

# SAVING THE WILDERNESS

BY GARY SCHNEIDER

One of the greatest environmental issues facing Canadians today is the depletion and destruction of the last great wilderness areas in the country. It seems as the economy goes down and resources grow more and more scarce, industry is determined to go farther in pursuing raw materials. Concerned individuals can have little impact on the policies of a company but they can directly influence governmental decisions and attitudes by making their feeling known to elected representatives.

Environmentalists the world over are concerned with the fate of South Moresby and Meares Island off the coast of British Columbia. The following is a letter I received from Martin Haase of Chester, Nova Scotia, executive secretary of Friends of Nature. This group is the North American affiliate of The Men of the Trees, that Richard St. Barbe Baker worked with for many years until his recent death.

This letter can be used as an example if you decide to voice your opinions to politicians from the Island all the way up to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. The more you show your concern, the more inclined the government will be to preserve these areas.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Ottawa  
Premier William Bennett, Victoria, B.C.

Dear Prime Minister Mulroney and Premier Bennett:

Canada's British Columbia owns at least two very special world-class forest wilderness areas which are threatened with destruction, and you are the men in elected positions of leadership to take appropriate action to save Meares Island, off Vancouver Island, and the South Moresby archipelago of the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Meares Island, adjacent to Pacific Rim National Park, embraces a magnificent rain forest containing cedars 60 feet in circumference and 1500 years old, possibly the biggest and oldest trees in Canada. They will not survive unless the entire island is left uncut, as a rain forest creates its own micro-climate which supports a large interdependent ecological community. Adam Zimmerman, chairman of MacMillan Bloedel which plans to lumber Meares, told a CBC reporter that there is "nothing special" about Meares Island, and that a facade of trees would be left so tourists looking across the water wouldn't notice any change. A company led by a man with his attitude shouldn't be allowed near one of Canada's priceless heritage and beauty spots.

The Islands Protection Society, which is leading the campaign to save the South Moresby archipelago, has produced a beautiful book entitled "Islands at the Edge" describing the unique flora and fauna and wonderful beauty of this area. Everyone who reads this book and sees its magnificent photos cannot help but be convinced that South Moresby must be preserved in its virgin state, especially after looking at the terrible pictures of the clear-cut devastation that has been inflicted upon some of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Jacques Cousteau, who wrote the foreword for the book, is one of the "wholehearted defenders" of the islands and says they are "a unique and therefore priceless microcosm".

As our membership is world-wide, and most of our 20,000 supporters are not Canadians, it is not up to us to tell you how to save Meares and South Moresby. We leave the mechanics up to you and the Indians