

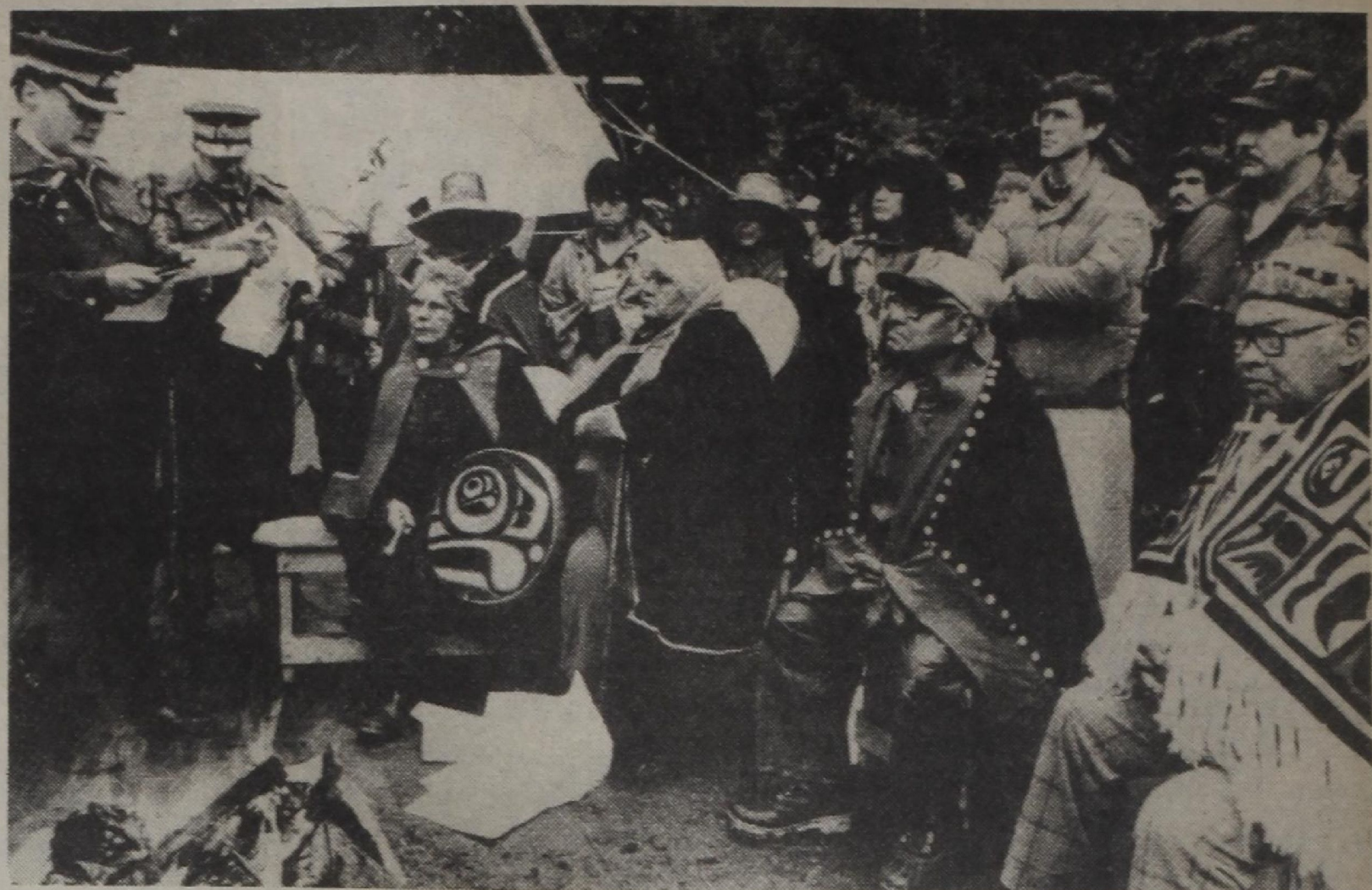
Logging Stopped: Struggle Continues

B.C. Indians Blockade & Win

Indians in British Columbia have struggled against the encroachment of European development and culture ever since the first arrival of the settlers at the beginning of the last century. Although the sad saga of decimation by disease, cultural erosion and forced removal is similar to that in other areas of North America, the Indians of B.C. are in a somewhat different situation now. The most important difference is that except for small areas at the southern tip of Vancouver Island and the extreme northeastern part of the province, the native people of B.C. have never signed a treaty with any government. Another difference is that a large proportion of B.C. Indians derive at least part of their living from the land, either through traditional food gathering or by commercial fishing or logging. Over the past ten years or so, concern about the rampant destruction of the forests by governments and corporations interested only in short term gains, and lack of recognition for historic fishing rights, has led to conflict with the authorities. During the past year attention has focussed on three struggles where native people took a radical stand and forced a halt to logging plans. The confrontations began after the provincial government issued logging permits for the disputed areas, whereas there had previously been a moratorium on logging pending settlement of outstanding claims. The Indians were joined in two cases by environmentalists, whose aims of wilderness preservation coincided momentarily with the aims of the Indians, which was to demand a voice in development plans. The Indians claim that since they were never defeated in a war or surrendered their claims to the land or sea resources that they have rights over the use of the land, and base their negotiating position on that premise. The government of B.C. categorically refuses to negotiate while at the same time continuing to allow large scale exploitation of disputed resources.

