

# The NDP's ode to neo-pantheism

Victoria honours the green 'soul' of the Tatshenshini

On June 22 Premier Mike Harcourt set aside the entire Tatshenshini-Alsek region of northwestern B.C. as a million-hectare class-A provincial park, thus killing plans by Geddes Resources Ltd. to develop its Windy Craggy mine there. The premier justified the decision by voicing standard preservationist arguments. Among other things, he said the park would provide "benefits to the global environment."

A week later, however, the NDP modified its message and invoked a distinctly spiritual rationale for the controversial decision, with the result that the already bewildered mining industry is even further confused about what's driving Victoria's resource-sector decision-making.

The new park would be a "Canada Day gift" to the planet "to honour the land that has given us so much," the NDP proclaimed. Full-page newspaper ads—part of a \$100,000 advertising campaign—also touted the new park as the "irreplaceable soul of this vast and open land." The ad provided a toll-free number to call for more information and to order a free commemorative poster.

Understandably, Victoria's ode to neo-pantheism elicited a sarcastic response. *Vancouver Sun* columnist Jamie Lamb wondered how a place that most British Columbians will never see—and most hadn't heard of until recently—could be the soul of the province. The *Alberni Valley Times* dismissed the ad as "idle New-Age rhetoric, written by some mantra-chanting aesthete in a fragrant room where the smell of incense and the tinkling of wind chimes clouds the mind."

Wayne Spilsbury, vice-president of the B.C. & Yukon Chamber of Mines, said that if the Tat is a soul, it's a "pretty empty" one. More importantly, he worries about the pantheistic tone. For staunch environmentalists the worship of Mother Earth is like a religion, he says. "I hope that's not seeping into cabinet." But it apparently has. Mines Minister Anne Edwards says the ad was meant to publicize the fact the government had protected a precious, important and ecologically-rare area. "We make no apology for that, whatsoever."

Not surprisingly, Adriane Carr of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee agrees with the philosophy behind the ad. Not all British Columbians have to see



Protected area: Industry isn't giving up yet.

the area for it to be a soul of the province, she says. "I feel wilderness is part of the psyche of Canadians." Ms. Carr acknowledges that for many people the connection to the environment is like a religion. That's why there's such an outcry when it's destroyed, as is happening in Clayoquot Sound.

Before it ventured into green spirituality, the NDP had said its decision to set the Tat aside was based on a report from the Commission on Resources and the Environment, which concluded that mining activity would be incompatible with full wilderness preservation. But that rationale is under attack as well. The Chamber of Mines has released a report outlining the "flawed character of the CORE report." The critique concludes that CORE's findings are incomplete and inaccurate, and should be rejected. Furthermore, an industry representative on CORE is asking Commissioner Stephen Owen to insist on a public inquiry to review the government's decision.

The CORE report on the Tatshenshini, released in January, identified three options for the land: preservation, limited mining, or a moratorium on develop-

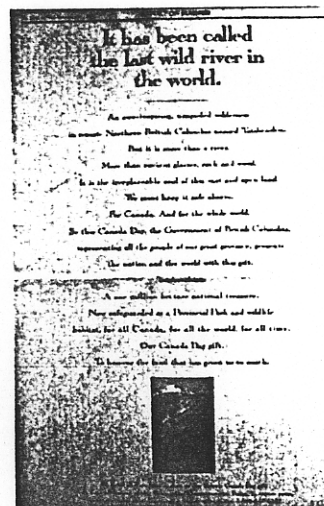
ment while the area is studied further. An option missing from the CORE report was to maintain the status quo, the mining chamber states. That would have allowed Geddes to continue to steer Windy Craggy through the stringent requirements of the Mine Development Assessment Process, which is supposed to screen out unfeasible projects. "The CORE report appears to express no faith in existing mine review process," the Chamber report states.

The mining industry isn't expecting a favourable response from the government to its critique. Nevertheless, Jack Patterson, the chamber's managing director, believes the CORE report must be challenged. The misinformation miring the Tat debate also annoys Daniel Jarvis,

Liberal mining critic. For example, the existence of the "rare glacier bear" that the park is supposed to protect hasn't even been confirmed, he says. To underscore how misleading some information has been, Mr. Jarvis points out that some of the slides used to accompany Mr. Harcourt's announcement of the Tat decision show areas that are well inside the Alaska border. (The Tatshenshini-Alsek park is bordered by the Yukon and Alaska boundaries on the north, west and south and by the Haines Highway on the east.)

