

THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE IDEOLOGY ON LANDSCAPE:  
THE BACK-TO-THE-LAND MOVEMENT IN THE SLOCAN VALLEY

By

JOHN GORDON GOWER

B.A. Carleton University, 1986

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTERS OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 1990

© John Gordon Gower

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of GEOGRAPHY

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date September 25th, 1990

## ABSTRACT

Like many North American resource-based rural communities, the Slocan Valley in southeastern British Columbia experienced a decline in its population and economy during the first half of this century. However, in the late 1960s, mainly young, well-educated and often idealistic members of the back-to-the-land movement began to re-settle the area. The influx reached its peak in the mid 1970s, and at a diminished level, continues. Currently this group of recent settlers comprises approximately one-quarter of the valley's population of 5000.

Drawing on data from participant observation in the area and personal interviews with members of this influx, this thesis first examines why and how these people came to settle in the Slocan. It finds that they moved for many different reasons: repelled by the "rat-race" and pollution of the cities, and the violent politics of the 1960's; or attracted by the prospects of a personally-meaningful and satisfying existence in the country-side. Whether driven by an individualistic or visionary quest, all subscribed to some extent to a back-to-the-land *ideology* which advocated a low-consumption, but highly diverse, lifestyle - close to nature and in touch with the land, independent politically and economically from the larger society, and in a community of like-minded rural neighbours.

Secondly, the thesis traces the evolution of personal lifeways and the development of community life in the twenty years since the resettlement began. As the newcomers encountered difficulties

living in the Slocan they made compromises. As a result, their lifestyles are no longer as clearly "alternative" and most have re-entered the "system" to some degree. Increasingly though, their values have found expression in specific causes, issues or projects which have altered the course of evolution of the Slocan, and left a lasting legacy of concrete accomplishments and changed attitudes within the larger geographic community. The settlers' impact has been particularly noticeable in issues regarding land and resource use, the diversification of the regional economy, and attempts to attain local political autonomy.

Finally, the thesis attempts to assess the significance of the back-to-the-land movement to the Slocan, and then to society as a whole. The Slocan in the 1990s is at a bifurcation point, and must choose its destiny from a range of divergent, and often conflicting, alternatives. Whether the area pursues a sustainable path, in which the viability of the local community and integrity of the environment are protected and enhanced, depends largely on which of the two competing ideologies (industrial versus post-industrial) currently represented in the Slocan prevails. In this regard, the Valley is a microcosm of the broader society: the experiences there show where both the opportunities and impediments lie in our search for a truly sustainable society.



## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	ii
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	iv
<b>List of Figures and Illustrations</b> .....	v
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	vi
<b>Foreword</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter One: The Coming of the Counterculture to the Slocan</b> ...	6
Introduction .....	6
The Valley Context .....	9
The Literature .....	21
The People Who Came .....	27
<b>Chapter Two: Settling the Valley: From the Voices of Settlers</b> .	40
The Decision to Move .....	40
Choosing the Slocan .....	50
<b>Chapter Three: Making It (and Not Making it) on the Land</b> .....	68
Subsistence: 1968 - 1971 .....	69
Community: 1971 - 1976 .....	86
Outreach: 1976 - 1990 .....	104
Conclusions .....	117
<b>Chapter Four: Making Change</b> .....	120
Introduction .....	120
The Community Forest Management Project .....	121
The Park and the Plan .....	128
The Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance .....	135
The Current Situation .....	139
Conclusions .....	141
<b>Chapter Five: The Meaning and Legacy of the Movement</b> .....	144
The Legacy of Back-to-the-Land Settlement in the Slocan ....	145
Implications to Politics .....	153
Implications to the Study of Geography .....	156
Implications to the Future .....	157
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	160
<b>Appendix A: Schedule of Interviews</b> .....	166
<b>Appendix B: The Ideology of the Alternatives Movement</b> .....	169

## List of Figures

Fig. 1. The Slocan Valley.....	10
Fig. 2. The valley at Winlaw, looking North.....	11
Fig. 3. Passmore and Vallican, looking West.....	12
Fig. 4. The agricultural landscape, Slocan Park.....	15
Fig. 5. Pioneer homestead, Vallican.....	18
Fig. 6. Range of North American communal settlement 1965-75...	32
Fig. 7. Distribution of back-to-the-land settlement in B.C....	38
Fig. 8. The Slocan River at Vallican.....	59
Fig. 9. A smallholding at Vallican.....	61
Fig. 10. Sequence of back-to-the-land settlement in the Slocan.	63
Fig. 11. Communes and co-ops in the Slocan Valley.....	70
Fig. 12. Three-bedroom dwelling at the New Family commune.....	74
Fig. 13. Building with logs, Vallican.....	75
Fig. 14. The caretaker's house at the Vallican Whole.....	76
Fig. 15. Raising the beams at the Vallican Whole, Summer, 1974.	99
Fig. 16. The Vallican Whole nears completion, Fall, 1975.....	103
Fig. 17. The 10th Annual "Rosebery Regatta", September, 1989...	114
Fig. 18. The Valhalla Range and Slocan Lake, from Idaho Peak...	129

## Acknowledgements

This thesis has been a long time in gestation and before its final delivery many people have made significant contributions for which I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks.

Dr. Walter Hardwick, my advisor, has been always available for consultation and guidance and never lost faith the day of delivery (and deliverance) would arrive. I thank him for his patience. Dr. Cole Harris has offered very constructive guidance, and I am indebted to Mark Roseland and the members of the "Save the World" group at UBC for acting as a sounding board and supportive group of peers who corroborated the value of the project.

The process of researching and writing this document has been a significant personal exploration. In many ways it is a product of years of joint search and discussion with my dear friend Mark Edwards, whose life has been the inspiration for many of the questions posed, and who was always there with encouragement at critical times.

I am grateful to Sam Shields for her support and faith in me during the past summer, and wish also to thank Marcia Braundy for reading and commenting on previous drafts and for verifying the accuracy of the material. Thanks also to my editor, Erin Smith, for corrections to the final draft, and to my mother, Rosalie Gower for her incisive editing and constructive critique.

My understanding of events in the Slocan was given further perspective by research carried out in back-to-the-land communities in Cape Breton and Eastern Ontario in 1987. To Chris King, Charlie and Susan Restino, Jean Brerretton and many others in Baddeck and Killaloe who welcomed me into their communities and homes and generously shared their experiences, I offer my thanks.

And finally, and most particularly, my warmest thanks to Eric Clough, Carol Gaskin, Nancy Harris, Corky Evans, Rita Moir, Joel Russ, David Orcutt, David Smith, Patti Sebben and many more residents and past residents of the Slocan who have freely and generously opened up their lives and entrusted their story to my telling.

Nelson, B.C.  
September 25, 1990

## Foreword

In dealing with the changing circumstances in the late 20th century, mounting evidence suggests either we find some new basis for living our lives or else face the prospect of environmental and social collapse, and dislocation and suffering on an unimaginable scale. Global environmental destruction, gross economic inequity, and the concentration of power by elites interact synergistically and threaten the survival of everyone on the planet. Yet, our leaders offer palliatives instead of real change, while the gap between rich and poor widens, and the destruction of species, the last vestiges of wilderness, and whole ecosystems continues unabated.

For a long time, I have felt that the back-to-the-land movement might hold some solutions to the problems currently facing the world. In the 1960s there was, for the first time, a widespread awareness of the precariousness of all life and a concern for the diminishing prospects for human life. It engendered a response - an ecological consciousness - which suffused the environmental movement, the counterculture, and the back-to-the-land movement of the time. The counterculture saw the only hope of real change coming from within: a change of personal values and an overthrow of the technological/materialistic/hierarchical ideology on which our system is based. There was, I believe, something of great value in certain ideas associated with the movement - self-sufficiency, mutual assistance, organic agriculture, recycling, and living in harmony with the earth.

My experience was that the approach to living by those ideas which were part of this movement was different from the mainstream. There was more open love and caring among people, more co-operation, and a greater willingness to be less well-off (in conventional terms) in exchange for more discretionary time, more freedom, and for being allowed to live in a beautiful place. Yet at the same time there was a certain unreality in their situation; a failure to come to terms with the issue of economics in a way consistent with their other beliefs.

However, a CBC "Ideas" broadcast in June, 1986, confirmed that the imperatives of the movement were maturing into a sophisticated and viable alternative to the established social order. In this series, entitled "New Ideas in Ecology and Economics",<sup>1</sup> David Cayley documented instances where individuals and local grass-roots organizations had developed forms of economic activity which created wealth, yet were intimate in scale, sustainable, equitable, and in harmony with nature and natural processes. Some of his examples were urban in origin. The majority, however, seemed to be emerging in rural areas, out of the rural societies in which the agenda of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement had been very influential.

This thesis thus emerged from a question: is living the back-to-the-land lifestyle in small communities in rural areas an ethical, appropriate, and effective response to the situation in the world today? The "Ideas" programs had focused primarily on examples from

---

<sup>1</sup> "New Ideas in Ecology and Economics," writ. David Cayley, Ideas, prod. Bernie Lucht, introd. Lister Sinclair, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Toronto, May 29, June 4, 11, 18, 1986.

the U.S. I wanted to see what was happening in our own country, particularly in those areas which I had visited and sensed to be somehow alternative. I decided to look at the Slocan Valley, long a well-known focus of back-to-the-land settlement activity, and an area I have known and loved for many years.

### **The Research Process**

This work is about the lives of people who have been, or remain engaged to some extent in the back-to-the-land experience. Consequently, the richest sources of information about most aspects of the phenomenon - those who have participated in it - are still available. In 1987, I completed studies on a local community forestry initiative - the Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project - and on the New Family - one of the communes that was established there in the late 1960s. During the months of August and September, 1988, I embarked upon a research project in the Slocan Valley which combined the techniques of participant observation with semi-structured interviews (a schedule of interviews is provided in Appendix A). The former primarily yielded insights into the general evolution of the alternative community in the area, relations between the new people and the established groups, and the various survival strategies of recent in-migrants and the dimensions of their social and cultural life. The interviews addressed more specific themes. My respondents represent the range of lifestyles and personal experiences characteristic of the back-to-the-land community.

Initially, interviewees were chosen on the recommendation of five individuals who were, or had been, part of that community. In time, my respondents themselves suggested other names, and the study grew to 20 interviews ranging from one to four hours in length. They recounted their experiences as back-to-the-land settlers, beginning with their personal backgrounds, through their decisions to move to the country, their experiences finding suitable land, and, once in the Slocan, getting established and finding subsistence. The data thus encompasses reasons and intentions for moving, the process of settlement, and the evolution of survival strategies. What clearly emerges is the profile of the ideology which most of the Valley's new residents have shared to some extent.

These insights have been enhanced and substantiated by further interviews and reports in local and regional newspapers, articles in magazines such as *Harrowsmith*, and various theses and essays. In addition, in the Spring of 1989 I undertook a study of the valley's economy on contract for the local regional government.<sup>2</sup> In combination, this evidence provides insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the area's economy, as well as the dynamics between the various constituents of the Slocan Valley community.

---

<sup>2</sup> The strategy process involved public meetings throughout the Slocan Valley and more than 80 interviews with public officials, business people, and a representative cross-section of valley residents. The report which documented this study, *Building on Our Strengths: A Strategy for Sustainable Community Economic Development in the Slocan Valley*, described the community's goals for its economic future, and proposed specific programs and projects to encourage development in target areas.

## **The structure of the thesis**

This thesis has two objectives: to describe the ways the alternative ideology of the counterculture - through the settlement of the back-to-the-land migrants - has become manifest in the physical and cultural landscape of the Slocan area; and to explore the deeper question of the significance of these events to the broader society. Chapter one discusses, in general, the back-to-the-land phenomenon, along with a brief review of the pertinent literature and an exploration of the local context. The second and third chapters describe the actual migration intentions and experiences of those who came to the valley and, once there, the peoples' efforts to become established economically, socially and culturally. Chapter four examines how the newcomers attempted to alter established patterns of land and resource use, economic activity, and institutional power relations to protect the qualities they value, and to promote a decentralist, ecologically-oriented agenda. The final chapter assesses the legacy and meaning of the experiences of the new people in the Slocan. Does this represent, as some have suggested, an essentially romantic, escapist indulgence by a privileged few? Or do these people, after having for 20 years approached life from a new set of values, point the way to a viable alternative to our existing society? In some respects the evidence is ambiguous, but, hopefully, in the course of this thesis the reader can make an informed judgement about the value of this lifestyle alternative to our society which *must find* a better way.



## Chapter One

### The Coming of the Counterculture to the Slocan Valley

#### Introduction

Travelling east on Highway 3 from Castlegar towards Nelson the entrance to the valley of the Slocan River is not at first obvious. A sharp bend in the river where it meets the still waters of the Kootenay hides the valley in a fold of rolling hills that rise one behind the other to the north. The settlement of Crescent Valley is really the gateway. There, past the narrow corner where the highway first descends to meet the river, the valley suddenly opens up - the rest of the world is left behind.

The year is 1968. Few people are visible on the land; even fewer on the road. In fact, the place feels almost as if it has been abandoned. A couple is on the road in an old pickup, hauling an army surplus trailer containing clothes, books, tools, and food for a new life. A dream of a piece of land, a tangled map of remembered directions, and advice picked up on the journey: "try the Slocan...."

It has been a journey from Interstate to secondary highway to gravel track; an ever-expanding circle of possibilities through four states and now British Columbia. Scouting forays into the countryside, looking for LAND - a piece of earth that would answer their dreams. Looking, too, for community, for gatherings of kindred spirits - the scattered seeds of the new society. This place has a feel about it, as if it's welcoming them. The highway winds up the valley, past small communities along the river: Slocan Park, Passmore with its sawmill, on to Winlaw, and the openness of Appledale. Then, with the peaks of the Valhalla Range rising above the lake, a growing sensation: "We have arrived. We are home". This thesis is their story.

The Slocan Valley initially developed in a settlement pattern which replicated, with minor variations, that of communities on the resource frontier across Canada. A mining boom in the 1890s attracted many thousands to what had previously been an inaccessible wilderness. By 1910 the boom had subsided and many people had left the valley. Some stayed to farm the land, and to participate in a fledgling lumber industry that gradually grew in importance to dominate the local economy and landscape. Yet, like much of rural North America, the valley slowly lost residents to brighter opportunities elsewhere. The domination of a single

industry and, consequently, an underdeveloped economy meant that few opportunities existed to hold young people in the area, or to attract new residents. The Slocan, like many similar places, was chronically depressed, unemployment was high, and the future seemed to offer little hope of improvement.

During the late 1960's, however, new people began arriving. They were not attracted by the prospect of wages in the mines or the lumber mills, but rather by less tangible qualities - beautiful mountain scenery, the pastoral landscape of the valley bottom, clean air and water, quiet and solitude. They came from cities across the continent to a place that seemed to be the antithesis of all that was urban. The new settlers bought the houses and farms of the homesteaders of two generations before and began the tasks of providing themselves with food and income. With them came a desire to live their lives differently from the social norm. Many of the new people sought to live an alternative lifestyle based on ecological harmony, intimate community, and independence from the political and economic systems of the mainstream society. The isolation of the area, its dispersed population and its agricultural potential made such a lifestyle seem possible.

The valley soon became widely known across North America. Through a network of communication that seemed to connect every person aspiring to go to the country, and every itinerant wanderer on the road, it became known that the Slocan valley was a natural paradise with a thriving countercultural community. More and more people arrived, and by the end of the decade, hundreds were passing through each summer. A number of communes briefly flourished and,

thanks to the media, the Slocan became known across the nation as an epicentre of back-to-the-land and communal activity.

The relationship between the "hippies" and the "locals" varied. The newcomers were initially welcomed by valley residents, but in the early 1970s tensions grew between certain long-time residents and the often insensitive, and outrageous, newcomers and, for a while, violent confrontation seemed imminent. By 1975 or 1976, most of the "weekend hippies" and uncommitted drifters who contributed to this animosity moved on, leaving one thousand people who, it can be assumed, were serious about their commitment to their alternative vision, to the valley itself, and to the more self-reliant lifestyle that both demanded. As the colonists persisted through their first few winters without abandoning their projects, and as they put down more substantial roots, they began to earn the respect of local people, and the encouragement and assistance of certain Doukhobors who recognized their own values and dreams in the idealistic rhetoric of the counterculture. The early back-to-the-land settlers were joined by others who continued to arrive in the valley in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s.

