

INTERVIEW (from page 14)
determining the length of the work-week?

EJH: Government doesn't directly set the work-week, but can influence it through rules that establish the point at which an employer must pay overtime, and various other benefit rates. It can also set the work-week for public servants, which creates a trend that private employers often follow. For many decades, improvements in labor productivity were shared between employers and employees, with employers seeing more profit per worker and employees earning their salary over a shorter time. However, in recent decades, productivity gains have been captured entirely by employers/investors, with the length of the work-week staying the same or even lengthening, while chronic unemployment/ underemployment slowly grows. This means that while employers/investors benefit, not only do workers not receive a share but they lose out through longer hours, lost jobs, or having to pay (via taxes) to support the unemployed. We believe that employers and employees should share in the benefits of productivity gains with shorter work-weeks, which would also reduce unemployment by spreading work among more workers. By reducing the cost of unemployment, taxes on workers could be relaxed, helping to maintain salaries over shorter hours. Workers with more free time would also be able to give back more to their community through volunteering, and have healthier family lives. (An alternative view is that shorter work weeks means more leisure time, which will drive growth in the tourism and entertainment industries).

SB: Canada has been seen in the United States as a resource-rich country, but also one that is significantly exploiting those resources in often environmentally unfriendly ways – e.g. clear-cutting forest, producing oil from tar-sands, which is both energy-intensive and dirty. How will the Green party address these issues? Does your proposal mean that America should expect less oil/forest products and more expensive oil/forest products from Canada? What are the negative and positive implications of that?

JF: My yearly visits to resource-rich and location-important parts of B.C. have brought home how many Canadians look at the resource issue.

In the Bulkley (River) Valley the division between those who want development/export and sustainable lifestyles is tempered by the common dependence/appreciation of the outdoors. Really most in both camps, both being rural, recognize the long-term importance of wise use of resources.

The division is coming to a head in two regional projects. These are: 1) Shell's attempt to develop a methane mine at the sacred headwaters of three major rivers (one being the Skeena R.) and 2) Pipeline and coastal tankers for oil (to China and USA) from the Tar Sands in Alberta.

Only recently have a few treaties been finalized with B.C. First Nations, so most natives, environmentalists, outfitters (fishing, hunting etc.) and many others are successfully (so far) fighting these projects. Many B.C. First Nations have advanced education and technical (i.e. mapping) skills.

The Green Party would put all factors (i.e. environ-

mental, social etc.) into the mix. For example how much would a car cost if all security, space, health, environmental costs were included? This is the thrust of Green thinking!

User fees (royalties, leases etc.) of publicly owned resources should reflect actual value (see vehicle example above). Note: Alberta's Heritage Fund and Alaska's Social Dividend, although based on oil, could be funded by expanding the revenue base to all of nature's free gifts!

EJH: Under a Green economic program, resource costs would rise but labour costs would decrease. This would increase costs to American industry for Canadian resource inputs, but would also drive efficiency gains. In the long run, it would ensure a more dependable resource supply by preventing the depletion of critical resources.

SB: What are the foreign policy implications of this policy shift?

EJH: Sorry, outside of my area.

SB: Forests are publicly owned for the most part in Canada. What are the implications of that?

EJH: On the surface, this would seem to suggest better management, but in practice the opposite is true. The logging companies are not the owners of the land, they are merely renting it while they log. They have no real interest in the future disposition of that land once they extract the lumber value, unless and until they have exhausted all other land parcels and have to log it again. Meanwhile, the government administrators also have no real ties to the land, and are often located in offices hundreds or thousands of miles away. And the government has conflicting agendas – on the one hand to steward the resource, but on the other hand to promote economic growth. The short-term pressure to create or maintain jobs thus overcomes the long-term need to preserve the resource for future generations (not to mention for non-human needs).

What happens is that government allocates more quota than can sustainably be harvested, and charges low stumpage fees (wood royalties) in exchange for promised jobs. This low cost subsidizes wasteful practices in the logging industry, and downstream in the construction industry, and even creates trade disputes. It also allows logging companies to concentrate on exporting raw logs, making their profit off the difference between wood value and stumpage. If they paid a higher cost for raw wood, they would have to concentrate more on value-added processes instead of exporting raw resources.

When forests are privately-owned, the owner wants to maximize the long-term return on land, so insists on a higher stumpage fee and a more sustainable logging pattern. There are privately owned forests, which have been sustainably logged for many decades, yet are still vibrant ecosystems, while neighboring government-administrated forests have been clear-cut and permanently degraded.

Different forms of public ownership could achieve the same, if the ownership and administration were in the hands of the long-time residents of the land in question, (continued on page 16)