The NDP's ham-handed handling of the Tat is having other repercussions as well. Bruce McKnight, vice-president of Westmin Resources Ltd. and the mining sector's spokesman for CORE's Vancouver Island regional negotiation process, says half of his steering committee resigned in disgust over the Tatshenshini decision. In a letter to CORE Commissioner Owen, sent July 6, Mr. McKnight said the only way to restore the faith of British Columbians alienated by the way land-use decisions are made in B.C. is for Mr. Owen to insist on a public inquiry to review the decision.

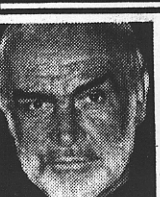
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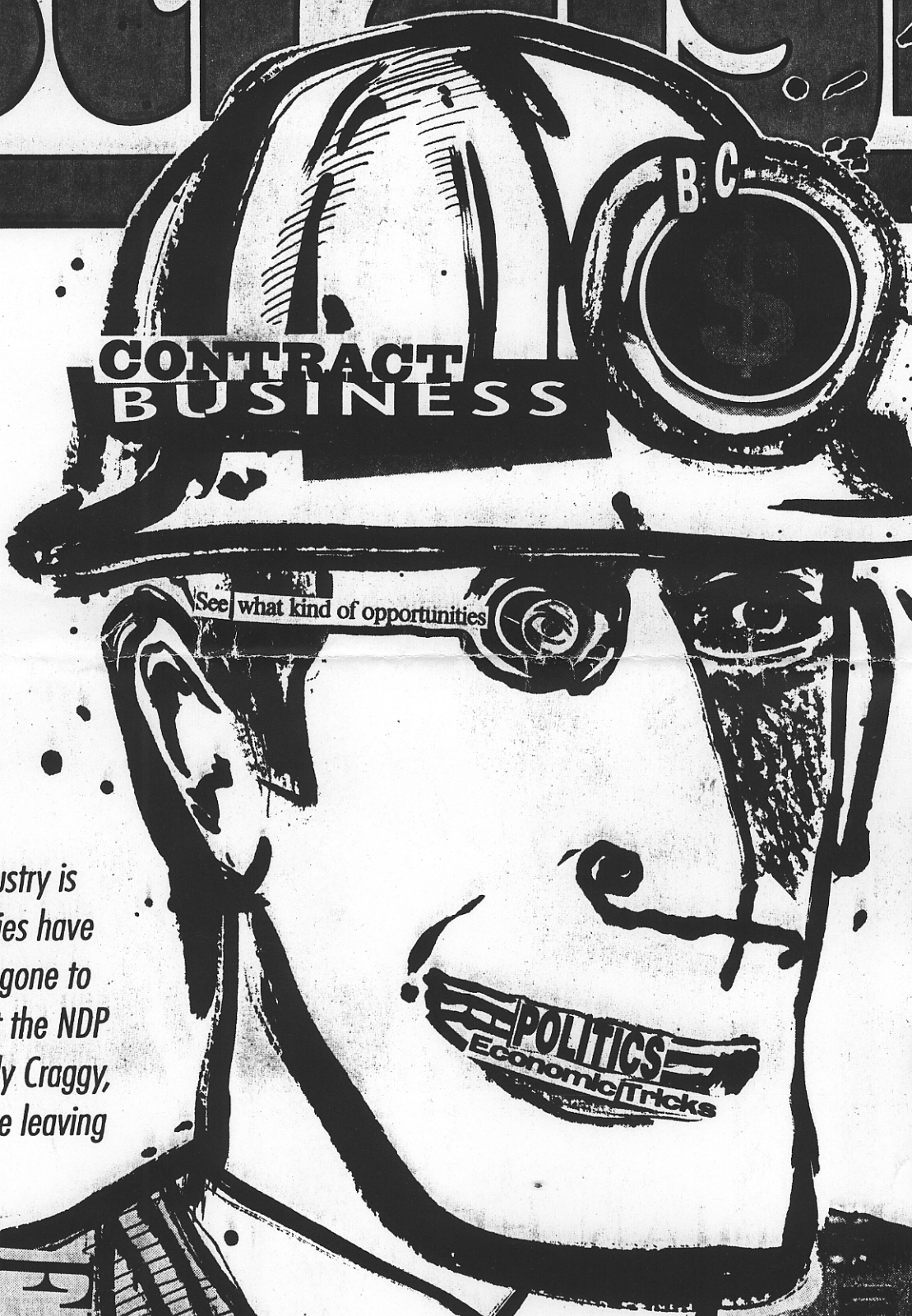
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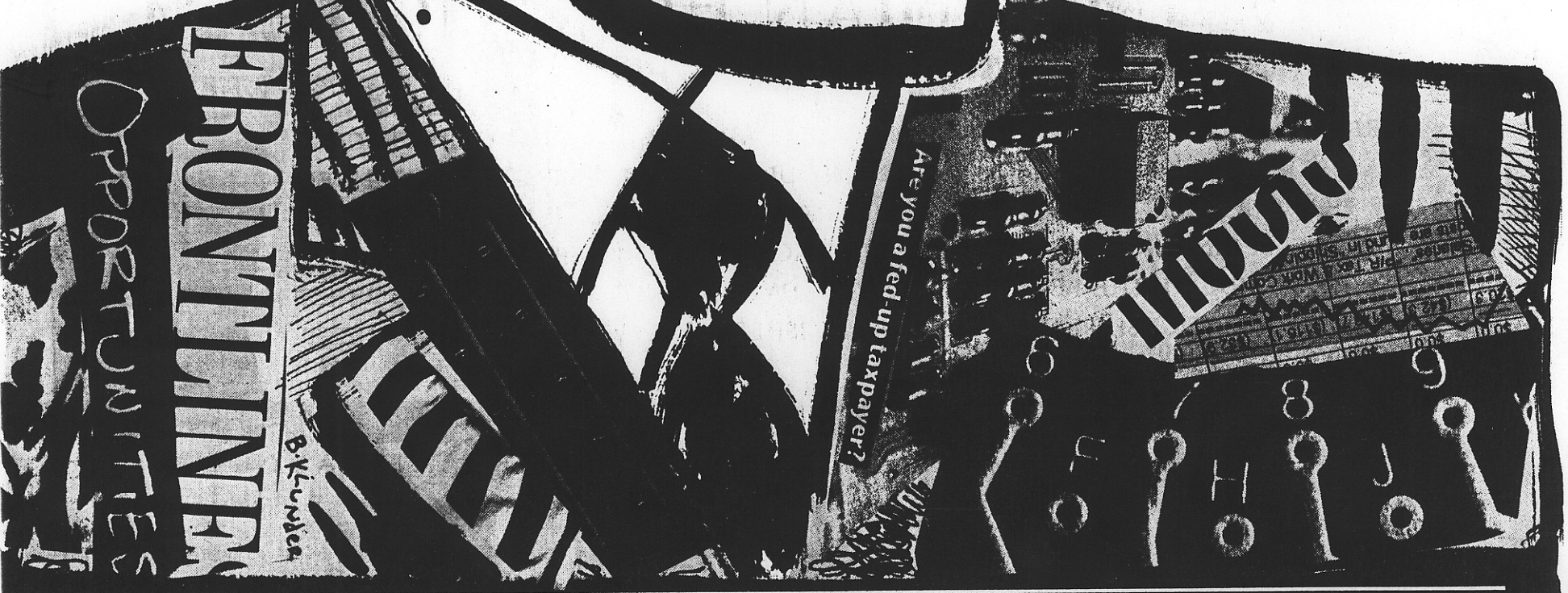
A Canadian patriot on *An Axe Murderer* and the accident of his success