Today, there are signs of growing acceptance of the newcomers' ways and viewpoints among the original communities.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, fundamental differences persist. Despite the peace that has

---

<sup>3</sup> The recent "Spike" protest, in which local residents engaged in direct action to halt the spraying of the pesticide Spike-80 along CPR rights-of-way in the area, is held out as an example of this. This well-organized protest involved a complete cross section of the community and was seen as a sign of growing environmental awareness among the local public.

increasingly prevailed, conflict has arisen repeatedly around certain issues, particularly environmental protection, wilderness preservation and resource use. The Slocan has been the scene of a struggle between two competing visions (of the world and of the future), and the continuing conflict demonstrates that it is far from resolution.

### **The Valley Context**

When the new in-migrants arrived in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the world they entered was not the wilderness frontier many thought it was. Certainly nature was there in abundance, yet by that time the area had already seen more than six decades of settlement. Patterns of land and resource use, relationships between the various constituents of the local community, demographic changes and so forth which were already well established when they arrived, profoundly affected both the initial reception of the new people into the valley and their subsequent experiences over the next twenty years. The following section briefly chronicles the development of the area, and provides a description of the Slocan as the back-to-the-land settlers found it in the late 1960s.

The Slocan Valley is, in many respects, typical of the glacially-carved valleys in the mountainous southeast corner of British Columbia. It is a long, sinuous indentation, extending 110 kilometers from the headwaters of Wilson Creek in the north, to its confluence with the Kootenay River valley in the south. Mountain

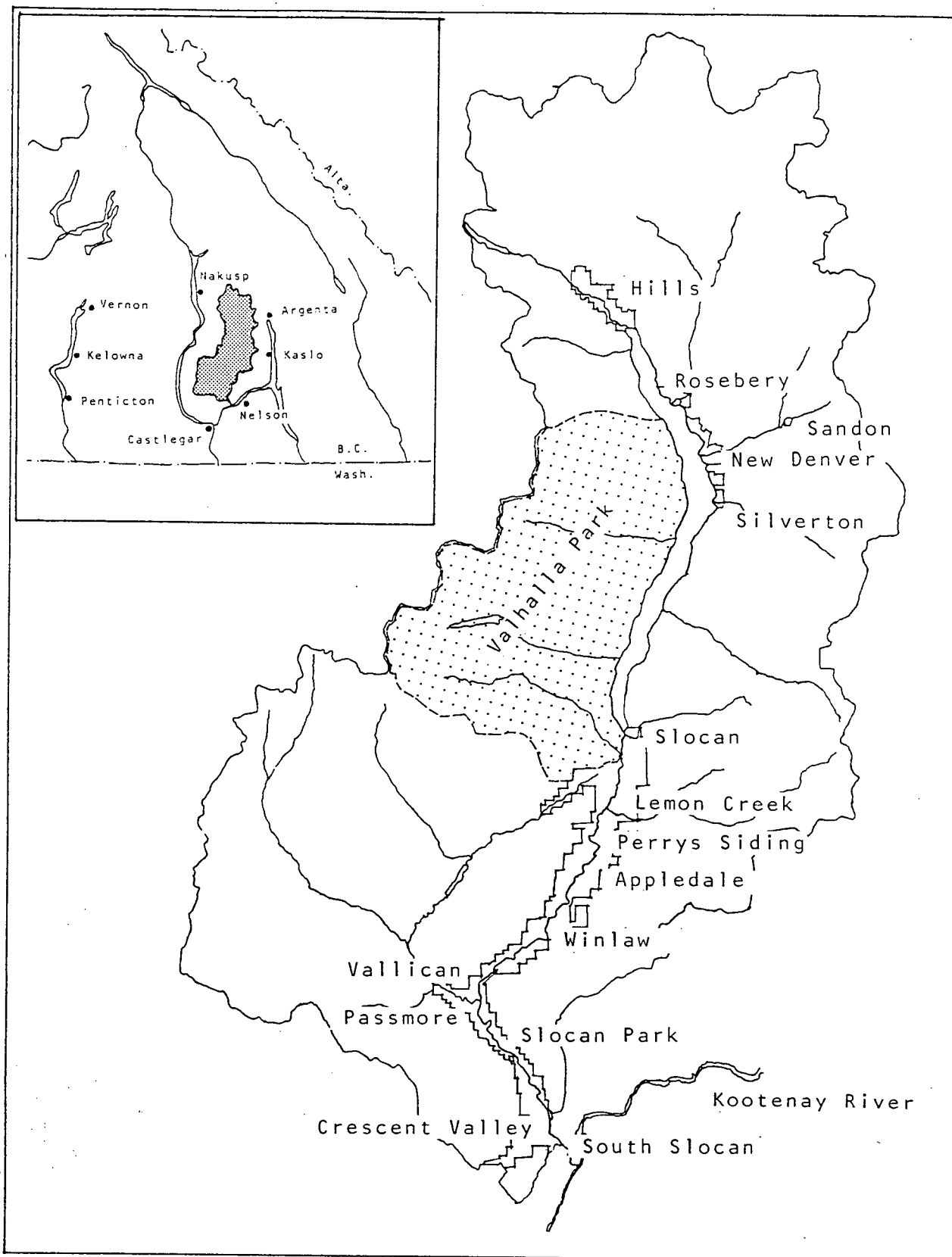


Fig. 1. *The Slocan Valley.*



Fig. 2. *The valley at Winlaw, looking North.*

peaks up to 9,000 feet in elevation part to allow a narrow strip of fairly rich, arable bottom land in the southern half of the valley. This is seldom more than two kilometers wide with forested hillsides which rise steeply up to the rock above. In the north, Slocan Lake completely fills the space between mountains permanently covered with snow and ice - limiting habitable terrain to river deltas and benches high on the valley walls. The Valley's mountainous surroundings also make it somewhat isolated from the rest of the province. From the early days of settlement, transportation, both within the Valley and to the outside world, has been a continual challenge. For most of this century, the treacherous Cape Horn Bluffs and uninhabited hillsides above Slocan Lake have perceptually and functionally divided the valley into Northern and





Fig. 3. *Passmore and Vallican, looking West.*

Southern "zones" each with its own distinct geography, settlement patterns, and political and social characteristics.<sup>4</sup> Located far from major population centres and tangential to major transportation routes, the region has been bypassed by the settlement and development pressures experienced elsewhere in southern British Columbia.

This landscape of mountains, forests and clear waters was, for millenia, the seasonal home of aboriginal peoples - members of the Lakes Tribes of the Interior Salish. Archeological evidence

---

<sup>4</sup> These differences show up also within the social geography of the back-to-the-land migrants. As we will see in the next two chapters, the experiences of the newcomers were significantly different in the north and southern ends of the valley, and the focus of each of these groups also tends to be local, rather than valley-wide.

indicates that these groups returned regularly to specific places on the shores of the lakes and rivers in the valley to fish and hunt. For most of this century, however, native people have not been present within the Valley.<sup>5</sup> Most were decimated by smallpox and other diseases likely brought into the area by white fur traders in the 1860s; those natives that survived had been permanently settled on reserves in Washington State soon after. When the first white residents arrived in 1891, only a few aboriginals remained.<sup>6</sup>

The first wave of white settlement began at this time with the discovery of rich deposits of silver and lead in the vicinity of Idaho Peak, east of Slocan Lake in the Selkirk Range. In five years, the local population grew from a handful of prospectors to many thousands as miners, merchants, entrepreneurs, and a booming service economy swelled towns that grew overnight on the few available patches of level ground. The deposits which fueled the boom soon proved to be limited, however, and by the turn of the century many mines had yielded up their treasures and closed down. Instant towns like Cody, Three Forks, Sandon<sup>7</sup> and Rettalack were well on their way to being ghost towns. People continued to live

---

<sup>5</sup> Recently, local efforts to preserve the Vallican site have attracted the attention of natives from a reserve in Colville, Washington. Since 1989, their renewed presence in the valley has raised the possibility of a land claim and created divisions within the local community.

<sup>6</sup> There is a legend, recounted in John Norris' *Old Silverton*, that natives guided the first party of prospectors in the Slocan to a rich outcrop of ore on the high slopes of Idaho Peak, thus launching the boom which followed.

<sup>7</sup> From a population of nearly 4000 at its peak in 1897, Sandon had dwindled to 400 by 1910 and only a few souls by the 1930's.



in the more economically and institutionally diversified communities of Silverton, New Denver and Slocan, but these, too, were hit hard by the diminishing of mining activity, and themselves began a long, slow decline.<sup>8</sup>

Around the turn of the century, isolated farms and orchards began to appear on the fertile lands of the lower valley. Some of these were subsistence operations, but many produced to sell in nearby Nelson, and in the mining communities around Slocan Lake. In the beginning, agriculture seemed to hold the same promise as the local mines and forests. A combination of moderately rich soils in the valley bottom, a relatively benign climate and an abundance of water allowed the production of a wide variety of agricultural products - anything from tree fruits and vegetables to sheep and cattle. With the passage of years, however, agriculture never became a significant part of the local cash economy. The promises of fruit ranching, or cash cropping, that had drawn people to the area, dimmed with the passing of the mining era and flourishing fruit industry elsewhere. Most homes had a garden, and subsistence food production bolstered the household economies of many resi

---

<sup>8</sup> Mining and mineral exploration continue to this day to be significant elements in the economy of the Slocan Valley. However, activity declined considerably during the 1920's due to falling metal prices and has never again attained early levels of production. As a result of having undergone the mining boom, however, the landscape was irreversibly changed. Without it, the villages of New Denver, Silverton, and Slocan with their rich architectural legacy and civic amenities would likely never have come into being, nor would the population of the valley ever have risen to the levels it attained through out much of this century. Drawing as it did a diverse array of new residents to the valley - of different classes, ethnic origins, and occupational specialization - it left a more richly textured and heterogeneous social fabric than would have been the case in an area where agriculture or logging predominated.



Fig. 4. *The agricultural landscape, Slocan Park.*

dents, but the absence of a ready market, the relatively small amount of arable land, and the small scale of most holdings thwarted the development of commercial agriculture in the valley.<sup>9</sup> Yet, like mining, farming profoundly shaped the landscape of the Slocan. From one end of the valley to the other, virtually every sizable patch of farmable ground has been at some time cleared and broken. The result is an almost continuous patchwork of small holdings, each complete with dwellings and outbuildings and, except for the villages of Slocan, New Denver and Silverton, very little

---

<sup>9</sup> *Slocan Valley Planning Program, Technical Report: Agriculture.* 1981.

concentrated development.<sup>10</sup>

Contemporary with the first farms in the valley, a rudimentary lumber industry formed, again to serve the mines and towns that sprung up so rapidly. A good deal of local timber found its way into railroad ties and mining props, and onto the boardwalks and buildings of Sandon, New Denver and Silverton. As the mining boom subsided during the first decades of this century, the lumbering continued, taking over as the mainstay of the valley's economy - a situation which persists today. The early exploiters of the forests were, for the most part, typical of others of their time; forests were perceived as an unlimited resource to be cut without thought given to efficient utilization or regeneration. Over-cutting, the clearing of the land for agriculture and the intentional burning of large areas by early prospectors, resulted in the decimation of much of the forests in the valley bottoms quite early in the century.<sup>11</sup> In the first three decades, a number of large mills operated but were constrained by a shortage of accessible timber. It was 1935 before a permanent industry was established.

In 1908 another wave of in-migration began in the West Kootenay, which soon had an impact on life in the Slocan: the Doukhobors. Unlike most of the previous newcomers, however, this group was attracted as much by the valley's isolation from the world outside, as by the economic opportunities it offered. They sought a life

---

<sup>10</sup> This pattern persists to the present day. As the Slocan's population grew by 43% between 1971 and 1981, the rural areas' share grew from 65.2% to 75%. Source: Regional District of Central Kootenay.

<sup>11</sup> Shadrack, 1981, pp. 111-112.

of rustic simplicity and toil, practiced pacifism, communitarianism and vegetarianism, and denied the authority of the secular state. The 5,000 or more Doukhobors who migrated to the West Kootenay established an economic enterprise and series of settlements called The Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood in at least five locations throughout the Slocan Valley.<sup>12</sup> When the Community was dissolved in 1940<sup>13</sup>, most Doukhobors stayed on in the Valley, where today they remain a distinct cultural and linguistic sub-community, although no formal pattern of communal living remains.<sup>14</sup>

These, then, were the basic ingredients that came together in

---

<sup>12</sup> The Community was organized on strict communist principles. All land was held in common, and personal earnings were returned to a central office; the community's members slept and ate in communal dwellings. At its peak, the commune occupied some 19,000 acres and had at least 128 communal dwellings. Gale and Koroscil, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> The rapid growth of the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood's holdings was accomplished with deficit financing, and banks lent freely on the strength of the community's proven productive capacity. In 1929 the banks sold these mortgages to large financial corporations which soon after began foreclosure proceedings. In 1939 the provincial government refused to honour its Farm Protection legislation, subsequently paying off the Community's remaining debt and thereby acquiring control of all the Doukhobor interests. The apparent systematic destruction of the CCUB assets followed. Mealing, 1977, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> The Slocan offered asylum of another kind to the Japanese who were interned there during the Second World War. Under the powers of the War Measures Act, all Japanese-Canadians and Japanese nationals living within a "protected zone" extending 100 miles inland from the Pacific were removed from their homes and shipped to work or detention camps in the interior of British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada. In October of 1942, Sandon housed 933 detainees; camps in New Denver and Rosebery held 1,505; and the so-called Slocan Valley camp - three locations between Slocan City and Lemon Creek - held 4,814. When the war ended, the camps were closed and inmates were relocated east of the Rocky Mountains. However, many who were old and infirm, unfit or unwilling to leave the camp, remained in New Denver. Soon thereafter, individual Japanese began moving back into the area, often returning to their wartime housing. Adachi, 1976, p. 253; 271-72.





Fig. 5. *Pioneer homestead, Vallican.*

the Slocan: the landscape with its rich resources and qualities of remoteness, ruggedness and natural beauty; migration into the area by a succession of distinct social groups, each with different initial intentions and cultural and linguistic heritages; and an economy based on primary extraction, some manufacturing, and limited agriculture.

Throughout this sequence of settlement, the Slocan's original wilderness landscape became increasingly bucolic. Gradually, more and more land was cleared, and substantial homes and barns replaced the rustic cabins of the pioneers. This tranquil, pastoral landscape set in beautiful natural surroundings may no doubt have attracted a few more settlers to the valley, as did the recreational opportunities found in its mountains and streams. But in-

migrants were few and most residents, whether Doukhobor or from the dominant "Anglo" community, were there either because they had always been, or because they had seen a way to make a living from the area's natural resources. Thus, while other parts of the province were being developed, the Slocan remained a quiet backwater which, like many parts of rural North America, began an inexorable decline that lasted well into the 1960s.

Despite its endowment with resources, since the end of the mining boom early in this century the Slocan has never prospered economically. The distance to markets, which hampered the development of the area's agricultural industry, also precluded the establishment of a viable manufacturing sector other than forest products. This undiversified economy had few openings for women and young people, and was vulnerable to shifts in the demand for lumber. In addition, the rationalization of the forest industry, which saw the closure of independent mills in the valley, gave virtual monopoly power to the major licensee, who could then decide who worked and who did not. Unemployment and underemployment have long been chronic problems in its undiversified economy and, as a result, from 1950 to the late 1960s, the valley was experiencing a net loss of people, as many left to seek their fortunes in larger urban areas. Most of those who left were young, and the median age of the valley population rose. The villages preserved some of their social and recreational amenities, but one by one stores, banks, businesses and government offices closed down and moved out of the valley. Of those people who stayed on the land, members of the Doukhobor community and Anglo settlers alike, many were ready to

retire from the farming life they had pursued for half a century.

Their land went on the market, but little sold. Except for a few entrepreneurs, most valley residents to the present day have not been affluent by national standards. Consequently, land prices were low, house sizes were modest, and the informal economy was strong. Because of the economic realities of the area, and because life there was otherwise good in many respects, people did just enough to get by. It was, as Harris (1985, p. 339) observed of New Denver, "...a place to live but not to prosper."

It was also, for years, the scene of cultural conflict. Because of the Doukhobors' obvious linguistic and ideological differences, and because of their ongoing problems with the provincial government, the relationship between the two principal community groups was characterized by frequent animosity, and an active and ongoing persecution of the Doukhobor people by a racist minority within the Anglo community.<sup>15</sup> The Doukhobors, conditioned by years of mistreatment to not trust the government, would not go to the police and were, to quote one witness, "sitting ducks for discrimination".<sup>16</sup>

If one could see a "snapshot" of the valley in the mid-1960's these would be its essential features: a population that largely consists of two community groups, one of these pursuing to some extent an alternative social agenda and being persecuted by a minority in the other larger community; an economy largely

---

<sup>15</sup> From an article in the LIP-funded co-operative newspaper *The Arrow*, #2, 1973.

