met all its scientific and economic goals, generating nearly 2,600 person years of employment and providing approximately 107,500 hectares of forestland with spacing, pruning and fertilization treatments.<sup>46</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From the relief projects of the Depression-era to the reforestation and intensive management initiatives of the FRDAs, Ottawa has maintained a clear, if wavering, interest in the state of B.C.’s forests. It did so not in terms of a commitment to the application of a reasoned national forest policy in the province, but rather in response to the emergence of perceived social and economic needs. A source of jobs, wealth, tax revenues, and foreign trade, provincial timberlands would benefit from an infusion of federal funds when conditions seemed to warrant spending. This pragmatic if uninspired approach has, of course, its parallel in the history of provincial forest policy. Financial support for forestry in both Victoria and Ottawa has never held to a stable course, determined instead by broader economic trends and shifting political tides. For a time during the 1950s and 1960s, and again in the 1980s, the principle of cooperation seemed to have found the support needed to flourish in a federal system, only to wither in the face of changing priorities and the familiar constitutional justifications. The current crisis atmosphere created by the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber dispute has generated demands for Ottawa’s help in defending and expanding export markets, bringing B.C.’s

forest sector to prominence on the national political stage. Recently announced initiatives in this field seem to elevate trade above conservation objectives, but mark no departure from an erratic tradition of federal policy-making. □

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## NOTES

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