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# Digging for Sympathy

**The NDP has enraged B.C.'s battered mining companies, but they've been bailing out for years ~ By Ian Gill**

It is about an hour after dusk when the pickup's headlights catch a quick flash of the rare viscacha, a small, rabbit-like creature that inhabits the altiplano, or high plain, of the Andes Mountains. It is a welcome sign of life in territory that doesn't seem to sustain much. We plunge on farther down the canyon, three prospectors in search of the end of a long day.

The road has narrowed and begins to switch back on itself. It doesn't look like a road to anywhere, but we console ourselves with the knowledge that we're heading down and we're heading west, towards the Pacific Ocean. Then, in the middle of a switchback, there's a ribcage picked clean and stuck upright in the dirt. We don't speculate on what sort of ribcage. We continue our descent, because there's nothing else to do.

There's just a little tension in the cab of the pickup. We've been up since 4 a.m., following a busload of University of B.C. geology grads and some industry representatives who are touring the mines of northern Chile. We're along for the ride, shooting a CBC documentary. The roads have been moderately foul and the schedule far too tight. For the past few hours, we've been working at a giddy altitude of 15,000 feet, and it's gone from being mighty hot during the day to bordering on freezing.

Our original plan had been to form a convoy of two with the bus, taking the backroad to that night's destination, the town of Calama, next to a mine called Chuquicamata. But the bus driver—you know, the Spanish-speaking local guy who knew where he was going—decided at the last minute that the backroad was too dangerous at night, so the bus was going to retrace its route back to the Pan American Highway, then head to Calama, a roundabout trip that would add seven more hours to the day. "Follow the bus," said CBC cameraman John Collins. But, ever mindful of keeping down the overtime cost burden to the Canadian taxpayer, producer David Paperny and I agreed that we'd take the shortcut. Four hours max. We ditched the bus.

So it's about an hour after sundown, then, and our backroad has become a track, has become a path, has become a riverbed. Down to about 40 k.p.h. now, I round a corner and brake into the front yard, shall we say, of a settlement that consists of two tents, two orange hard hats on the ground, two dogs, and, out of the inky darkness, one man. "Buenas noches," Paperiy ventures, with more hope than conviction. There ensues one of those classic conversations that make international travel such undiluted fun, whereby we

talk a lot and so does this rather grimy fellow—standing startled like a viscacha in our headlights—and nothing comprehensible penetrates either party's conscious mind. Finally, I break the conversation down to its most basic bits. "Chuquicamata?" I say, pointing past his tents in the hope that the road miraculously re-forms on the other side. Another barrage of Spanish. "Calama?" I ask. Same deal. I try a different tack: "La roota... er... finito aqui?" Finally, the lights go on all round. "Claro," our friend says with a smile. We've reached the end of the road. "Exacto!" We take his picture and take our leave—back the way we just came.

Later, we're up on the altiplano and speeding south by the silvery light of the moon. There are spectral volcanoes to our left, the rims frosted with snow, and Bolivia may be somewhere over that way as well. By now, we've deduced that the road on our ancient Esso road-map simply doesn't exist and the road we're actually on isn't marked at all. We're no longer sure whether we're in Chile or Bolivia, and burned into our minds is a passing reference in a guidebook to the effect that there are land-mines along the border. We want the trip to end, but not that way.

About three hours into the trip, we see another vehicle for the first time. We flag down a truck full of workers and almost expire with gratitude when "Chuquicamata?" evokes a "Sí!" from its driver. "Cuántos kilómetros?" I ask, really stretching my linguistic legs at this point. Maybe 150, the driver seems to say. Maybe 200, says one of his passengers. More, says someone else. The driver leans in my win-

dow and sees the gas gauge trying bravely to register half a tank. "Mínimo," he says in a low voice, shaking his head. Nonetheless, after three more excruciating hours on an impossibly bad road—make that goat track—we collapse into Calama with enough gas to maybe take a grease spot out of a trouser leg. "Alive!" we cry in unison, in a mordant take on that movie about another bunch that got lost in the Andes. Alive—and, what's more, we beat the bus by an hour.

By next morning, our adventure is fast becoming folklore. The man we flushed out of solitary in the canyon has been awarded a name—Andy, as in Andy of the Andes. It also begins to dawn on us what Andy was doing there in the first place. Undoubtedly, he is a *pirquinero*, one of the independent miners who work small claims throughout the mountains of northern Chile. God only knows how he makes a living at it, if, indeed, what he was doing there could be called living. But for as long as metals have been precious, people have combed the canyons and the plains of the Andes for ore. So it seems Andy isn't that exceptional, and his presence in the middle of our nowhere is perhaps not that remarkable. And yet he is a rare bird when you think on it, because apparently Andy is grubbing away at his stake without the backing of Canadian investment dollars, and there aren't many Chilean miners who are doing that these days.

Just an hour back from where we ran into Andy, Falconbridge has a one-third interest in the biggest undeveloped copper property in the world, Collahuasi. It will take \$1 billion to put it into production. A bare few kilometres across

the rise, hundreds of Chilean workers are building the Quebrada Blanca copper mine, a \$350 million wager by Cominco and Teck on both the enduring value of copper and the future stability of the Chilean government. Likewise Rio Algom, at Cerro Colorado. And Placer Dome at Zaldivar.

The roll-call is extensive, embracing all the "majors" of Canadian mining and a lot of juniors looking to earn some respect with a South American gold or copper play. It adds up, in rough figures, to about \$2 billion of Canadian mining investment dollars being ploughed into Chile alone. If all the projects currently on the books or under exploration pan out, make that \$4 billion.