<sup>16</sup> David Orcutt, personal interview, January 30, 1990.

dependent upon a single industry and in a chronic state of depression; a declining and aging population and consequent abundance of inexpensive land; and, a landscape of exceptional beauty, isolated from urban pressures and influence by its location in the midst of a sea of mountains.

## **The Literature**

The back-to-the-land movement has received limited academic attention. By far, the majority of writing on the subject has originated internally - from participants and advocates of the movement - and has generally been of a technical (i.e., how to do it) or philosophical (why do it) nature. Such perspectives are found most frequently in periodicals such as *Harrowsmith*, *Mother Earth News* and *The Smallholder* which have grown to serve the back-to-the-land population, and various popular books of the same genre.<sup>17</sup> In order to gain a comprehensive perspective on the movement generally, and specifically in the Slocan, it was necessary to draw on a wider range of literary sources. Few works treat the back-to-the-land phenomenon directly, but many can shed light on certain dimensions of the movement - its origins, intentions, and geographic distribution - from which a more wholistic picture can be constructed. This will be done in detail in the next chapter; what follows here is a briefly-annotated summary of the relevant literature.

---

<sup>17</sup> Some examples of this popular literature on the subject are: the *Whole Earth Catalogue*; the *Foxfire Books* series; Nearing and Nearing, 1970; Kern, 1975; Langer, 1972.



The back-to-the-land movement was a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon which originated both in social forces prevalent in the 1960s, and in long-standing attitudes and patterns of behavior.<sup>18</sup> Its roots were in the counterculture of that time, and its ideology sprang from the counterculture's alternative vision and critique of the status quo. The critique and vision emerge early in the 1960s in such works as Ellul's *The Technological Society* (1964) and Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1964) and by the end of the decade are articulated by Roszak (1969), Reich (1970) and Goodman et al (1970). These ideas first found expression in the "hippie" phenomenon in the San Fransisco Bay area of California (Bell, 1971), but were also representative of sentiments running through American society at the time (Perrow, 1979). After 1967, the locus of counterculture activity shifted to the countryside with the growth of the commune movement (Kantor, 1973; Gardner, 1978). The communes are generally regarded as the precursors to the migration of the more widespread and numerically significant back-to-the-land homesteaders (Vance, 1972; Gardner, 1978).

However, social change was not confined to members of the counterculture. During the past three decades, attitudes and values among western publics have been changing as well. Among these have been the emergence of post-industrial and post-material-

---

<sup>18</sup> This is generally more true for Americans than for Canadians. The Jeffersonian agrarian creed, the lure of the frontier and a long history of experimental communities were part of the American legacy. Canada, too, has experienced its share of utopian settlement (see Raspiorch, 1977), but it has always maintained a different and somewhat less romantic attitude to its frontier which, as Cross (1970, p. 4) notes, was opened up by the Northwest Mounted Police and the CPR rather than idealists or adventurers.

ist preferences (Inglehart, 1977; Louv, 1983; Heath et al, 1986), the changing relationship to the environment (Cotgrove and Duff, 1981) and to wilderness (Nash; 1982). These value changes and an increasing emphasis on quality of life, combined with the long-standing vision of the frontier as a place of transcendence, partially underlay both the back-to-the-land movement and the related Migration Turnaround. Participants in both mass movements share many of the same motives and intentions. Works dealing with the causes, magnitude and distribution of mainstream urban-rural migration since the 1960's (Larson, 1978; Williams and Sofranko, 1979; Vining, 1982; Campbell and Garkovitch, 1984), and the impacts on rural culture and rural societies (Graber, 1974; Young et al, 1986; Price and Clay, 1980; Ford, 1978; Bradshaw and Blakely, 1979) can thus also cast light on the more alternative back-to-the-land phenomenon.

From another perspective, the movement was but the latest installment in a long American history of people attempting to create the good life or the ideal society on the frontier of the time. The most direct antecedent was the tradition of utopian communalism (Holloway, 1951; Hine, 1953, 1980; Armytage, 1968; Parrington, 1964; Fellman, 1973; Lewarne, 1975; Vance, 1980). However, less radical traditions such as the pursuit of the simple life (Shi, 1985) and the ideal landscape (Marx, 1964; Vance, 1972) have had similar spatial expressions.

While the more visible "hippie" aspects of the counterculture receded in the early 1970s, the back-to-the-land movement continued, and with it, the alternative ideology. The components of

this vision of a better world remain important to those still on the land and have in turn evolved into social movements in their own right. The "alternatives movement" or "conserver society" advocates ideas such as limits to growth (Meadows et al, 1972; Ophuls, 1976), anarchist-decentralist societies (Bookchin, 1971), appropriate technology (Schumacher, 1973), deep ecology (Bookchin, 1980; Devall and Sessions, 1985), voluntary simplicity (Johnson, 1978; Elgin, 1981), bioregionalism (Udvardy, 1975; Berg and Dasmann, 1977; Sale, 1980, 1985), alternative economics (Hamrin, 1983), and the broad pursuit of a stable and sustainable society (Goldsmith et al, 1972; Brown, 1980). These alternatives have also found a much wider following among academics and members of the general public. Since the early 1970s, there has been a rich cross-fertilization between the intellectual development of these ideas and those people who have been attempting to live them in the countryside. Rural areas of North America have thus become significant loci of activity aimed at creating alternatives to existing patterns of community, economics and politics (Cayley, 1986).

Canadian writers have been less prone to look into these dimensions of their recent past than Americans. Fortunately, there are exceptions. A decade after the back-to-the-land movement began in earnest, Kostash (1980) in *A Long Way From Home: The 60's Generation in Canada*, portrays an era in which the forces of social change originating in the United States found their own expressions in the Canadian social and physical landscape. This impressionistic work describes, at some length, the Canadian back-to-the-land

experience and includes a study of the Slocan at that time. Smith's (1978) *Quicksilver Utopias: The Counterculture as a Social Field in British Columbia* approached the subject of the counterculture in B.C. from an anthropological perspective. Of particular value is his description of the dynamics and institutions of the counterculture in urban and rural British Columbia in the years 1966-1971. In the course of his research, he spent some months in the Slocan Valley and recorded, firsthand, communal and alternative community life in the early 1970's. Simmons (1979) describes all of the many facets of back-to-the-land settlement in British Columbia over the preceding decade. Among other things, his *But We Must Cultivate Our Garden: Twentieth Century Pioneering in Rural British Columbia* provides sociological perspectives on the movement, looks at changes in the structure of rural society, back-to-the-land lifestyles in the countryside, the process of settling the land, and locating where people went and how many were involved. As a source of descriptive data about this settlement period in B.C. it is useful, although short on analysis. Herrero (1981), in *The Conserver Society Alternative: A Community Values Study* based her study on the assumption that many of the back-to-the-land residents in the West Kootenay area are living lifestyles founded on "conserver" or "voluntary simplicity" principles. In her thesis Herrero defines which of the alternative values held by these residents most induced them to move to the country and maintain this sort of lifestyle. Among her respondents, she found a strong attraction to the ideas of self-reliance, intimate community and the environmental qualities of the area. Steele

(1981) examined the cash and technological dependencies in a so-called self-reliant lifestyle. Her study looked at the consumer patterns of a group of back-to-the-land residents in Eastern Ontario and found a high degree of correlation between the professed ideology of self-reliance and actual attempts to live economically independent from the mainstream society. Finally, Brinkerhoff and Jacob, in two studies which focus partly on the West Kootenay, explore the connection between personal values (ideology) and the use of alternative technology (1986); and between ideology, alternative technology, and perceived quality of life (1984). Drawing on sample populations derived from subscription lists for homesteading and smallholding periodicals, Brinkerhoff and Jacob conclude in each case that values and beliefs commonly associated with the back-to-the-land movement - self-reliance, ecological harmony, and voluntary simplicity - are stronger determinants of lifestyle and personal satisfaction than are structural or material factors.

Each of the preceding works has, in different ways, advanced knowledge about aspects of the back-to-the-land phenomenon, and a number have dealt with the Slocan or West Kootenay region in particular. They describe, in general, who these migrants were, why they moved to the country, and the fact that they were living some form of an alternative lifestyle. What is lacking however, is any systematic effort to describe the impact of these new people on their rural communities, or to come to terms with what the back-to-the-land alternative means to society. This thesis expands on the existing literature by attempting to assess the impacts of

alternative visions on the Slocan Valley, and the relevance of this experience to society in the 1990s. The next section describes in more detail the origins and essential characteristics of the movement.

### **The People Who Came**

The people who began repopulating the Slocan and many other places in the North American countryside in the late 1960s were thus part of a ruralward migration which originated in the urban counterculture of that decade. Beginning in California's San Francisco Bay area around 1965, the counterculture spread to other major American cities and university towns and, a few years later, to Canadian centres. At the root of this phenomenon were five factors: a widespread dissatisfaction with the state of contemporary American life<sup>19</sup>, a large cohort of young people (the baby boomers, who flooded the universities and then the job markets in unprecedented numbers), increasing deterioration of the urban and natural environments<sup>20</sup>, the war in Vietnam, and drug experiences.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> "The new consciousness is the product of two interacting forces: the promise of life that is made to young Americans by all of our affluence, technology, liberation and ideals, and the threat to that promise posed by everything from neon ugliness and boring jobs to the Vietnam War and the shadow of nuclear holocaust." Reich, 1970, p. 234.

<sup>20</sup> "Fear underlay the upswell in what was increasingly known as 'environmentalism'...The new driving impulse, based on ecological awareness, transcended concern for the quality of life to fear for life itself. Americans suddenly realized that man is vulnerable. More precisely, they began to see man as a part of a larger community of life, dependent for survival on the survival of the ecosystem and on the health of the total environment." R. Nash, 1982, p. 254.

Disillusionment with society was extensive - witness the growth of various movements during the 1960s<sup>22</sup> - but it was primarily the young who made their critique into a lifestyle, who called most loudly for social change, and who ultimately brought forth an alternative vision for the transformation of their society.

There were many dimensions to this movement, and many apparent contradictions. On one level it was the rebellion of youth coming of age and seeking to define themselves in the world of their parents. At another, it was a serious questioning of the underlying tenets of their parents' society. It advocated a more spontaneous, unstructured and carefree way of living, and at the same time, sought authenticity and honesty in personal relationships, and responsibility in human relationships to the environment. For many, the counterculture was little more than a fad, yet others were deeply committed to living their lives according to its ideals and creating the personal and social changes it demanded. Some saw their involvement solely from an individualistic perspective - they were "dropping out" to pursue a personal reality - while others were committed to nothing less than a complete reshaping of

---

<sup>21</sup> Writing on the origins of the commune movement in the 1960's, Gardner (1978, p. 241) observes: "The contribution of the anti-war movement was essentially negative, creating widespread feelings that a society capable of producing such a revolting war must therefore be immoral and rotten throughout. The contribution of drugs was essentially positive, producing visions of cosmic unity, personal liberation, and loving groups of like-minded peers, visions which left mainstream America pale by comparison."

<sup>22</sup> Perrow (1979, p. 194) summarizes the social movements contemporary with the rise and fall of the counterculture: civil rights, 1956-1972; students, 1958-1972; peace, 1965-early 1970's; welfare/black power, 1966-early 1970's; ecology/militant feminism, 1967-early 1970's; militant American Indian, 1968-early 1970's.

society.

They were drawn from middle-class homes<sup>23</sup> across the land first to the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, and then to other meccas like New York's East Village, and Atlanta's Fourteenth Street. The "Haight" by 1965 had become "a symbolic centre for (among other idealist causes) a sweeping, youthful revulsion toward all private property, ecological rape, The Bomb and the War in Vietnam."<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the counterculture was a vital and growing phenomenon in Canada. Within two years of its initial flourishing in San Fransisco, areas such as Kitsilano in Vancouver and Yorkdale in Toronto contained thriving alternative communities, complete with their own newspapers, stores, hostels and crash pads.<sup>25</sup>

But by 1967 it was becoming clear to many in the Haight-Ashbury that the alternative agenda was being subverted there, overwhelmed

---

<sup>23</sup> Who were these people? The counterculture, the commune movement, and the back-to-the-land movement which followed, drew participants from the same segment of society. According to Gardner (1978, p. 240): "There seems to be universal agreement among social scientists that the vast majority were white, came from middle class and professional homes, had been to college and often held advanced degrees, were twenty to thirty years old, had used psychedelic drugs, and had been at least peripherally involved in the protest politics of the time." In a study of 62 back-to-the-land residents in southeastern British Columbia (including the Slocan Valley), Herrero (1981) found a similar profile. Among her respondents, the median age when they had first moved to the area was 26.5 years, 63% had been to university or college (versus the Canadian average of 18%) where arts and the social sciences predominated as areas of study, and fully 69.3% described their backgrounds as lower middle, or upper middle-class.

<sup>24</sup> Hedgepeth and Stock, 1970, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> For accounts of the world of the counterculture in Vancouver and other cities in Canada at this time, see Smith (1977) and Kostash (1981).



by crime, commercialism, media hype and overt suppression, and that society was not going to be changed through their example. That year the district began to disintegrate. In the face of "the TV crews, tourists, narcotics agents, and hordes of vacant-faced teenies fresh on the scene...Haight-Ashbury began as a community and devolved into a ghetto."<sup>26</sup>

Within the counterculture:

"the mood was one of preparing for Armageddon and of ambivalence between no longer giving a damn about anything but personal release, and hoping to demonstrate to America that a better answer could be found....In the face of the system's entrenched resistance to change by peaceful means, the only "alternative" - a word which changed in tone from theoretical desirability to personal desperation - became a strategy of retreat."<sup>27</sup>

That summer, the symbolic "death of the hippie" ritual held in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park marked a significant turning point for the movement. No longer content to be patronized and exploited by the establishment, they began to redirect the energy of the revolution into a less visible place - the open countryside.<sup>28</sup> As one observer summarized it:

---

<sup>26</sup> Hedgepeth and Stock, *op cit*, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> H. Gardner, *op cit*, p. 241.

<sup>28</sup> The turning away was reflected in the popular culture of the times. Throughout the 1960's, music had defined the anger, idealism, frustration and fears of the generation. It exhorted togetherness and drug experiences, legitimized personal feelings of alienation and disenchantment, and pointed the way to alternatives. Well-known popular songs such as Crosby Stills and Nash's "Wooden Ships": "Horror grips us as we watch you die/ all we can do is echo your anguished cries/ stare as all human feelings die/ we are leaving, you don't need us"; and Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock": "We are stardust, we are golden/ we are caught in the devil's bargain/ and we've got to get ourselves back to the garden"; described an increasingly common reaction to the situation.

"The solution to the poison of conventional society was to totally exclude oneself from it. America was doomed to imminent Armageddon and only the chosen few who had the realization of this and in 'Wooden Ships' escaped to the 'other side' would transcend the holocaust to build the new. The 'other side' was the bliss and knowledge that only living in the country could provide. When one experienced the 'politics of ecstasy' that living so close to the natural order as was possible would provide, then one would be whole."<sup>29</sup>

So, as it had for the utopians and idealists<sup>30</sup> of the previous three centuries, the social became the spatial: people on the social margins of society moved, literally, to its spatial margins. The first to leave for the country were the communes. In many ways they epitomized the radical vision of counterculture of the late 1960s. As Kostash (1981, p. 130-131) observes:

"...the communes - which existed simultaneously as critics of the social order and prototypes of a new one - represented the antithesis of bourgeois culture....They countered the violence of society with pacifist communities where life was revered, relationships were non-coercive, habits peaceable, and tools creative. In place of competitiveness and hierarchy, the communes attempted co-operation in work and decision-making, and egalitarianism. Against isolation and atomization - immersion in the collective and mutual self-help. In place of the nuclear family and private property - the tribe and collective ownership

---

<sup>29</sup> From an anonymous article, "The Rise (and Fall) of Woodstock Nation (1966-1969)" which appeared in the West Kootenay alternative newspaper *The Arrow*, February, 1974, pp. 8-9.

