

# Rugged, slightly soiled isle sought for open-pit mine not far from cottagers

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VANCOUVER — A beautiful, mountainous Howe Sound island, just 30 kilometres from Vancouver, is the site of a proposed open-pit copper-molybdenum mine that would process 40,000 metric tons of ore a day and employ 690 workers around the clock.

Gambier Island's population of 70 to 80 permanent residents swells to 600 to 700 during the summer, including three camps. Glistening sailboats and yachts tie up at the log booms that surround its rocky shores.

Some salmon and trout can be found in island creeks and there are prawn beds in surrounding bays. Seals and the occasional sea lion or killer whale may be spotted. Ducks, several kinds of grouse, greese, cormorants, herons and bald eagles make their homes here.

Opponents of the mine, pounding around the island in an aluminum log-salvage boat, and mining company officials, in their suite of offices in downtown Vancouver, agreed that Howe Sound is not pristine.

Old logging scars mar the mountainsides, the stench from a pulp mill wafts down when the forest industry is in operation, and upper Howe Sound, above Gambier, was closed to fishing for several years because of chemicals in the water.

## Residents in south, mining in north

Fighting 2½ years of protests from Gambier Island cottagers, 20th Century Energy Corp. of Vancouver argues that residents, who live almost exclusively on the south side of the island, will be little affected by the mine on the less attractive north side.

According to a preliminary report prepared for the company by Acres Consulting Services, "about 579 hectares (a little over two square miles) out of a total surface of 6,490 hectares, representing 8.9 per cent of the island, would be disturbed."

The report also says one hiking trail would be lost and two others affected, to the detriment of one of the church camps, there would be a loss of deer habitat and predatory birds would be displaced.

The report argues that because other recreational lands are more readily accessible, the island is little used by short-term visitors, although cottagers and permanent visitors might be affected.

## Company cites distance from work

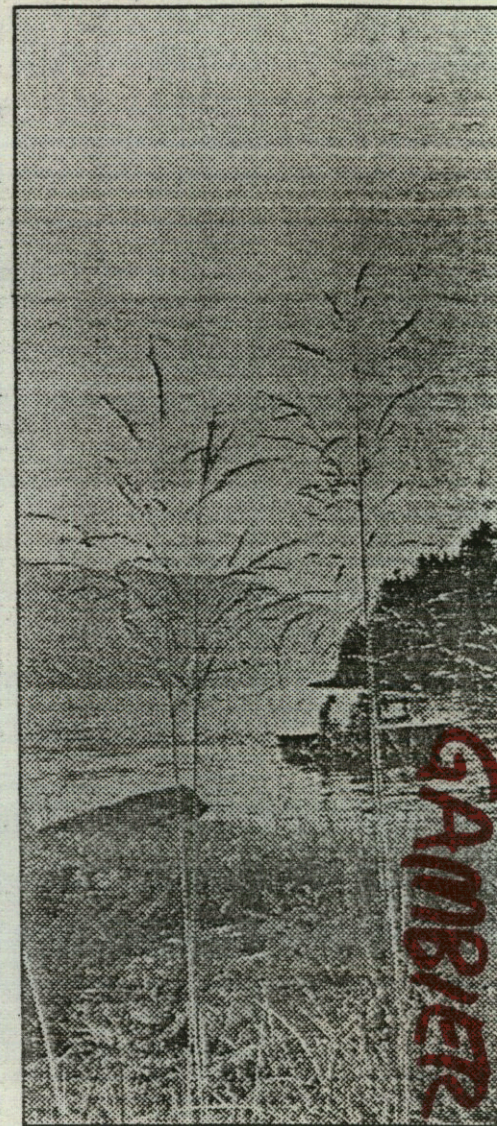
"Many of the permanent and seasonal residents of the island have made a commitment to rural living and thus disturbances by blasting and construction noise may reduce their satisfaction with their living environment . . . However the extent of the impact would be partially offset by the fact that virtually the entire population is concentrated in areas distant from the main site."

This argument does not impress Elspeth Armstrong, a member of the Gambier Island Preservation Society and former trustee of the Islands Trust, who has been fighting the 20th Century proposal for 2½ years. (The Islands Trust was set up in 1974 by the former New Democratic Party government as a body of elected protectors for 13 islands, including Gambier.)

Mrs. Armstrong argues that the cottagers and residents already have their stake in the island and it is future users who are being denied. The January, 1977, community plan drawn up by islanders and approved by Premier William Bennett calls for 5,000 residents.

The wife of a geologist, Mrs. Armstrong says it is unlikely that 20th Century will restrict itself to the current proposal because it has staked three-quarters of the island and she predicts that if the mine is allowed it will destroy the rural and recreational aspect of the island.