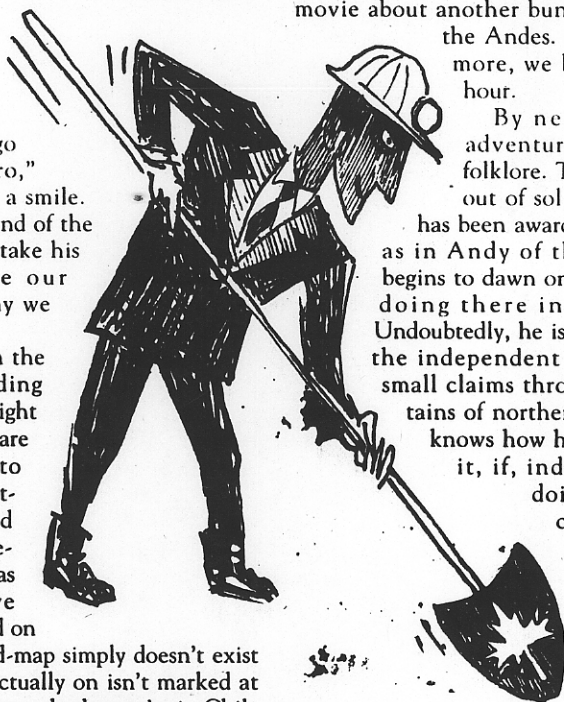
Canada—usually lucky to play even second fiddle to the Americans or the Japanese—is, in fact, the largest foreign investor in Chile, which is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Almost all of the Canadian investment is in the mining sector. It adds up to a huge commitment of money and talent to a place that, for investors, was largely taboo for almost two decades, thanks to the grim rule of Augusto Pinochet. It might also amount to one of the most monumental shifts, a veritable sea change, in the history of Canada's mining sector. The doomsayers will tell you that the explosion of Canadian mining investments in Chile portends that mining in Canada is a crippled enterprise at best. Some say it's dying. Some say it's dead. In B.C., they all say: Windy Craggy.

It was hard not to notice the bilious gaggle of mining industry interlopers that hijacked Mike Harcourt's June press conference, called to announce that there would be no copper mine at Windy Craggy but that the NDP had decided to preserve a million hectares of the far northwest of the province as a park. The event was steeped in irony. There were men in suits waving badly made placards and yelling one-liners for the media: their behaviour was straight out of an environmentalist's playbook. Meanwhile, environmentalists were there to cheer on the premier, unctuous in their praise for a man they would just as soon hang from an old-growth Clayoquot cedar on any other day.

But other than this curious exercise in role reversal, the occasion was instructive for a couple of reasons. First, it amounted to a recognition on the part of the Harcourt government that there are some land-use conflicts in this province that are utterly irreconcilable. The Windy Craggy/Tatshenshini conflict is one, and although the NDP has won precious little credit for it, it took a lot of stomach for the government to make such a clean decision. The Clayoquot Sound decision in April, by comparison, was an abdication. So, too, Harcourt's earlier decision to give Alcan's Kemano Completion Project the thumbs up, then engaging a toothless utilities commission review to appease its opponents.

Much speculation has been ventured to the effect that Harcourt ended up giving the greens the Tat as a sop to redeem his essentially pro-industry stance on Clayoquot and Kemano. In fact, the NDP had been heading towards preserving the Tatshenshini for months: all Clayoquot—and the reaction to that decision—did was underline that some wishy-washy attempt at a compromise over Windy Craggy/Tatshenshini was pointless. So the

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## Mining

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

NDP swallowed hard and made a real decision. Three cheers for that, whether you like the decision or not.

The other fascinating thing about the Tatshenshini announcement is that business told Harcourt to his face—loudly, rudely, publicly—what he seems unable to have grasped for years: business doesn't much like him or the NDP. Never has. But, given the manner in which this protest took place, it might start to dawn on Harcourt that business is fast losing what little tolerance it had for his ingratiating ways and will play dirty pool to get a shot at him.

The protesters at the Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre hardly constituted a spontaneous outbreak of disapproval: they had been summoned during the morning by a fax urging industry people to get out and berate the premier. The fax, or at least the copy that came into my hands, originated in the offices of Geddes Resources Ltd., whose sole property of any consequence is, or was, Windy Craggy.

"I was struck by the artificial and orchestrated nature of this supposedly 'natural' protest," says Vancouver Stock Exchange critic Adrian du Plessis, who was a bemused onlooker that day. The premier's announcement that Windy Craggy would not be mined was punctuated by chants of "Recall! Recall!", an appeal to the populist anti-government sentiment of our times.

Harcourt was also urged to "recall" the Barrett years. Asked by a reporter if his government's relations with the mining sector weren't as bad, or worse, than in the days of Dave Barrett's NDP government—which fell, in part, because of a vigorous anti-NDP campaign led by the mining industry, stung by a special royalty on mining—the premier replied that, on the contrary, he and his government were working closely with the mining industry. He was drowned out by the protesters, and the implication for his government is clear. The mining industry now has it in for Harcourt.