<sup>30</sup> The migration of the communal migrants can be considered the latest instance of a recurring phenomenon whose antecedents can be traced to the initial founding of American society. The Pilgrims who landed in Plymouth in 1620 were the first in a long line of settlers who sought the undeveloped wilderness in which to give birth to their vision of the good life or the ideal society. The search for the simple life, the quest for mental and physical health, socialist communitarianism, and closeness to nature, are themes which have figured prominently in the history of this type of settlement. As a result of this experience, when young people in the 1960's found their society hostile to their vision and unamenable to change, the frontier beckoned as it always had, for "Arcadia has long been part of the American geographical norm, even in its isolation from the social norm, furnishing a pattern that allows a pattern of social diversity." J. Vance, 1972, p. 210.

of property. In place of waste, conservation and a marginal economics. Instead of uniformity of processes of expression, they promoted the ideosyncratic and the experimental."

Thus, the communes were "...by no means seen as hideouts - cop-outs - from the world. Rather, they are outposts, testing grounds, self-experimental laboratories, starting points for whole hallucinatory metropolises...a wildly different pattern of social life that more rightly fits the human form."<sup>31</sup>

More and more of the disaffected young joined the wave of migration in the succeeding years. Settlement in this era spread out across the North American landscape wherever "land was cheap, the terrain unsuitable for commercial agriculture, and the scenery

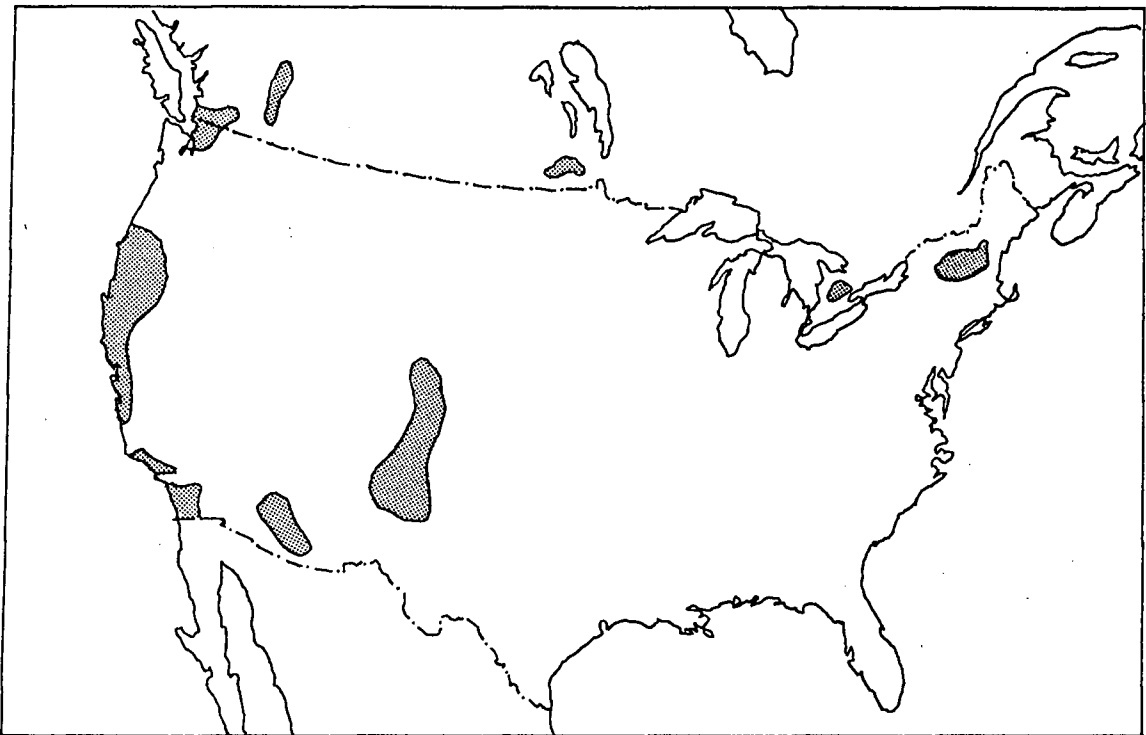


Fig. 6. Range of North American communal settlement 1965-75.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Hedgepeth and Stock, *op cit*, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> After J. Vance, 1972, p. 201.

beautiful."<sup>33</sup> Initially, Northern California was the favoured destination, but soon pockets of settlement were appearing in southern Oregon, northwestern Washington, isolated parts of Colorado and New Mexico, certain undeveloped counties in New England, and in Appalachia. There was also communal activity in Canada - primarily urban-based, since for the time being, the imperatives to escape in this country were not as strong. Canadian cities were not wracked by racial strife, or afflicted by pollution, crime, or political unrest to the extent of those in the United States. Nor was there yet in Canada an indigenous tradition of seeking out the frontier to find freedom for social deviance.<sup>34</sup> Thus the Canadian counterculture remained largely an urban movement until the beginning of the 1970s,<sup>35</sup> and when rural areas in Canada first began to experience new exurban settlers in their midsts, these people were, in many places, American in origin.

Soon after these first forays into the countryside, individual homesteaders began to follow.<sup>36</sup> The next year the political

---

<sup>33</sup> H. Gardner, *op cit*, p. 240.

<sup>34</sup> Canada, and in particular British Columbia, has seen numerous instances of consciously utopian settlement in the past century. Yet in very few cases have these arisen out of the general populace - more often they have been transplants from Europe or America drawn by the greater wildness of the Canadian frontier (and the frequently generous inducements of various governments). See Raspiorch, 1977.

<sup>35</sup> This is not entirely true. Smith (1977) mentions the short-lived existence of a number of indigenous counterculture-inspired communes in northern British Columbia. They apparently had all come and gone by 1969.

<sup>36</sup> "There can be little question that the rural communes of the 1960's played a major avant-garde role in the back to the land movement. They were the antennae of incipient cultural change. As the first major probe back to the countryside in generations, they pioneered the way out of urban pollution and alienation. They

situation intensified, the conflict in Vietnam continued to escalate, and the magnitude of the migration grew.

"The turning point came for the student movement and the commune movement alike in 1968, with the first bombings of ROTC facilities at Stanford and Berkeley; the shootings of three black students by state troopers in Orangeburg, South Carolina; the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy; rebellions and strikes at Columbia, San Francisco State, Wisconsin and several other universities; and the battle of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago." (Gardner, 1978)

The focus of countercultural activity shifted more and more out of the cities. At the same time, Americans began to look increasingly out of the United States - driven by the personal threat of the Draft or political violence, or by a general feeling of revulsion towards their society and what it stood for. Mexico, Sweden and Australia were all considered possible destinations, but Canada - close at hand, familiar yet significantly different (with its socialized medicine, low-key patriotism, peaceful reputation and openness to new immigrants, especially from the United States) - was the most frequent choice. By the summer of 1968 a full-scale migration was underway.<sup>37</sup> Facilitated by lenient immigration laws, Canada remained a popular option until at least 1973. In Vancouver, "Cool-Aid" offered hot meals, accomodation and job

---

did not often succeed as communes, but they did succeed in initiating and inspiring a new interest in rural living that will be with us for a long time to come." H. Gardner, *op cit*, p. 250.

<sup>37</sup> They were among "The Americans Who Voted With Their Feet" portrayed by Jon Ruddy in a 1969 *Maclean's Magazine* article. Disillusionment with the state of affairs in the U.S. was inspiring a broad-based migration to cities and rural areas in Canada. In 1967, 19,038 American citizens moved to Canada, up from 12,565 in 1964. "Young married college graduates, typically...well educated and well-heeled. They brought money...they came to stay."

referrals to newly arrived Americans, and the American Deserters Committee operated a hostel in Kitsilano. Following the invasion of Cambodia and the Kent State incident, both were inundated by "a mixture of embittered and visionary Americans."<sup>38</sup>

As the back-to-the-land migration gathered momentum, another related trend was emerging: the so-called Migration Turnaround. Like the back-to-the-land phenomenon, this mass movement was motivated by a widely-held negative view of urban life and strong pro-ruralism values, and a growing "post-industrial" orientation to quality-of-life and environmental amenities. "...[A] large number of individuals moved to rural areas (or did not leave them) due to a belief that rural life represented the "promised land" of economic security, family security and stability, environmental purity, and moral superiority."<sup>39</sup> Economic and employment considerations were much more important to the turnaround migrants than to the back-to-the-land settlers. The Turnaround was, in large part, predicated on changes in communications and transportation technology and the relocation of industry to more rural areas. The turnaround migrants generally settled where there was employment, while the counterculture settlers - like the generations of utopian colonists before them - often sought locales "quite dogmatically detached, frequently uneconomically located to the point of being quixotic."<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, it is widely felt that the latter settlers, "as the first major probe back to the

---

<sup>38</sup> D. Smith, 1977, p. 117.

<sup>39</sup> R. Campbell and L. Garkovitch, 1984, p. 102.

<sup>40</sup> J. Vance, 1972, p. 200.

country in generations...pioneered the way out of urban pollution and alienation",<sup>41</sup> launching a large-scale exodus from cities across North America and Europe.<sup>42</sup>

The beginning of the 1970s saw the advent of a new phase in back-to-the-land settlement. In the cities, the counterculture as a force for social change was in decline. By 1970:

"it was becoming clear that for every freak who had carved out a place of tranquility and self-sufficiency...there were hundreds and hundreds of youths stranded in the no-man's-land of a lifestyle that was gradually being reabsorbed into the mainstream of capitalist enterprise and exploitive, demoralizing, and even violent relations. A highly conscious counterculture was degenerating into a sub-culture of reaction."<sup>43</sup>

With the commercial co-optation of the movement nearly complete, its revolutionary momentum appeared spent. Yet, the critique, vision, and questioning spirit of the counterculture lived on - in the many counterculture communities scattered across the continent, in an increasingly pragmatic and deliberate back-to-the-land movement, and in a growing alternatives movement.<sup>44</sup> Nourished by a rapidly-growing popular literature of do-it-yourself and home-steading books and periodicals, and increasingly disassociated from

---

<sup>41</sup> H. Gardner, 1978, p. 250.

<sup>42</sup> Gardner (*op cit*, p. 249) reports (after Beale and Fuguitt, 1976) that in the U.S., "Between 1970 and 1973...there was a net migration of over one million people from the cities and suburbs into sparsely populated rural areas."

<sup>43</sup> M. Kostash, *op cit*, p. 135.

<sup>44</sup> The various facets of this "movement" developed parallel to the back-to-the-land movement during the 1970s, and both benefitted from a cross-fertilization of ideas and practical experience. Many who came to the Slocan during the past 20 years would have identified with at least part of the alternative agenda. Its related strands are summarized in Appendix B.

the "hippie" aspects of the counterculture, the back-to-the-land movement attracted a widening spectrum of participants.<sup>45</sup> No longer so overtly political, so naively utopian, these people nonetheless subscribed to a common vision. They saw a more self-reliant life in small rural communities close to nature and the basics of survival as more healthy, satisfying, and easier on the planet than that which the mainstream society offered. Their numbers declined gradually from the peak years in the early 1970s, but the stream of migration continued into the 1980s and in certain areas has enjoyed a resurgence since the latter part of the decade (this has been observed in the Slocan).

By the mid-1970s, the wave of back-to-the-land migration which started a decade earlier in California, may have involved as many as one million people, spread out in isolated homesteads and rural communities across the continent. A conservative estimate is that by 1978,<sup>46</sup> more than 15,000 of these migrants populated the B.C. countryside, from the Gulf Islands and Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, to the Bulkley River valley northwest of Prince George. The Pemberton-Lillooet area was another focus, as was the Likely-Horsefly area in the Cariboo (see Fig. 7.). However, the West Kootenay region was the centre of the movement's activity in B.C. and the Slocan, its epicentre.

---

<sup>45</sup> The majority, however, continued to be drawn from the same segment of society. Young et al (1986, p. 10-6) observe that new migrants to rural areas "are on average younger, of higher SES, and are motivated by concerns other than employment." See also: Graber (1974, p. 509), Louv (1983, p. 152) and Bradshaw and Blakeley (1983, p. 197).

<sup>46</sup> Simmons, 1979.



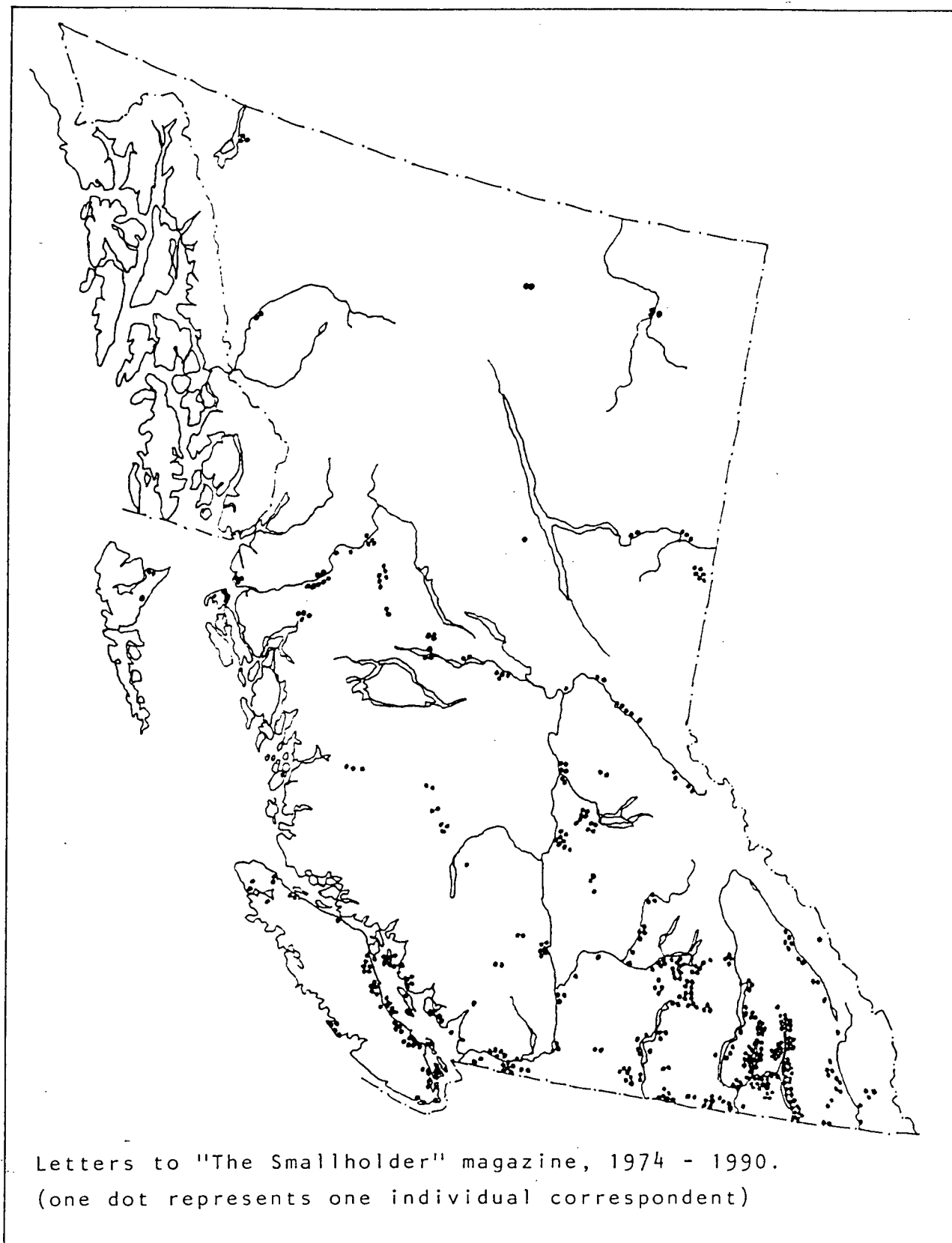


Fig. 7. The distribution of back-to-the-land settlement in B.C.

The preceding description of the context and objectives of the back-to-the-land movement is the framework for settlement in the Slocan after 1967. The next chapter will focus on the experiences of those who, as part of this movement, decided to live in the country and ultimately chose the Slocan.