IN JANUARY, 1985, THE NUU-CHAH-nulth tribal council, on the west coast of Vancouver Island took MacMillan Bloedel, a large logging company, to court to prevent logging on Meares Island. While the trial was still in progress MB decided to send

crews onto the island to survey for roads and mark trees for cutting. When this became known an advance party of Indians and environmentalists landed on the island and set up camp. By the time the logging crew arrived on Jan. 30th, there were 150 protest-



POLICE READ INJUNCTION TO HAIDA BLOCKADERS

ers crowded along the 100 meter foreshore at Heelboom Bay, effectively preventing a landing. The company responded by suggesting that a landing could be made at any point along the island's shore. By the afternoon protesters had fanned out, setting up two more camps. The next two months were occupied by a cat and mouse game between the loggers and protesters. Surveyors managed to land and began marking trees. The protesters responded by driving long spikes into the marked trees, making them unable to be sawn. Company employees then resorted to marking the spiked trees with spray paint. This tactic was countered by copying the spray marks onto many unspiked trees, thus confounding the loggers even further. On March 27th the court set Nov. 1986 as the date for settling the land claim and ordered both the loggers and the protesters off the island. The company was allowed to remove the spikes.

Throughout the summer a general sense of uneasiness pervaded the land claims forums as more and more bands spoke up about long standing grievances. The provincial government responded by refusing to negotiate and attempted to polarize public opinion by raising the spectre of huge reparations that might have to be made to the Indians if it was found that they did indeed own the province 'lock, stock and barrel', as at least one native leader claimed. The government continued to issue timber leases on disputed land while teams of biologists, archaeologists and photographers combed the disputed areas, bringing back evidence of historic native use and unique ecological values.

In October, proposals to log the Stein valley in the interior were resurrected. Plans to log the Stein were shelved in the early '70s due to protests. The company (British Columbia Forest Products), promised to consult with all interested groups but made it clear that they would not abandon plans to log the valley. On Oct. 15th 200 people gathered at

the mouth of the Stein River to hear chief Ruby Dunstan explain why her people want the valley left unlogged. At another Stein gathering over 500 people hiked over the divide to meet at the Stein headwaters, all this in the face of government assertions that the valley is too remote to have any recreational potential.

On Oct. 30th, twenty Haida Indians blockaded a logging road on Lyell Island, in the South Moresby section of the Queen Charlotte Islands group. The blockade forced a logging crew to turn back. The blockaders pointed out that twelve years of legal wrangles, petitions, cabinet decisions, appeals and protests, logging was finally stopped by the direct action that they had taken. While the logging company went to the courts to get an injunction against the blockade, the Indians began unloading three fishing boats loaded with provisions and enough materials to build three cabins. On Nov. 8 the court brought down an injunction prohibiting the Haidas from interfering with the logging. This was a departure from the Meares case as the company was not prohibited from continuing to log. The next day the Haidas again blocked the road but stepped aside and sang songs when the loggers turned up to work. On Nov. 20th the blockade was resumed in defiance of the injunction and twelve protesters were arrested. Police reinforcements were flown in, the beginning of an escalation that would amount to over \$200,000 in police costs before the action was terminated. During the following days a blockade was set up each morning. The loggers would turn up for work and then the police would arrest the blockade. By the beginning of December 72 Haidas had been arrested. On Nov. 30th, ten Haidas were sentenced to between four and six months in jail for disobeying the court injunction. They were given a week to promise to stay away from Lyell Island in return for a suspension of

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Aims of the Movement

LARGE AREAS OF B.C. ARE BEING RAVAGED by clear cut logging, so why have resistance efforts been directed at three specific areas; Meares, South Moresby and the Stein? The Indians of B.C. view the preservation of the remaining natural areas as the only way that they can preserve an independent life. The land and sea base are essential for the maintenance of their culture. Some bands (including the Haidas with respect to South Moresby) regard some areas as sacred and will allow no 'development' of any kind.

The environmentalists focus on the unique aspects of the ecosystems. Meares Island and the South Moresby group are covered by some of the last virgin stands of temperate rainforest that remain on the Pacific coast. Some of the largest and oldest trees on the planet are in these areas, Sitka Spruce, Hemlock and giant Red Cedars, one of which, on Meares, is known to be over 1500 years old. The Queen Charlotte Islands, of which South Moresby forms a part, is one of the only areas along the Pacific coast that escaped the glaciation of the last ice age, resulting in many species of plants and animals that are found nowhere else. These include the worlds largest black bears, and various mosses and flowers. The Stein valley is unique because it is the only major water shed in southern B.C. that has never been logged. It contains a range of ecosystems from ice and tundra at the headwaters through subalpine forest, then a large Douglas Fir forest and where the valley ends at the Fraser river, a Ponderosa Pine—Rabbitbrush benchland, reputedly the hottest place in Canada. Few rivers traverse such a variety of landforms, vegetation or climates in such a short distance.

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