Two weeks after the raucous press conference, two mining industry representatives quit the NDP's revered Commission on Resources and Environment in disgust. Another mining representative on CORE, Westmin Resources Ltd. vice-president Bruce McKnight, demanded that Stephen Owen, the land-use commissioner and head of CORE, hold a public inquiry into the killing of Windy Craggy. "Bridges are burned," McKnight told me. "It's almost down to bare knuckles now. We're into the next election."

Adrian du Plessis confirms that the men in suits are restive. "The Howe Street movement is gearing up for the end of the Harcourt reign. A lot of people think it's a done deal, we are going to have the Liberals, and they're setting things in place to have the old world order."

Meanwhile, I got a call at the CBC from a former Windy Craggy project geologist, Bruce Downing. He wanted footage of the press conference, apparently because slides used as a backdrop when Harcourt announced that the mine was dead depicted icebergs in the Alsek River on the American side of the border. That is, some of the slides weren't of the Tatshenshini at all. Downing said he had been contacted by someone in the Liberal party who wanted to embarrass the government with this revelation. "The Opposition is hot after this." That's understandable, because it's the Opposition's job to take a crack at any false step by the government. That's politics. But is the mining industry's growing antipathy towards the government warranted? Is it fair?

In the crowd that day at the convention centre were people waving placards saying, among other things, "I'm Taking Spanish Lessons" and "See You in Chile". The clear impli-

cation: industry is being driven out of town by an anti-mining government. Godless socialists! Well, the truth is that major mining companies have been rooting around in South America for years. Yes, Placer Dome has just recently plunked down half a billion dollars to develop the Zaldivar deposit, but the company has been working another Chilean property, La Coipa, since 1989. Likewise, other majors have been exploring in Andy's backyard a long time now. Falconbridge, for instance, has been in Chile since the mid-'70s. Junior mining-stock promoters, too, have been getting a fix on Latin America's veins for years. They've been there, says du Plessis, since "well before Windy Craggy had entered the public con-

er Dome, North America's largest gold producer and a company that's eager to add more copper to its frame.

"It's a matter of urgency," says Placer Dome's vice-president of project development, Sandy Laird. "Where can you go to find the most promising reserves that you can develop with some degree of certainty, in the shortest period of time, with some assurance that you have the support of government?" Laird says Placer Dome pays 51 percent income tax in B.C.; in Chile, the company pays 35 percent. More important is that it takes, on average, about two years to get a mine through the approval process in B.C. In Chile, if you can prove you have an ore body and the financial wherewithal to extract it, you can be breaking ground within four months. That's what Laird means when he talks about "the support of government."

Another factor is cheaper labour, although this is offset by the facts that most Chilean operations employ a lot more people, and infrastructure costs are high because northern Chile is largely undeveloped. Environmental laws are much less strict than in North America, but the companies claim they're operating to North American standards already, in anticipation of new environmental regulations due to be introduced in Chile's Congress later this year. (Fernando Dougnac, a leading Chilean environmental lawyer, confirmed that, for the most part, Canadian companies have behaved well. He says the only area of conflict in the north, a desert region that in places hasn't recorded rainfall for fully 500 years, is over the huge quantities of water used by copper mines. At Cerro Colorado, he says, this had put Rio Algom in conflict with the local Native community.)

The long and the short of it is that Chile has got bigger, better reserves and lets just about anyone have at them—and no one points a gun at you when you try to take your profits out of the country. As Anne Edwards, B.C.'s minister of energy, mines and petroleum resources, says of the matter, "I could be the patron saint of mining and the mining dollars would still be going to Chile. It has some real advantages for capital that can easily move."

Earlier this year, Edwards acknowledged the gravity of what has happened to the B.C. mining industry, saying in a speech that "at current exploration levels, mining could virtually disappear in the province early in the 21st century." What she means is this: half of B.C.'s two dozen operating mines could close by the end of this decade, and the only way new mines will come onstream is if they're explored and put into production. But exploration expenditures have fallen dramatically. They were at \$200 million provincially in 1988; try half that last year, and falling fast.

Cominco, for instance, spent 58 percent of its exploration budget outside Canada in 1992, the first time in the company's 86-year history that it explored more abroad than at home. Laird says Placer Dome once spent 45 percent of its exploration budget in Canada; that's now at 20 percent and falling. Mining accounts for 20 percent of B.C.'s exports, and 13,000 direct jobs depend on the industry. There are countless other spin-offs and indirect jobs, so the consequences of this one-way trend could be staggering for the provincial economy.