## Chapter Two

### Settling the Valley: From the Voices of Settlers

#### The Decision to Move

Every person who eventually settled in the Slocan has a different story - a different set of reasons underlying their decision to move, a different array of intentions of what their new life was going to be about. On one hand, some people were desperate to flee their place of origin. They were in personal danger from the Draft or from political violence, or else so repulsed by what they saw around them that they were unwilling to participate in their society any longer. On the other hand, significant numbers of people were going with the flow, following their pleasure. Many left the cities with no idea of what they were running to, only what they wanted to leave behind. Others went to the land specifically to create new realities, to experiment. With survival strategies prepared, they were well aware of the rigours of the homesteading life. They were simultaneously pushed and pulled. On one side stood the society and the urban environment; on the other, visions of the good life in the country or of a better kind of society that needed space and freedom to flourish. Understanding this mixture of motives is important as part of understanding the subsequent actions of the new people in changing the Slocan Valley. The fundamental fact is this: people went back-to-the-land for a wide variety of reasons, but uniting all of them was a search for a place on earth where they felt welcomed by the land and the people around them.

Virtually every person who came to the Slocan as part of the back-to-the-land influx was attempting to escape something. For some it was just to get out of the stress, crime and pollution of city life. Nancy Harris recalls having to drive 40 miles to work and coping with the deterioration of the urban environment:

"We lived for that time up the Irvine Ranch outside of L.A. while Joel finished his degree. It was during that time I guess that we really began to see the other side of the affluent society. From our place we could see the pollution cloud growing as it spread up the valley from L.A....Our kids were getting sick from the pollution."<sup>47</sup>

For many Americans, the Draft was a pressing reality, as was the repression of anti-war activity by government forces. One of the first Americans to arrive in the valley was Bob Ploss.

"I came up the first time in 1967. At that time I'd been involved in an underground railroad operation that was taking army deserters from near the bases, picking them up and hiding them, then shipping them on to Reed College and then up to Canada. We were sponsored by what they called the "peace churches" - the Unitarians, Quakers and the Doukhobors. Sometime in mid '67 we got wind that we were under surveillance by the FBI, and we decided pretty quickly that it was time to leave. So we took the same route - took the railroad up into Canada. In Vancouver some Unitarians put us up for a while and then we went out to the Slocan to visit some of the deserters we knew. We liked it and decided to stay."

These specific perils were but part of a much larger threat of political violence, which seemed endemic in certain places throughout the late 1960s. Even those with a deferment felt it:

"I got deferred from the draft by some lawyer friends - on the grounds of my being in support of two kids. But the streets were wrapped in barbed wire, and lots of guns and National Guard

---

<sup>47</sup> Nancy Harris, personal interview, November 22, 1986. The date and location of interviews referred to in the text are contained in a Schedule of Interviews, Appendix A.

were everywhere. One day my father said "This country's had the biscuit, I'm leaving and I suggest you do the same." That sounded like pretty good advice. So, at first we weren't going back to the land so much as getting the hell out of the country. It was a straight political rationale."<sup>48</sup>

Places like Berkeley, or Chicago in 1968, were beginning to look like war zones "...rocked by bombs from both the right wing and the left wing." The personal choices of those who cared about making change were increasingly being constrained. This was the feeling of John Herrmann, one of the first to settle in Hills:

"My last job in the States before leaving was with the California highway system. This was at the time when the war in Southeast Asia was really starting to get heated up. I knew of people all over that were getting beaten up by the authorities for their efforts to protest the war - it was looking like a repeat of the Nazis....Their intention was to crush the war resistance by brute strength. That seemed to leave a person with a choice: either become a Rambo-type fighter or leave the country."

The widespread feeling that society was headed for a collapse - either from a large-scale environmental disaster such as a nuclear accident, or from a breakdown in the increasingly vulnerable food and energy production and distribution systems on which the West relied - made the urge to escape even more pressing. This was part of the rationale underlying the New Family commune's move from California to B.C.<sup>49</sup>, but not only Americans had feelings of impending doom. When the Carpendales left Vancouver in 1970 they

---

<sup>48</sup> Corky Evans, personal interview, September 2, 1988.

<sup>49</sup> "At that time either a Third World War or some kind of social breakdown seemed imminent - we figured it would happen by 1975. We felt a desire for a really dramatic change to restore real health to society - that way the collapse could perhaps be postponed. Our moving out into the woods was the first stage in an attempt to deal with this." Eric Clough, personal interview, February 18, 1987.

"...were planning to be self-sufficient and manage on very little. There was a really strong feeling that if society started to crash it would be the cities that went first."

Even outside the U.S., there was a strong antipathy for almost everything society stood for. Many felt out of place; their values were in conflict with the goals that society offered and the means it offered to obtain them. To stay would mean they would either be co-opted by the system, or risk personal breakdown trying to live true to their beliefs. So moving out into the woods was also an act of withdrawal, as it was for Sam Tichenor:

"My motivation? Well it started as an act of defiance against society...and also a process of beginning to make the important life decisions for myself. I think mostly I wanted to hide - I felt I didn't fit in to the greater society. So I was trying to create a place where I couldn't be bothered by it all, where I could really explore personal growth."

Overall, there was a sense of disillusionment. They were "innocent children of World War Two people - moving towards what our society wanted us to be - yet finding out that crass consumerism and the war were the real statements of that society. It was morally bankrupt!"<sup>50</sup>

The urge to flee was only one aspect of the back-to-the-land rationale; on the other side of the equation there were plenty of positive attractions. Most people had some vision of the ideal life, even if they did not know yet where to find it or how to make it a reality. Generally, a number of desires predominated.

---

<sup>50</sup> Nancy Harris, *op cit.*

Richard Burton and Barbara Foreman were perhaps typical in this respect:

"We always wanted a quiet place in the mountains...and to feel rooted, anywhere other than in a city. We wanted neighbours too, and a more organic environment...to be involved in a lifestyle that was very diverse, rather than the sterility of a profession."

Environmental aesthetics were important, and mountainous landscapes with abundant water were particularly favoured. But people were also looking for security and a sense of freedom, and to be more connected with the essential processes of survival.

Many have told of leaving the city with hundreds of pounds of food - survival rations in the likely event that food was soon unobtainable in stores. The systemic collapse was a palpable threat and, thus, personal security was high on peoples' minds. This, a piece of land offered.

"We wanted to grow our own food and build our house and provide for our energy needs - without being dependent on Hydro or the rest of them.<sup>51</sup> We figured we could be self-sufficient in a fairly short time."

If large enough, a piece of land could supply building materials, wood for heat and cooking, food, potentially hydro electricity, and a defensible buffer should the need arise. The ideal of self-sufficiency was thus partially a response to the precariousness of the system. It was also integral to the idea of "living lightly on the land" and practising a conserver lifestyle, rather than one of consumption. One of the strongest criticisms of life in modern

---

<sup>51</sup> Richard Burton, personal interview.

society was the way urban people were isolated from the sources of their sustenance. John and Bay Herrmann felt that: "...San Francisco was just this parasitic colony, exploiting the produce of other peoples. So we had this deep desire to learn how to grow our own food. Once across the border we became very concerned to stop being parasites."

This longing to get back in touch with the basics of life was spiritual as well as practical in origin. It had to do with wanting to find one's place in the cosmic order.

"We left Calgary in '75 or '76 - I was about 36 - looking I suppose, for roots and a connection to food, clothing and shelter cycles. We didn't know yet at the time how we were going to live, but we planned to homestead."<sup>52</sup>

Growing one's own food was perhaps the central focus of this reconnection, and the centrepiece of efforts to be self-sufficient. Wholesome, healthy food, free of pesticides, produced with the labour of one's own hands - this was the ideal.

Underlying this array of personal desires and aspirations was another common thread: like generations of American and Canadian settlers who had preceded them out into the frontier, most of the Slocan settlers were seeking freedom in some form. For example, when the New Family was looking for land in the area, part of their concern was to get far enough out that "we wouldn't be forced to send our kids to public school."<sup>53</sup> The remote countryside offered a measure of independence from the institutions of the "system".

---

<sup>52</sup> John Hodges, personal interview.

<sup>53</sup> Eric Clough, *op cit*.



Being self-sufficient on a piece of land also offered the possibility of freedom from the routine and hierarchical relations of conventional employment, as it did for Jeff Ankenman:

"Basically I always hated two things: school and going to work. What I needed was a place with a roof over my head without a mortgage. And I wanted also to be able to do things myself and so not have to pay other people to do them for me - which of course would require a job."

Equally important was the ability to work when and how much one wanted to. Ken Minchin, for example, maintains: "In my life I don't have time to work eight hours a day. It makes me crazy and I don't need the money anyway." As we shall see in the next chapter, this freedom came with a price - economic uncertainty. This kind of occupational flexibility became characteristic of the lifestyles that evolved in the following years.

A major part of the desire for connectedness and roots was a longing for community. Most of the newcomers mentioned this as an important underlying motive for moving to a rural area, since cities were seen as places of anomie, alienation and competitiveness. In the country, one knew one's neighbours, helped them and could depend on them in times of need.

The idea of "community" was almost a grail for the migrants, yet personal visions of the ideal community varied. For most, community clearly meant the community of their peers - other members of the counterculture, other "new people" in the country. Some sought the intimacy and intensity of a communal or group marriage situation. But the desire to live communally or co-

operatively was by no means universal among the new people.<sup>54</sup> More preferred a looser, more tribal kind of association with a sense of cohesion and identity around a set of shared values and activities. A minority sought an affiliation with the "oldtimers", or rural people already long-established on the land.

In a way, many of the preceding reasons and intentions were about creating a better society. The difference between individuals was in whether they saw their role as *exemplars* for the rest of mainstream society to emulate, or were more concerned with creating a viable *personal* reality.<sup>55</sup> The evidence suggests that the first type were in a minority in the Slocan, a feeling shared by Marcia Braundy:

"The new people in the valley ranged from the visionaries - like those in the New Family - to the ones who were more concerned with personal reasons, with creating a personal alternative. The social visionaries were creating community in the social sense of the word: a woven fabric of caring for the land, for the alternative economy, for the institutions we've created here, and so on. Maybe one-third of the new people here are visionaries in this sense, but their visions are all different. Fortunately, however, there is a commonality between them that allows people to work together."

This concept of community was central to the counterculture's vision of the ideal society, but the vision extended beyond this

---

<sup>54</sup> Herrero (1981, p. 119) observes that less than 25% of her respondents came to the Slocan area with expectations of living this way.

<sup>55</sup> This same dichotomy is a consistent feature of utopian settlements in history. Some, such as the Fourierist and Owenite communes of the 1800's were clearly intended as models. Others, notably certain religious and temperance communities, in effect turned their backs on the rest of the world and often made no effort to convert or recruit new members.

as it seemed for a time that they were attempting a revolution in every dimension of life simultaneously. Counterculture communities, whether urban or rural, were places of experimentation. The New Family's commune had four specific goals: to create a loving, supportive extended family; to create a safe, nourishing environment for personal growth; to become self-sufficient on the land; to educate their children better than they could be educated in public school. These or similar goals were shared by many outside of that group, by people such as Judy Maltz who: "... had taken a course in utopian literature in college and...wanted to fulfil that search with personal experience,"<sup>56</sup> or Joel Russ, who observed: "...a lot of us came out here thinking that we could build a model world counterculture, and that we all had some part to play in that."<sup>57</sup>

Finally, and in sharp contrast to these visionaries with specific intentions, very many came without any clearly articulated idea of what they were moving to, or why. It was a time of acting on impulse. Like Burgid Schinke, who moved there in 1976, they felt "...part of a movement. It was more of a feeling in my guts than any rational or planned idea. I had heard that it was good up here so I moved."

It is clear that far from being motivated by the same goals and objectives, people were moving to the country for a variety of reasons. Even within individual communes such as the New Family,

---

<sup>56</sup> Judy Maltz, personal interview.

<sup>57</sup> Joel Russ to Linda Herrero, 1979.

which had a written charter, practised consensus decision-making, and required a total commitment to the enterprise<sup>58</sup> the vision varied widely. As Eric Clough recalls:

"The individual members of the New Family had very different views about what they were actually doing. I know Michael saw it as a glorious stepping back one hundred years and discarding power tools and so on. He was very much into simplicity for spiritual reasons and was wanting us to give up everything not absolutely necessary. He had a noble savage ideal. And then there was Joan. I think she really had an image of a community of scientologists here, and a white house with a picket fence, and more of a monogamous couple relationship. There was actually a lot that our viewpoints diverged on....We were maybe closer than most groups but still had many discrepancies."

The fact that such differences between individuals were common within the new community explains a good deal of the ambiguity of their actions which will emerge in subsequent chapters. The back-to-the-land ideology was broad, and inclusive of these kinds of contradictions. As Simmons (1979, p. 5) notes, the movement had clearly identifiable core elements while having diverse individual participants. Its members "believe in the virtues of rural life; wish to establish new, often alternative communities; and seek to achieve social and economic self-sufficiency and independence," but because of their diverse personalities, they could be oriented to survival, to quality-of-life, or to changing the planet.

As social conditions changed during the 1960s and 1970s, so did the motives of the settlers, their numbers, and their priorities. Prior to approximately 1972, escape - "getting the hell out" - was frequently mentioned as a major reason for moving to the country.

---

<sup>58</sup> Upon joining, New Family members agreed to give up all personal financial assets to the group.

Particularly among the American expatriates, political feelings were bound up with the other dimensions of the back-to-the-land ideology, often inseparably. As time went on, the proportion of Americans among the new settlers decreased, while that of Canadians increased.<sup>59</sup> With this change came a general shift in the characteristics of the community of new people. Because the Canadians were generally not as politically oriented, the community became increasingly more pragmatic and less prone to proselytize. People were going to the country simply because urban areas were no longer desirable environments in which to live.

### **Choosing the Slocan**

Representative of those who were to come to settle were people like the Herrmanns and members of the New Family who came upon the valley through a fortuitous combination of hearsay and extensive reconnaissance. By far the most common early experience was this kind of circumstantial search, for people were attracted to British Columbia but initially had no clear idea of where in the province they should go. John and Bay Herrmann, for example, traced a convoluted path before landing in the Slocan:

"We arrived in Vancouver sometime early in 1968 and spent a month there finding out about the province. We knew we wanted a place

---

<sup>59</sup> This is attributable to a number of factors. Firstly, the back-to-the-land movement arose and peaked a few years later in Canada than the U.S. By 1971 or '72, the factors which had prompted so many Americans to leave their country had begun to change. There was evidence that the war in Vietnam was about to end. The virulent "us versus them" feeling that pervaded the counterculture mellowed. It also became increasingly difficult to obtain landed immigrant status.

in the country with good water, nice neighbours - not too many neighbours though - good soil...pretty, in the mountains, off the beaten track. Had this feeling that we'd know it when we found it. The vibes would be right. Part of this vision came from having read *The Carusoe of Lonesome Lake*<sup>60</sup> as a boy....We were travelling in an old Ford sedan, hauling a WWII army surplus trailer with about 1,000 pounds of food in it...our food awareness was going through a change then. We had the idea that you should know where your food comes from and try to grow as much of it as possible."

They had heard that Horsefly was the edge of rural B.C. so they made "a beeline for there, going north into winter and winding up at Cottonwood Creek, near Quesnel." There they met some elderly back-to-the-landers, people who had been there since the 1930s. After working with them a while they "began to realize it wasn't our community. They did tell us, though, about the Kootenays, New Denver specifically."

"We went on to check out the Columbia-Kootenay valley, around Brisco and Spillimacheen. Already there were little communes there, individual back-to-the-landers, the beginning of the movement. But it wasn't the right place either - too-heavily industrialized, too redneck. We almost decided to join a group that was forming among friends in Montana but they told us to check out the Slocan first."

When they arrived in Nelson, the Herrmanns' first impression was that "it looked like every other place in B.C. should look. We got into the valley in July sometime. By 1968 it had been pretty much abandoned and was very quiet." They saw local farmers working their fields with horses. It was pastoral, picturesque.

"We stayed in the campground in the park at Rosebery and looked around for land. People seemed desperate to have people rent their places....There was little traffic on the road and the

---

<sup>60</sup> This is the story of Ralph Edwards, an American who left his urban life during the 1930s to homestead in the Coast Mountains east of Bella Coola.

local community was really tight - everybody knew everybody. One day at the gas pumps a Doukhobor approached us and offered to sell us his farm....It had been family property since it was cleared from the bush in the 1920s. We eventually settled on \$3,400 for the house and 15 acres. We had \$2,200 and had to borrow the rest from the local Credit Union. When we moved in, there were only two other Americans here before us."

The New Family had a more precise idea of where they were going. In 1967 members of the commune came up from California to visit David Orcutt on his co-operative farm in Fauquier, in the Arrow Lakes valley. They liked the area, and when they returned the following summer to settle they rented a house in Fauquier as a base from which to scout for their own piece of land. Their quest took them across much of south-central B.C. - to the Okanagan Valley, 130 kilometres west, and east to Kootenay. Ultimately, after weeks of searching, they located a piece of land isolated enough, and within their budget, in the Slocan.