Spokesmen for 20th Century say they have staked two-thirds of the island and



Gambier Island's Douglas Bay is ar

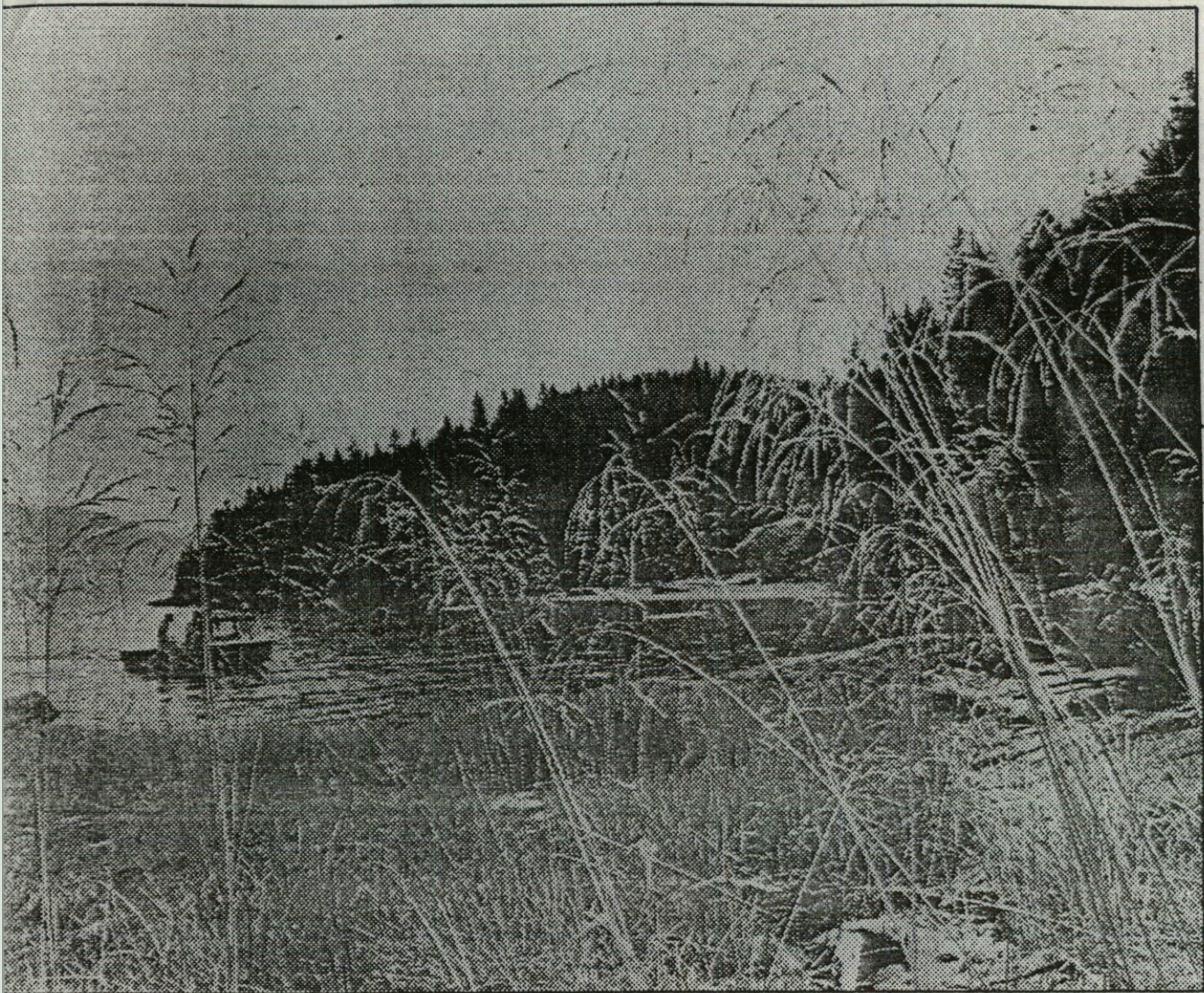
would not rule out development of the rest, though they said they were largely trying to bar less environmentally sensitive developers.

Opponents of the mine, including Mrs. Armstrong and former trustee Beverley Baxter, have been stressing loss of recreational opportunities rather than possible environmental impact on Howe Sound. They think this is the approach most likely to win public support but some residents worry that it will attract additional visitors.

Ann Rogers, a current trustee of the Islands Trust, said permanent residents "think that if we would just shut up it would all go away. They think it is worth the risk (that the mine might be brought in)." All three women are Vancouver residents who spend their summers on Gambier.

Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Rogers, Social Credit MLA Jack Davis (North Vancouver-Seymour) and West Vancouver





Deborah Cameron

Island's Douglas Bay is area where mining concentrate would be loaded for planned open-pit mine.

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Council have all asked the B.C. Govern-ment to tell 20th Century it cannot build on Gambier.

Environment Minister Stephen Rog-ers, who owns land on nearby Bowen Island, said he is personally opposed to the open-pit mine but that is not a suffi-cient basis for barring it.

According to the company there would be 315 hectares of tailings and five dams, the biggest 180 metres (591 feet) high.

The company has drawn up a series of proposals to offset any damage it might cause; it would upgrade unaffected hik-ing trails, augment fishing, revegetate a vast area including the large dam, and set up a publicly administered fund to expand recreational opportunities on Howe Sound.

The 690 workers would be brought in by company ferry from homes on the Sunshine Coast, a strip of the mainland adjoining Howe Sound. About 400 more

jobs would be created directly and an additional 2,430 jobs created indirectly in the province.

The company has already spent \$1.5-million and will have to spend \$325-mil-lion plus a variable cost estimated at \$62-million annually to set up what would be its first producing mine.

It will leave a pit measuring 1,450 metres by 1,000 metres (about 4,760 by 3,280 feet) extending 90 metres (295 feet) below sea level and the mine operation would require 40.5 million litres of water a day, probably obtained from the McNab Creek watershed on the Sunshine Coast.

The mine contains an estimated 202 million metric tons of ore. About 40,000 tons of ore a day would be processed at the site to provide 300 to 400 tons of con-centrate, which would be shipped from Douglas Bay, on the east side of Gam-bier, to Vancouver for shipping abroad.