Edwards has put together a mineral strategy, which many industry people have dismissed as self-evident and full of hoary platitudes about "serious challenges" becoming "strategic opportunities". Edwards concedes that the increase in corporate income tax in Glen Clark's last budget sits badly with mining companies. But she insists that the subject that makes the industry bleat loudest—the whole question of



A host of factors have prompted the apparent "rush" to Chile, the decision on Windy Craggy perhaps least among them.



sciousness and long before the NDP were even elected in this province". A host of factors have prompted the apparent "rush" to Chile, the decision on Windy Craggy perhaps least among them.

For a start, Chile, which is thought to have about one-quarter of the world's copper reserves, remains astonishingly underexplored. "In terms of mineral potential, Chile looks like Canada did some 75 years ago," one ex-pat Canadian mining executive told the *Globe and Mail*. And the copper grades in ore now being mined are, on average, four times higher than in Canada. So the chances of striking a rich property in Chile are far greater than in B.C., which has been all but picked clean. This is a hugely influential factor to a company like Plac-



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## Mining

FROM PAGE 8

uncertainty over land use and tenure—is where her government has made its greatest advances. “We campaigned on land-use planning,” Edwards says. The minister thinks that where the industry has had a legitimate grievance for some years “is the issue of certainty about where they can operate and where they cannot operate.”

“We are going to draw those lines so we know what is a protected area, and put a boundary on it, and set a time frame on deciding others, so the industry knows where it’s going and what it can do.” To wit, her government drew a line last month around the Tatshenshini wilderness and, in the opinion of Westmin’s Bruce McKnight, didn’t just kill Windy Craggy, but “sterilized” the entire area that surrounds it. “I don’t know why they are attacking us this way,” says McKnight. The minister and industry have a glaring difference of opinion over just how great have been the advances in land-use planning.

For all his sabre-rattling, however, McKnight was on his way to a CORE meeting at Campbell River when we talked by phone. He isn’t about to quit that process, even though he thinks the Windy Craggy decision came about through a “demonstrated lack of process.” In fact, Windy Craggy got lots of process. It was years—too long for everyone—in the mining-review process, during which Geddes held noisy public meetings. American agencies reviewed the project (because it impinged on Alaskan turf) and, for the most part, were leery. Even CORE itself took a crack at it.

Commissioner Stephen Owen maintains that the only thing really missing before cabinet decided to kill the mine proposal was a government-led series of public forums that CORE recommended take place. “The government, for whatever reason, decided not to do that,” he says. “They have the right not to do that, but they have to live with the political consequences.” But Owen says the key for industry is to realize that Windy Craggy isn’t a precedent for how decisions about land use will be made in B.C. Owen, with a commission mandate to find consensus, says simply that there was no middle ground to be had with the Tat. This time around, industry didn’t get any of it.

Should Windy Craggy’s owners be compensated? Geddes Resources certainly thinks it’s entitled to a wheelbarrowful of dough, citing Owen’s own report that put the value of the deposit at between \$110 million and \$620 million. In fact, the company has spent about \$45 million exploring the deposit. But according to Ric Careless of Tatshenshini International, the conservation group that won the NDP’s ear on this one, federal flow-through tax breaks accounted for \$31 million of what Geddes spent. So the taxpayer has already underwritten the company. “What Geddes is asking for is for the taxpayers to pay twice,” Careless says of the company’s compensation demand. Finance Minister Glen Clark has scoffed at suggestions that Geddes will score a windfall of hundreds of millions of dollars’ compensation for a deposit forgone. Maybe millions, says the minister, but not hundreds of millions.

But then there’s the redoubtable Peggy Witte, the nickel-assed chair of Royal Oak Mines, which bought a controlling 40-percent stake in Geddes for \$10 million just weeks before Geddes’ only asset got sent down the river. Logic therefore dictates that Geddes was worth \$25 million at the time Witte bought it. At the time of the purchase, Royal Oak’s chief financial officer, Chris Serin, acknowledged that there was a risk Windy Craggy wouldn’t get built. But he said getting 40 percent of Geddes was “an extraordinary invest-

ment opportunity should the government either decide to compensate Geddes or allow the project to be developed. This acquisition has significant upside potential and limited downside risk for Royal Oak shareholders.”

In Victoria, this played badly—very badly. Witte went there herself to try and convince cabinet that she genuinely wanted to mine ore, not the provincial coffers. She wasn’t believed, in part because she’s disliked for her union-busting ways at the Giant mine in Yellowknife. So Peggy Witte bought a pig in a poke, given that no one else in the mining industry honestly believed Windy Craggy had a prayer.