Sometimes something else brought people to the area. They liked it and decided to stay:

"In 1975 I went to a newspaper conference held in Syringa Creek outside of Castlegar and fell in love with the people and the area. We were looking for a place to live but had at the time only 600 dollars. Fortunately, the Vallican Whole was looking for a caretaker for the building who would be willing to build next door. We got the job and moved here in May of that year."<sup>61</sup>

This kind of serendipity was very common. People spoke of a "magic" that brought them to the Slocan Valley. For example, Marcia Braundy told of living on a commune in California in 1969 and of her planned trip to Alaska. Upon leaving, she met Eric Lees, (who had moved to the Slocan from Victoria in 1969); he

---

<sup>61</sup> Rita Moir, personal interview.

suggested that she stop in on her way through the area. She has been there since.

"Again and again it was the fact that people were just in the right place at the right time to get the information they needed to send them on a journey that would change the rest of their lives...people like me who had someone come up to them and say, 'you should really check out the Slocan Valley'." <sup>62</sup>

Elements of B.C.'s past history of radical settlement activity also seem to have attracted back-to-the-land settlers to the province. For example, Malcolm Island was a common thread weaving through the personal narratives of many who came to the Slocan. In 1901 the island was the site of a utopian colony known as "Sointula" started by the Finnish intellectual Matti Kurrika. Although this commune was short-lived - it disbanded in 1905 - many of the original Finnish settlers stayed on, living for years in a peaceful, temperate and co-operative community where some of the founding ideals remained a part of daily life. A trip to Sointula appears to have been an important ritual for many who later went on to settle in the Slocan and elsewhere in the province. It was a connection with this place which first brought Judy Maltz out to B.C., and Barry and Sally Lamare journeyed there from Topanga, California on their first trip to the province:

"A lot of people we knew in our area were looking around for other places to live - Canada in particular. We were interested in seeing Malcolm Island, that was a draw. We came from there, across through Vernon and then stayed at the campground in Rosebery."

Some people who settled in the Slocan recall similar awareness of

---

<sup>62</sup> Marica Braundy, telephone interview, August 30, 1990.



the Doukhobor and Quaker histories in the area.<sup>63</sup> While these in themselves may not have precipitated the choice of settling in this area, they may have been important influences at a more subliminal level.

In the beginning, the "intelligence network" of hearsay and personal testimony that guided later settlers to the area did not yet exist. As the urge to leave the cities grew in the mid-sixties, the first people out into the countryside had little more to guide them than lists of desirable criteria and what maps and standard geographical descriptions could tell them.<sup>64</sup> One of the first new people to settle in the north end of the valley was Peter Pell, from Los Angeles. After studying maps, and then weeks of scouting the area, Pell chose the Slokan.<sup>65</sup> Since the counterculture was focused more on the West Coast and details of the back-to-the-land settlement in B.C. had not reached the eastern United States, many who set out from there used similar strategies to find

---

<sup>63</sup> Judy Maltz remembers hearing about the ill-fated Doukhobor commune while in college in the early 1960s. Nancy Harris and her family carefully investigated the Argenta Quaker community before finally committing herself to the New Family on their commune in Winlaw.

<sup>64</sup> In an interview on Cape Breton Island, one respondent told his story: "We'd previously gone to the West Coast looking for land unsuccessfully, and I put a compass on the cities over a million inhabitants in this continent and spanned out around eight hundred or a thousand miles. When you get to Cape Breton you're safe, you're eight hundred miles from Boston, you're a thousand from New York, you're a thousand from Montreal or Toronto. And I figured if you're that far away from the big cities you shouldn't be too much bothered by their problems." Chris King, personal interview, Baddeck, Nova Scotia, September, 1987.

<sup>65</sup> John Norris, personal interview.

their ideal landscape. Vicki Allen recalls meeting such settlers in her first trip to the Slocan:

"I first came here on a summer trip to B.C. in 1973 and visited for a week with a man who knew people who were wanting to homestead around Kaslo or Galena Bay. These were people from the Eastern States who looked at things like rainfall and growing conditions and remoteness and so forth before they decided to come here."

Most who were on the road carried around some intuitive sense of what they were looking for. But some - like Jim Rutkowski - were more specific:

"I was thinking of a more rural lifestyle - I had the back-to-the-land bug - and wanted to live somewhere close to mountains and skiing and hiking. And I also wanted to do a garden. So I used all my available breaks to travel and explore different places to move to. I had a list of criteria of what I was looking for...."

But the most common way people found out about the valley was undoubtedly word of mouth. People who had heard about the valley or had perhaps visited it themselves helped spread its reputation as far away as southern California. To those involved in the counterculture in Vancouver and Victoria, the attractions of the Slocan were common knowledge by the end of the 1960s.

"I was living in a communal house in Richmond, B.C. in late 1970. In the spring of 1971 two friends from the house and I came out to the Slocan Valley, having heard about the Kootenays and this being a beautiful area where lots of young people were coming to settle because land was available fairly inexpensively. So the three of us did an exploratory trip. I guess it took us a couple of days to get out here, and then we drove up the valley from South to North. We didn't really stop to look around much until we got to Hills, where we met John Herrmann, who kind of acted in the role of Ambassador and made the place sound intriguing to

us."<sup>66</sup>

Health food stores, restaurants, and other establishments where the counterculture congregated played a major role in the dissemination of information about attractive places.

"That summer I went with a friend to check out other rural areas in Southern B.C.. We heard about the Slocan Valley at this health food store "Shume" in Vancouver and more or less headed straight there. The first person we ran into was John Herrmann north of Hills. He invited us back to his house."<sup>67</sup>

In some cases it was the recently-arrived residents who spread the word. This was the case with Shawn Rooney - who took an 8mm movie he had taken of the valley to Topanga, California when he returned there on a holiday in 1970 - and a group of Primal Therapy practitioners who arrived in Rosebery in 1972.

"Actually I came up to the Slocan Valley originally to work with Ronnie Gilbert....We were down in Berkeley doing primal work, and decided that the only sensible thing to do was to move back up here since all the people that were seeing her down there were from either the B.C. Coast, which was where I was living before I came here, or from the Slocan Valley. So we shifted the whole show to the Rosebery Centre."<sup>68</sup>

One final component of the back-to-the-land in-migration which had a major impact on the course of events was the significant numbers of local people who embraced the values, dreams or intentions of the new people. Some, like John Norris, had spent a considerable period away from the area and, before the arrival

---

<sup>66</sup> Joel Russ to Linda Herrero, 1979.

<sup>67</sup> Sam Tichenor, personal interview.

<sup>68</sup> Judy Maltz to Linda Herrero, 1979.

of the newcomers, found themselves without a local peer group.

"These people were far more soul-mates for me than the local people. Many of the local people at that time were narrow minded red-necks....I was in the process of changing my own lifestyle at the time and the new people helped me through it."

Others, like the McRorys, from New Denver, and the Avises and Swansons from Winlaw, were long-established families who were open-minded from the beginning.<sup>69</sup>

What emerges from this exploration of the circumstances which brought people to the valley, is a clear pattern of information diffusion. In the beginning, very few knew about the Slocan Valley. Then, through a combination of circumstantial and methodical search it was "discovered" by a few individuals.<sup>70</sup> These people told their friends, and in the highly mobile and information-oriented counterculture, the word quickly spread. By 1970 the Slocan was a place firmly established in the broader landscape of the North American back-to-the-land movement. This landscape ignored international borders<sup>71</sup> (except in the case of Draft

---

<sup>69</sup> For those who affiliated with the new people, this often meant an increasing estrangement from their own communities. For many years the lines between the Anglo population and the Doukhobors had been similarly drawn. Families who reached out across this line, like the Avises and the Kazakoffs of Winlaw, found themselves ostracised from those around them. Larry Avis, personal interview, August 20, 1990.

<sup>70</sup> Herrero found in her 1979 survey that 41.9% of her respondents had come to the area by chance and immediately liked it. 21% described a methodical search for the type of place they wanted to live in.

<sup>71</sup> Many recall that for a while between 1968 and the early 1970s "the border between Canada and the States sort of disappeared. It really felt like the world of the counterculture was continuous between the two countries." Nancy Harris, personal interview, January 17, 1987.

evaders). It had focal points - places, institutions and personalities - around which the life of the counterculture revolved. These existed at the national scale (i.e. the Haight-Ashbury), regional scale (such as the Georgia Straight newspaper or Cool-Aid in Vancouver), and locally. In the Slocan, for example, a very common point of first contact in the valley was the campground at Rosebery Provincial Park, or the nude beach nearby. Individuals such as John Herrmann and David Orcutt, and groups like the New Family also reached out to welcome newcomers. The back-to-the-land landscape was also characterised by strong linkages between city and country. Most of these were of a social nature, but some were functional, such as the connection of the counterculture hinterland in B.C. to the central distribution depot of the "Fed-Up" co-op in Vancouver. On the fringes of this landscape were other places - such as the Ashram in Kootenay Bay, or the Quaker community in Argenta - which were not formally affiliated with the back-to-the-land movement, but had shared causes and concerns.

The media also helped spread the word. During the period from 1969 to 1974, articles on the evolving alternative scene in the Kootenays - usually on the Slocan - were regularly seen in the province's major newspapers - *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province* - and on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio and television. Then, with the start of *Harrowsmith Magazine* in 1976, the area

found itself with a national reputation.<sup>72</sup>



Fig. 8. *The Slocan River at Vallican.*

However they happened to first come to the Slocan, most people found themselves immediately attracted to its environs. Many mention having an immediate feeling that the valley was right for them, that it was a special or magic place. Colleen Bowman, for example, remembers "Our whole trip up through the valley was like coming home - we knew from the inside that this was *our* place."

---

<sup>72</sup> Early issues of Harrowsmith carried stories of back-to-the-landers in the area. Issue #2 reported a couple in their late twenties from Windsor who had settled in an isolated valley near Trail and were attempting to live on \$1,000 per year. The infamous John Herrmann, "the Garlic Man" of Hills, B.C. was the subject of a story in Issue #4.

The strongest first impression was usually the landscape.<sup>73</sup> Those that came from crowded and polluted cities truly believed that they had found Eden, "with its fresh clean lake and river waters, forests, and wild animals that walk past your kitchen windows."<sup>74</sup> The Slocan Valley offered a variety of aesthetic experiences: pastoral valley bottoms, the rugged Valhalla Range, quaint villages with their lingering traces of boomtown prosperity, the exhilarating passage through the Cape Horn Bluffs, and through it all, running clear water.

"Back then we were living on a community outside of Vernon but thinking seriously about moving down to California. That summer we did a canoe trip down the Slocan from Silverton to Passmore - I think we decided right then that we wanted to come back here to live....So you could say we came for the natural beauty of the area above all - the tight community we found here was a nice surprise."<sup>75</sup>

The valley also has an intimacy - it enfolds but does not overwhelm.

"The landscape is very important to me. The mountains here are craggy and raw but not ominous, you know, the way they are around Banff. So there's space but also enclosure, and everything feels clean and pure."<sup>76</sup>

Once the newcomers made inquiries about land, the valley became even more attractive. Those who arrived in the early years

---

<sup>73</sup> This conclusion is in agreement with Herrero (1981) who found that environmental qualities were mentioned by 67.7% of her respondents as being what had initially attracted them to the area.

<sup>74</sup> Joel Harris, letter to the editor of the *Nelson Daily News*, June, 1973.

<sup>75</sup> Pamela Stevenson, personal interview.

<sup>76</sup> Sally Hammond, personal interview.





Fig. 9. *A smallholding at Vallican.*

benefitted from great values. Prices reveal a good deal about the real estate market at that time. For example, in 1968, John and Bay Herrmann bought 13 acres with a 3-bedroom house in Hills for \$3,400. The next year, Colleen Bowman and her family from Montana bought 33 partially-cleared acres with a house and barn for \$9,500. Further down the valley the New Family purchased two undeveloped parcels of land on a timbered bench above Winlaw. They paid

\$1,600 for the first forty acres in the summer of 1968, and the following spring, another 160 acres for \$4,500. Across the valley a year later, 20 acres in Vallican with river frontage, a house and barn sold for \$12,000, and nearby, 94 acres - also on the river with house and barn - sold for \$13,000.

Many local people were eager to sell, and, as with the Herrmanns, approached the newcomers with offers of places for rent or for



sale. After a lifetime spent on the land, many were reaching retirement age, and their own children had no interest in living there or carrying on their way of life. In a way, the arrival of the new people may have seemed a validation of this way of life. Elderly rural residents ready to leave the land, and others who wished to relocate elsewhere in the valley, took advantage of the booming market.

By 1974, much of the previously developed land that had initially been available was sold. Prices began to rise<sup>77</sup> and increasingly the new people turned to undeveloped properties - usually forested, higher on the valley walls and less easily accessible. Part of this occurred as infill between existing homes and farms, but in addition, whole new areas began to feel the pressure of settlement.<sup>78</sup> The Red Mountain Road area south of Silverton was first extensively settled in this period, as was the Springer Creek watershed above Slocan City and the further reaches of the Little Slocan River Road, near Vallican (see map, Figure 10).

---

<sup>77</sup> The Lamares, who purchased a 94 acre parcel in 1971 for \$13,000, sold it two years later for \$19,000. Then, in 1976 the same piece sold again for \$40,000. The fact that people could still pay these higher prices reflected a change in the attitude and general level of affluence of later settlers. There was a kind of idealistic, naive optimism which flourished in the beginning. People would move to the valley intending to settle with little more than a down payment for their land, and then live on family allowance cheques for the next few years while they got established. By 1974 this type of attitude was no longer so prevalent. Those that came later benefitted from the accumulated experience of the previous six or seven years - passed on by word of mouth and in the pages of the back-to-the-land literature. They knew it would be hard and thus they more often came prepared.

<sup>78</sup> The experiences of those who came later and settled raw land differed markedly from their earlier counterparts. The work involved in establishing a homestead from nothing was long and arduous.