Should she be compensated for a bad business decision? “She’s a money person, a promoter, as opposed to a mining person,” says du Plessis. “She’s a stock promoter.” Which, in his opinion, clouds any

hard rock tour, “is to look for elephants in elephant country. And this is elephant country.” This is geo-speak, the reference to elephants meaning giant ore bodies. The bus disgorges the UBC students and various industry folks out onto the altiplano, and after they pick ore samples, lick them to bring out their colours, and babble incomprehensibly about their various geologic charms, a conversation begins about the state of mining here in Chile and back at home in B.C.

At this point, the Windy Craggy decision hasn’t yet been made, but the group is acutely aware of its importance. “It’s the crux, it’s entirely the crux,” says Craig Hart, from Whitehorse. “I think the entire future and potential of the mineral industries in Canada, certainly in British Columbia, is dependent on that decision.”

Ken Delong, of Vancouver, says, “You’re allowed to explore, but you’re not allowed to produce.” He’s assuming Windy Craggy will be killed, and he says that allowing a company to stake and explore and then not mine is “changing horses halfway through the process.”

Where we are standing, at Col-lahuasi, is the property one-third owned by Falconbridge. It’s a Toronto-based company that used to have a stake in Windy Craggy and used to have an exploration office in Vancouver. Now it has neither. It got out of Windy Craggy and packed up its exploration staff and sent them to Santiago. It did that long before the NDP breathed a word about preserving the Tatshenshini.

Others have done much the same thing. In fact, two men standing in the group, shivering as the sun sets, are from a smaller B.C. firm, Canada Tungsten. Stan Bartlett and Chris Hodgson are looking for a copper mine. About Windy Craggy, Bartlett says: “It’s the classic case of finding it and finding out later that you’re not allowed to look there. I mean, it’s a ridiculous concept.”

Some weeks later, back in Vancouver, Hodgson is dressed in a suit, hooting at the premier and waving an “Adios Amigos, See You in Chile” placard. The impression he’s seeking to create is that he’s being run out of town. In fact, Hodgson’s already left, with a business card in two languages to prove it.

Like many in the mining industry, he’s fed up with the host of legitimate problems it faces in Canada. He’s chosen to leave, but he’s chosen to characterize that as having been persecuted. True, there’s a lot that’s wrong with the Canadian investment scene, particularly in mining. Some of that is of the NDP’s making, but, then again, the NDP is the first government in this province to attempt to develop a province-wide land-use strategy such that, ideally, there’ll not be another Windy Craggy.

The industry is in mortal danger, and government has to help. But Windy Craggy was never proven to be economically feasible, at least not unless copper were to fetch \$2 per pound (it’s at about 80 cents right now). There were huge technical problems. The Windy Craggy site is almost completely surrounded by parks. And there were monumental political problems, not least of which were both U.S. Vice-President Al Gore’s implacable opposition to the project and Geddes Resources’ inept performance in public and in the corridors of power.

Few proposals that come before any government could have so little to recommend them. Yes, Windy Craggy is a huge copper deposit. An elephant, perhaps. And, yes, it will lay in the ground forever beside the place where the salmon run.

But to suggest that B.C.’s mining industry got buried the day Mike Harcourt said no to Windy Craggy is not only disingenuous. It’s a crock.

**The industry  
is in mortal  
danger, and  
government  
has to help.  
But Windy  
Craggy was  
never proven  
to be  
economically  
feasible.**



discussion about Windy Craggy’s real worth as a viable mine. Doubtless, Witte will get something, which won’t be enough for industry and which will once again be invoked as an anti-mining precedent.

Cry me a river, you might say. The Tatshenshini River. The name “Tatshenshini” is a Tlingit word that means “place where the salmon run”. In a slightly nauseating bit of self-congratulation for having preserved it, the B.C. government took out full-page newspaper ads trumpeting the Tat as “more than ancient glacier, rock and wood. It is the irreplaceable soul of this vast and open land.” It was a Canada Day gift, the government said, “to honor the land that has given us so much.” So in northern B.C., the salmon will run forever.

Back in northern Chile, it’s a different game. “One of the main rules in exploration, of course,” says Colin Godwin, UBC geology professor and leader of the 1993

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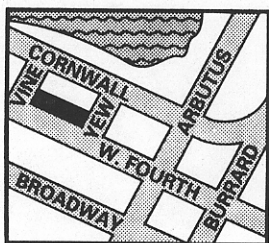
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