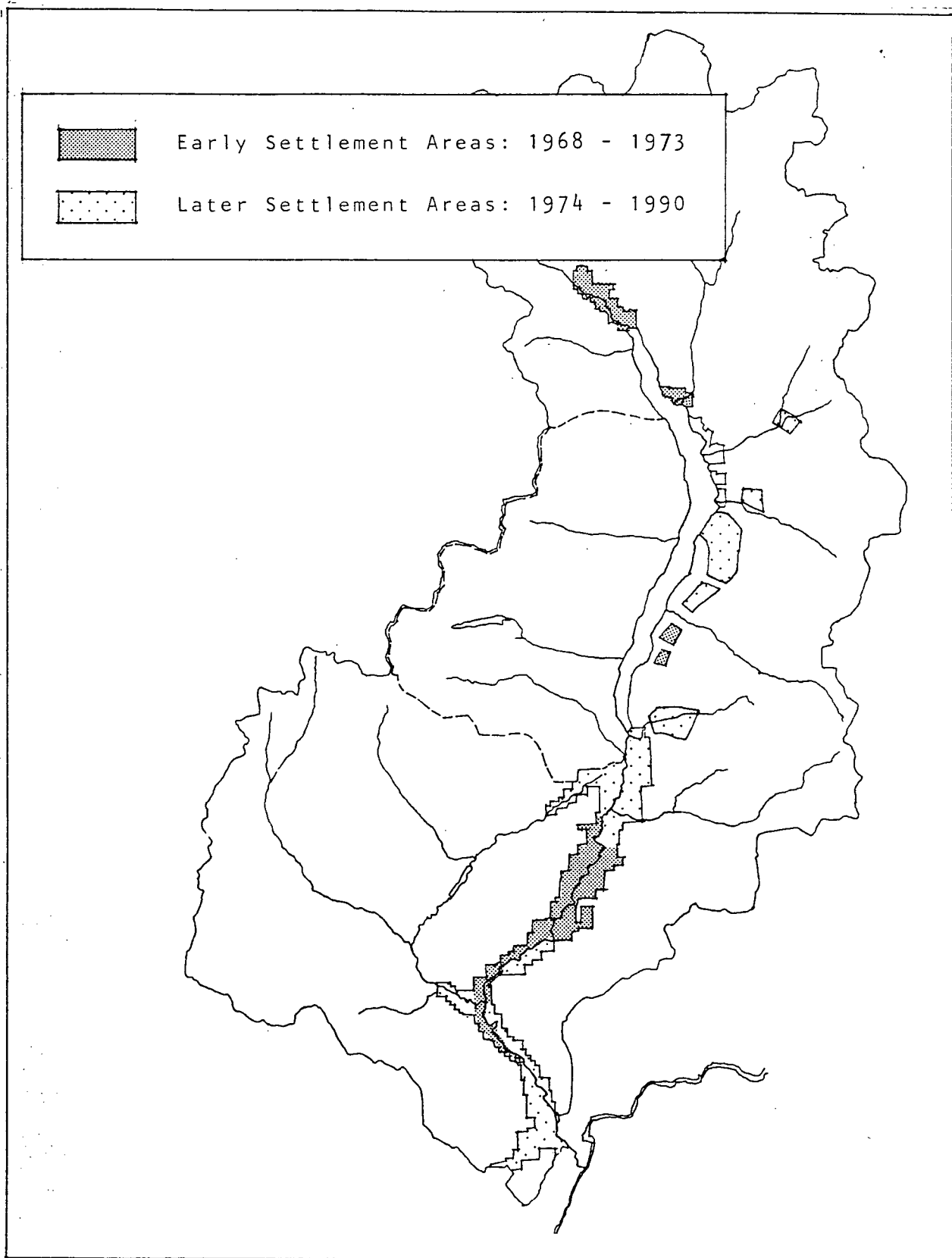


Fig. 10. *The sequence of back-to-the-land settlement in the Slocan.*

What partially underlay the low prices was the valley's relative remoteness from the rest of the province. During the 1960s while areas such as the Okanagan, Shuswap and East Kootenay began to experience a development boom, the Slocan remained a quiet backwater. From the newcomers' perspective, this was an attraction. The valley was remote from major highways, and a full day's drive from the nearest large Canadian cities - Vancouver or Calgary. This put the valley well outside of the urban field and free of cottages or speculative development - both of which would have raised land prices. Yet it was also close to Nelson. This city of 10,000, with its university and amenities, served as a centre for the counterculture in the whole West Kootenay area. Should the people seek the pleasures of a larger city, Spokane was only four or five hours away.<sup>79</sup>

The goal of providing at least some of their own food was probably the most common denominator among the back-to-the-land settlers. Although the pastoral appearance of the Slocan valley suggested rich horticultural possibilities, the experiences of the newcomers in the valley varied considerably in this regard. Many of the farms they bought came with gardens and orchards already well established - generally located on the best available land. Colleen Bowman's home in Hills, for example, "was a happening farm right from the start." With the purchase of a cow, the family was

---

<sup>79</sup> This is a curious ambiguity within the alternative community. There were some - perhaps a majority at first - who were back-to-the-land "purists" and kept their contact with cities to a minimum. With time, more and more of the newcomers seemed to want the best of both worlds - to live self-sufficiently in a beautiful natural setting, yet to have the opportunity to enjoy the cultural attractions of large urban centres.

soon almost self-sufficient in food and produced a surplus of milk for sale. For those who were clearing land and attempting to create gardens from nothing, however, it was often years before gardens were producing a significant part of the household's food. The soils in the valley were generally moderately productive, particularly in the valley bottoms, but there were also large alluvial gravel deposits and poorer conditions found on the valley walls. Despite these limitations, the overall impression of the area was one of "lushness", and it was to this that the settlers were drawn.

A final major attraction was that by 1970 a vital and growing alternative community was already established in the valley. Homesteaders who committed themselves to the place by buying land, communes which flourished there from 1968 to 1973 or '74, and a far greater number of visitors and itinerant drifters made up the community. Some were drawn to the area because of the climate of experimentation - with lifestyles, relationships, new forms of community and economics, and so on - which flourished in the early 1970s as part of this growing community. Whatever it was that most strongly appealed to individuals, there was a common response: "We all, I feel, love this valley and intend to stay here for the rest of our days. Our search for a place to settle has ended."<sup>80</sup>

Thus, between the late 1960s and the present, a back-to-the-land presence joined the earlier community groups in the Slocan. They infilled the gaps in the rural fabric of small, dispersed farms and

---

<sup>80</sup> Joel Harris, *op cit.*

houses, then moved onto undeveloped land, clearing it and making it productive, as settlers had in the generations before them. They came to the valley for a diverse array of reasons and with a wide range of intentions, both repelled by the world they had left and drawn towards a lifestyle and a particular kind of landscape. Some came for idealistic reasons - concerned to find a better life for themselves, it is true, but also to explore new options for the rest of humanity to follow - while others were more immediately concerned with their own situation, with creating utopias of a personal nature. The feeling they all shared however, was that the Slocan was a special place, worth the hardships to live there, and worthy of protection.

Like the previous settlers, the most recent arrivals came to the valley in search of their dreams. However, because new and old came from vastly different personal experiences and backgrounds, and because the new people had come of age in a different world and an era of intense questioning, the dreams differed. There were many aspects of the back-to-the-land ideology which were sympathetic to the beliefs and values of the existing community: the desire to grow a garden and be more self-reliant, a distrust of government and big business, a belief in co-operation.<sup>81</sup> Yet, with

---

<sup>81</sup> There were more points of similarity between the new people and the Doukhobors than between the newcomers and the Anglo community. Many of the fundamentals of the Doukhobor way of life such as pacifism, vegetarianism, and communalism were central to the alternative lifestyle advocated by the counterculture. As Marcia Braundy (September, 1990) observes, the newcomers found that the Doukhobors were "actually living the value system we shared, and relating to the land in the way we wanted to." The Anglo community was far more integrated into the value-structure of the mainstream culture.

the non-Doukhobor residents, these similarities were overwhelmed by some essential differences, at least in the beginning. Above all, the newcomers' belief that they were on a different path from the rest of society made them clearly a distinct group within the broader community. As Joel Harris admits:

"I don't believe that most of us have asked to be separate from the social structure of the valley, we just are. As components of a counter-culture we differ from the dominant culture. We ask to be accepted as individuals who differ. Few people expect or want special treatment; the vast majority only ask for equal consideration."<sup>82</sup>

Over the next two decades, the interaction of these different dreams and the resultant community dynamics are a significant aspect of the story of the new people in the Slocan. The story is also about the way the back-to-the-land settlers' dreams collided with the realities - both constraints and opportunities - of the place they chose to call home. These will be discussed in the following chapters.

---

<sup>82</sup> Joel Harris, *op cit.*

### Chapter Three

#### Making It (and not Making It) on the Land

*"People came here with an idea and became committed to a place. So the idea naturally took other forms."*<sup>83</sup>

Among the back-to-the-land settlers in the Slocan, four general objectives are expressed: living a more self-sufficient lifestyle, being involved in an intimate community, living in harmony with the natural environment, and practicing "voluntary simplicity". Many of their lives in the early 1970's were reflective of these priorities. However, the economic conditions that had proven so difficult for the pre-existing people also challenged the newcomers. In order to live in the valley they had to develop some distinctive survival strategies. Many found that the initial dream of self-sufficiency soon gave way to more conventional responses.

The community began as a loose, organic, dynamic association of like-minded peers and then solidified around common interests. Between 1970 and 1990, relations between the new and old communities fluctuated, from open acceptance to overt hostility. With time, the boundaries between the "alternative" and the "straight" communities have become less visible, although the new people still largely associate - culturally, socially and economically - with their own. Increasingly the alternative agenda has been expressed less in a distinctive lifestyle and more in the form and content of the political debate that engages the valley. This will be the subject of chapter four. The current chapter will focus primarily

---

<sup>83</sup> Marcia Braundy, personal interview, June 6, 1989.

on life within the alternative community.

Since 1968, the alternative community in the valley has evolved through three more or less distinct phases: a period of initial settlement where the new arrivals - both individual homesteaders and communes alike - had to secure the basic necessities of subsistence (food, shelter, energy, and income); a period of community-building where the newcomers solidified their presence in the area by putting down substantial roots; and a period of outreach in which they have increasingly become involved in the affairs of the broader community. These phases are the point of departure for a broad examination of the back-to-the-land settlers' experiences as they have adapted to life in their new milieu and have shaped the landscape around them.

#### **Subsistence (1967-1970)**

Perhaps most representative of the idealistic and experimental early phase of settlement were the communes that began to spring up. Over the next few years at least eight such experiments in communal living appeared and disappeared (see map, Figure 9). Each one was unique. Some, like the New Family, were conceived and initiated elsewhere and then transplanted into the Slocan. These generally had a clear sense of what they were attempting to do, rules of conduct and admission, even legal incorporation as societies, and tended to be the most stable and long-lived. Others were conceived more spontaneously and were often ephemeral in the



extreme. As David Orcutt<sup>84</sup> recounts: "A group of people would come and spend a couple of summers together on someone's land. This collection would acquire a name and voila, a commune would be born.

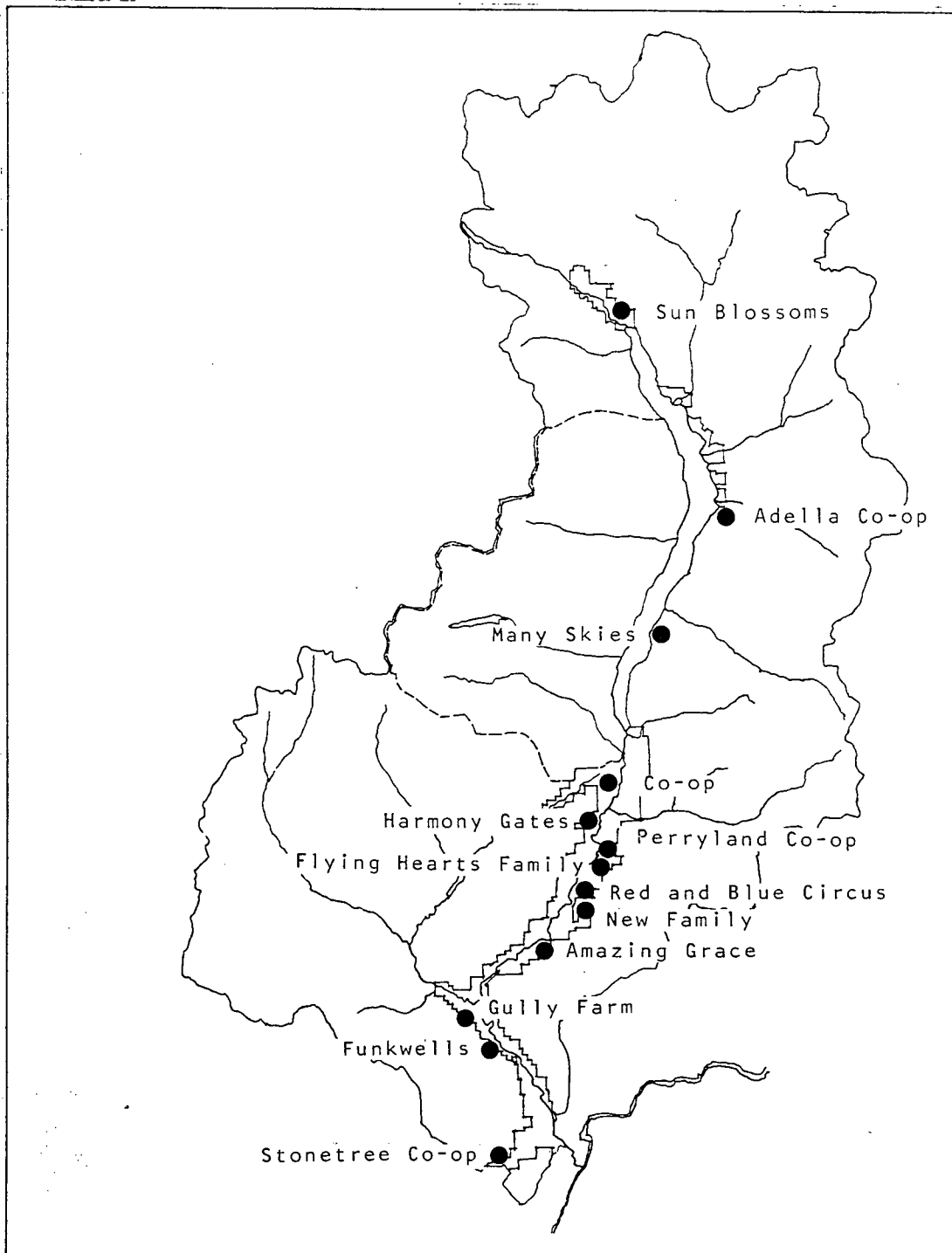


Fig. 11. Communes and co-ops in the Slocan Valley, 1968-1990.

<sup>84</sup> David Orcutt, personal interview, January 25, 1990.

Harmony Gates and Amazing Grace were communes of this kind.<sup>85</sup>

In general, the communes sought to recreate the experience of intimate community as found in an extended family situation - with property held in common, shared meals and duties, and a pooling of personal financial resources - although each one was different in this regard. Alongside the communes, land co-ops were also being formed.<sup>86</sup> These differed from the communes in that co-op members generally maintained separate households, although they often shared gardens, shop and community buildings, and regular rituals on the common land. Without the pressures of day-to-day cohabitation, these were usually less problematic endeavors and have tended to be by far the more successful and long-lived.<sup>87</sup> The majority of settlers, though, were homesteaders - individuals or small families who were attempting to be self-sufficient on their own piece of

---

<sup>85</sup> The "Red and the Blue Circus" was another group that was initially floating and informal but then coalesced into a more solid communal structure. It started in rented cabins beside the highway on Perry's Hill and then moved south into Appledale. The name came from the fact that their buildings had red and blue roofing, and members liked to take red and blue pills. They were convinced, as were many others at that time, of the imminence of a societal breakdown and had vast amounts of stored food. Like other millenarian sects they had an evangelizing thrust and purportedly a list of people they wanted to convert to their path.

<sup>86</sup> David Orcutt arrived in the Slocan from Fauquier in the Arrow Lakes valley in 1969, after his property there - also operated as a co-op - had been flooded out by BC Hydro's High Arrow Dam. For 6000 dollars he bought 170 acres of gently-sloping treed hillside at Perry's Hill and opened it up to others to build on. This "open land" situation was a common feature of the back-to-the-land landscape.

<sup>87</sup> Stonetree, Adella, Perryland and a number of other un-named co-ops were started in the late 1960's and early 1970's and are still in existence in 1990.

land.<sup>88</sup>

Although land was the key component in the back-to-the-land ideology, many people did not know what they were seeking. So much emphasis was placed on getting out of the city that many had no idea of what they were looking for beyond a piece of earth; they assumed they would know the right piece intuitively when they found it. Sometimes mistakes were made. People bought land without water, without sunlight for three or four months of the year, without access except by foot or by snowshoes in the winter. Sometimes remoteness was deliberately sought and they were willing to pay the price to maintain it; others people based their choice on a romantic vision that proved to be unworkable in practice. The parcels bought varied considerably in size and quality. Ten to twenty acres was about average, although parcels as small as one acre or as large as 200 acres were not unheard of. Many subscribed to a "land ethic":

"...this was an agreement to be stewardly, to acknowledge that the land was not ours and that we were merely caretakers. We also believed that you shouldn't profit from the land - in the speculative sense. The land was to exist as a sanctuary where people could come and live but not to feel they had some proprietary right to it."

---

<sup>88</sup> And there were hundreds of visitors. For the first four or five years of settlement far more of those who came to the valley were transients than landowners or homesteaders. Nancy Harris recalls that "There were really three distinct groups among the counterculture at that time. There were the "summer hippies" who were there to have a good time, smoke dope and have good experiences. They partied all summer and then generally went back to their jobs in the city in the fall. They often had friends here but no real commitment to the place or to what people were trying to do here. Then there were lots of hardworking hippie families, trying to make it go and working just as hard as us. And then the other communes....We were often visiting, seeing how each of us were doing things."

The land would provide them with food, firewood, shelter and a safe haven should society collapse as they predicted. In return, they would respect it and leave it undiminished for posterity.

Once land had been purchased or rented, the experiences of individual and collective settlers alike were in large measure determined by the kind of personal and financial resources people brought with them to the area. Money came from different sources: inheritances, savings, loans from relatives. Often there was little more than the payment for the land and a few months' expenses - there was nothing left for shelter, food or the other necessities of life. Stories of whole families living for years on fifty or one hundred dollars per month were not uncommon. There was, early on, a clear distinction developing between the various dimensions of the household economy. There was work done on one's land - the garden, building, clearing, putting up food - barter and mutual assistance between friends and neighbours - and work for cash. In the lifestyle that evolved, the non-market subsistence and informal exchange activities generally predominated.

Since a conscious effort was being made to reject the superfluous material comforts of conventional society, taste in architecture often leaned toward "voluntary primitivism". Those who had purchased land with buildings could usually move in immediately, although some found it necessary to customize their dwellings - to make them fit their vision of the kind of life they wanted to live. Marcia Braundy recounts that the first of the newcomers to occupy the house in Vallican where she resides customized it in this way:

"As soon as they moved in they began to systematically demolish the inside of the house. The kitchen cabinets were removed and

replaced with shelves and counters of rough planks. They preferred to use the old outhouse in the back so the fixtures in the bathroom were torn out. They pulled the switch plates and plugs from the walls and stuffed the bare wires back inside, into the sawdust insulation. Then over all the ceilings and walls they nailed more of the rough cedar slabs discarded from the old sawmill down the road...The people across the road, who had spent years acquiring these very same conveniences, were of course scandalized...."<sup>89</sup>

There was some experimentation with different kinds of shelter and many spent their first months, or even years, in the area living in tipis or tents. The New Family, for example, built rough A-frames from poles of lodgepole pine covered with handsplit cedar



shakes. There was no insulation and the floors were packed earth. The Slocan's severe winters usually soon persuaded the newcomers to erect something more substantial, however. The generic cabin was small, roughly and hastily built (at first), often with salvaged materials, logs or poles. It was heated by a woodstove, and often consisted of a single liv-

Fig. 12. *Three-bedroom dwelling at the New Family commune, constructed 1968.*

---

<sup>89</sup> Marcia Braundy, personal interview, December 16, 1989.





Fig. 13. *Building with logs, Vallican.*

with a loft overhead for sleeping. Some had at least cold running water but many did not. Out-houses were often preferred to indoor plumbing. Electricity was frequently absent because people did not want to be plugged into, and dependent on, the local utility. It went against their goals of voluntary primitivism, or they were just too far from the nearest service. Wood cook-stoves, kerosene lamps and candles provided heat and light. Not

surprisingly, house fires were a common experience, and community benefits for the unfortunate victims were regular social events.

Virtually every household or commune had a garden. The idea of producing one's own food - cheap, healthful, independent of the stores, uncontaminated by pesticides or chemical fertilizers, and in tune with the earth and the seasons - was perhaps the central aspect of the back-to-the-land lifestyle. Along with the provision



Fig. 14. The caretaker's house at the Vallican Whole.

of shelter, it was the primary focus of life on the homestead. Ambitious gardeners who planted early and extensively were often able to satisfy a significant proportion of their food requirements from mid-summer to well into the winter. Surpluses were traded, sometimes with their Doukhobour and Anglo neighbours. For those starting out on raw land though, it was often years before gardens were producing a substantial amount. For many, the garden became an art form. Home grown produce was augmented with staples generally bought in bulk through the local farmers co-op or, in later years, through their own independent food co-operative. Some kept animals - chickens were most common, although goats and cattle were also seen. By growing or raising their own food, buying in bulk, shopping at the local thrift store for clothes, and generally



avoiding most luxuries, the newcomers were able to live on very little cash income.

However, few were content to continue at this level of constant struggle for more than a couple of years; at some point they became disenchanted with enforced voluntary primitivism and were ready for more money - and there were always some larger expenses which were unavoidable. A vehicle was a necessity for many, although some made do by hitchhiking or walking. Another major expense was building materials, since the first arrivals had salvaged most of what remained in the derelict ruins of the mining era. These free resources became increasingly rare with time and people often made do with "temporary" shelter for years.<sup>90</sup>

There were few local opportunities open to the newcomers to earn a cash income. Many had come to the valley without the slightest notion of what they would do for a living. One option was to work in the local forest or mining industry, although this was certainly not the work of choice for most.

"When the idealistic notion of establishing a self-sufficient farm and living from savings gave way to the reality of no more money in the bank and needing a considerable amount of income each year, the "newcomers" tried to take jobs in the community. But most of us had no training in cat work, logging or mill work. Our training was for other professional fields. It was dreary work for low pay."<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Like the Herrmanns in Hills. When their house burned down in early 1970, they constructed a dwelling compound with various separate living spaces, each open to the elements in the summer and closed in roughly with plastic in the winter. They moved into their partially completed house in 1988.

<sup>91</sup> Joel Harris to the editor of the *Nelson Daily News*, June, 1973.



A small number did find employment at the Triangle Pacific sawmill in Slocan. This was generally on a casual basis in unskilled labouring capacities. Some, such as John Norris and John Herrmann, found work in the boy's reform school that had opened in 1965 in New Denver, as substitute teachers and social workers. Their education and professional skills made them qualified for openings of this sort when they became available. Well-paying stable jobs such as these were rare, however, and in addition contradicted many people's sense of what they had come here for in the first place. There were small businesses started that reflected the interests of the alternative community: a woodstove manufacturer "Valley Comfort"; a healthfood store in New Denver; the "Organic Mechanic" (who specialized in Volkswagens) in Crescent Valley; and the New Family's "Paradise Valley Nursery Society" on their land above Winlaw. Some of these were short-lived, but others have survived to the present. Outside of these formal enterprises, the majority of the new community lived a hand-to-mouth existence of odd jobs, small carpentry contracts, temporary labouring (haying was common), firefighting, and so on, which alternated with periods at home engaged in building, household maintenance, recreation and community life. This pattern persists to the present day as individuals seek out cyclic or periodic episodes of employment either locally, or outside of the area.<sup>92</sup> Because personal overhead tends to be low, relatively substantial amounts of money can be saved in a short time. Welfare was there as a recourse when other

---

<sup>92</sup> Treeplanting, grant-sponsored construction work, or contracts (teaching, carpentry, consulting, etc) of short duration are common examples of this type of employment.

avenues failed, and some - those who were not bothered by the ideological implications - took advantage of the service. A minority developed a lifestyle in which social assistance supplemented other subsistence activities on their land. This provided them with an adequate standard of living without ever having to seek wage employment.

A welcome part of the rhythm of life on the land were regular trips to town. Nancy Harris recalls that in the New Family, "When we first arrived people didn't go out very much - it was just too expensive. I think we made a town trip once a week but aside from the occasional party down in the valley that was about it."<sup>93</sup> The city of Nelson was located twenty kilometers from the southern end of the Slocan Valley, and it was the most common destination. People living in the northern end of the valley often tended to patronize Naskusp or Kaslo. People came in to purchase food and building supplies, use the laundromat and showers (which they frequently lacked at home) and socialize with other recent immigrants. These trips were a welcome break from the work and isolation of their daily lives and allowed them to connect with other back-to-the-land migrants from the Slocan or elsewhere in the region.<sup>94</sup> A longing for community was deeply felt, and the social dimension of their lives was a high priority. By 1970 - within a year of the first major influx into the area - they had already

---

<sup>93</sup> Nancy Harris, personal interview, November 22, 1986.

<sup>94</sup> Other areas throughout the West Kootenays were also being resettled at the same time as the Slocan. There were pockets in Pass Creek, Ymir, Queen's Bay, Kaslo, Argenta, Kootenay Bay and Gray Creek, each within a few hours of Nelson which served as their service and social centre.

developed patterns of social and ritual activity, and certain common meeting places.

"Ritual was philosophically very important in the view of the early group. Our solstice celebration, for example. It came out of a desire to establish something more meaningful than Christmas - that conveyed something about the seasons, connected us back to earlier rites. We celebrated both winter and summer."<sup>95</sup>

There were frequent parties and regular valley-wide gatherings<sup>96</sup> particularly during the summer months when the alternative population swelled with transients and visitors. Those who were not engaged in work on the land gravitated to places throughout the valley that served as community centres and meeting places. The public house at the Newmarket Hotel in New Denver was the social centre for those north of the Cape Horn Bluffs; dances were held in the Bosun Hall or Silverton Memorial Hall. Those down the valley used the Riverside Hall in Slocan Park - an aging log structure that in the 1930's was a dance hall<sup>97</sup>, the old red school-

---

<sup>95</sup> Carol Gaskin, personal interview, February 22, 1987.

<sup>96</sup> In December of 1970, people were invited to a Solstice Celebration with the following notice in the Tribal Drum, a local alternative newspaper: "A festival of the sun will be held Dec. 22 at the Riverside Hall beginning with a feast at 3:00 pm. Then a pageant will be presented depicting the death and rebirth of the sun in dance and music and song. A music festival and dance - bring your instrument - will follow. Bring food for the feast, or wine, and one candle for each person in your group. Bring also eating utensils and sleeping bags. Don't forget the candles. Most of all bring yourself, tuned in joyous and loving." Reproduced in Smith, 1977, p. 346.]

<sup>97</sup> The hall fulfilled many functions for the alternative community at that time. It was a meeting place, the scene of regular parties and feasts and a short-lived commune (the "Riverside Farm"), a regular crash pad for transients, and, for a time, a free store.

house in Vallican, the coffee shop at the Slocan Park Co-op, and the Passmore Hall, frequently the scene of dances and benefits among the new people.

Mutual assistance was an important part of social and economic life. Joel Russ remembers:

"There were work parties happening when I first came out here, which were sort of among the newcomers to the area. They were happening on a weekly or a bi-weekly basis when I first moved out here. That was one of the most exciting kinds of community involvement for me, because you could see a lot happen in a single day's work on somebody's place - because there were eight or ten households there working away at it."<sup>98</sup>

At a meeting at the Riverside Hall in November, 1970 the newcomers first started talking formally about a more structured form of community association. There was a movement to form a "tribe" - its leaders had created a "tribal council" which presided over the meeting.

"Most everyone agreed that one way to bring us together was to set up a work co-op where anyone having a need for manpower on a given day or days could make this known and we would all try to help...Some time was spent discussing whether this would be put on an hour for hour, job for job, I worked for you now you gotta work for me, basis....There seemed to be two camps. Some wanted to know where they stood if they worked for someone, that is, they wanted the assurance that when the need arose there would be a reciprocation....Others felt that the idea of paying back was not necessary; that if a brother had a need for help, they would be willing to help, no questions asked....The council decided that the work co-op was on - but if there were to be terms, the individuals concerned would have to work them out."<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Joel Russ to Linda Herrero, 1979.

<sup>99</sup> An excerpt from *The Tribal Drum*, December 17, 1970, reproduced in Smith (1977, p. 344).

In the midst of all this activity, the local people were hospitable. Perhaps they were used to having new people in their midst - first the Doukhobors and then the Japanese - and living alongside people with slightly different beliefs and practices. In particular, most who came before 1970 recall the openness and generosity of the Doukhobors. These long-term residents and the newcomers recognized in each other's words and actions echoes of their own beliefs.<sup>100</sup> They were generous with their skills and knowledge and were credited with "saving the lives" of some who came to the area ill-equipped to deal with its economic and climactic rigours. They helped out with advice on gardening and raising animals, employed the newcomers in their fields and woodlots, bartered with them - labour for building supplies, an old truck, hay for the winter - and brought them food in times of scarcity.<sup>101</sup>

There are no conclusive records of how many new people moved into the valley between 1967 and 1970 on the crest of the new wave of settlement.<sup>102</sup> The records of local realtors (quoted in Smith,

---

<sup>100</sup> An idea heard frequently at that time was: "The Doukhobours had a prophesy that if community wasn't done right by them, someone else would come along and do it - so they were very interested in what the New Family was doing...The Son's of Freedom also understood the idea of non-monogamy, and the problems of jealousy that it entails, so they were sympathetic to what we were going through."

<sup>101</sup> Similar stories of openness and generosity are told of some of the area's Japanese residents - those who came back to live here after the closure of the internment camps in the 1940's - and a number of well-known local Anglo families.

<sup>102</sup> Census sub-division boundaries in the Slocan changed in 1961, 1967, 1971, and 1976.

1977) indicate that 29 properties sold to newcomers in 1970. Perhaps as many sold in the two years previously. Not everyone bought land. Some rented, some squatted on crown land or vacant private land, some even stayed for extended periods living in the provincial campsite in Rosebery, a common entrepot for new arrivals. The winter of 1970-71 saw as many as 200 newcomers more or less permanently residing in the valley, not enough yet to have had a distinctive lasting influence on the landscape, but enough to have had a strong impact on the social dynamics of the local community. The loosely-knit collection of peers which comprised the new community was coming together into a more cohesive community body and some measure of stability was coming to certain household economies, even if life was still very difficult.

Rhythms of life, both daily and seasonal, were beginning to emerge. Sometimes these were rather unorthodox, as at the New Family where:

"...you woke up with whoever you slept with that night and went to breakfast with that person. Then you had to deal with whatever dynamics that brought up in the group. It was usually pretty apparent from the energy around the table where work was needed, where the trouble was, who had to be talked to. It was like it added a whole other layer of complexity to life....If the problems hadn't been smoothed out during the day, there was still the 15 minutes before dinner to do it. Then, time to decide who to sleep with the next night...Eventually patterns would emerge, you know, two nights with A, one with B, that kind of thing. When the patterns were disrupted, often pure chaos would ensue!"<sup>103</sup>

The annual cycle started in the summer - the time when most people had first come to the area. This was an active time of work -

---

<sup>103</sup> Nancy Harris, personal interview, January 17, 1987.

building, gardening, cutting firewood - and socializing. There were always visitors from outside the valley.

"Summer, especially in the first two years was the busiest. Often there would be twenty-five or thirty people for dinner...Visitors were generally asked to contribute something. If you came at certain times you were expected to work, if you came for dinner you should bring something, and usually people brought food with them. Then there were other regular visitors who made a point of coming in the winter when things were a lot quieter.. .. There were perhaps 300 people through the New Family during the first year we were there."<sup>104</sup>

Parties and swimming at the beaches along the river or Slocan Lake were popular. As fall approached, the transients and "summer settlers" - those who had purchased land and stayed more than a few weeks but had not yet given up their urban vocations - went back to the cities or moved to warmer climates, leaving the residents to prepare for winter. This was a time of focusing inward on the the household and the work of preparing for winter. Winter was long, wet and often cold, particularly for those north of Slocan Lake or higher up on the valley walls. Temperatures of minus 20 Celsius were not uncommon, nor were snowfalls of one metre. It could be a time of hardship or a time of rest, depending on how well-prepared one was. The first snow came in November and lasted into April in most locations, and frozen water lines and firewood shortages were a common occurrence. Spring was a welcome relief when it came, although the "breakup" often meant roads were impassable for a month or more during April and May.

For those who had come to the area genuinely seeking a simpler life with a close community of kindred souls and connected to the

---

<sup>104</sup> Nancy Harris, *op cit.*

cycles of the earth, it was a satisfying life. But, as the preceeding description has suggested, it was not without its negative aspects. Few anticipated how much work was involved in the most basic activities of survival, much less being totally self-sufficient. In the New Family for example, all adults worked an eight-hour day, six days per week, year-round. Nor could they have anticipated that rural life could mean loneliness and a lack of stimulation, particularly if they had never spent time alone or in the country, especially in the winter. These three factors alone drove many back to the cities, often after only a short time - a few months or one winter - on the land. The shortage of cash was a continual hardship for many; despite their ideals of voluntary simplicity, few managed to wholly embrace the poverty that was often a regular feature of their lives. Because of the kinds of work involved in maintaining a homestead, women came to see that they were being thrust back into the traditional roles that they had only recently been liberated from: the house, the food, the children, while their mates did the building and the bread-winning. As Carol Gaskin remembers: "In the beginning, the women did *everything*....the traditional female roles and all the new roles of primitive survival." All of the above weaknesses and hardships figured in the demise of the communes as well. By 1973 or 1974 most of these had disappeared. Communal living arrangements put great stress on people raised in the individualistic and competitive culture of their youth, for they demanded unselfish-



ness, co-operation and consideration, in order to work.<sup>105</sup>

Because the desire to go back to the land remained strong within the general society, even while these negative aspects of the lifestyle persisted, people continued to come and go from the Slocan over much of the next decade. For those who had made the commitment to the place, by 1971 it was becoming clear that some urgent needs had to be addressed. More access to money and a greater diversity of employment options, particularly for women, were needed. Economic co-operation and stronger support networks were also needed. There was a desire for a more diverse and vital local cultural life to compensate for the dearth of cultural stimuli in the area, and the next phase of establishment in the valley saw the new community begin to address some of these needs.

### **Community (1971-1975)**

Having bought land, put down roots and decided they were here to stay, the new people began the work of establishing a viable community. Ultimately, the needs for community institutions, economic options, and a concrete presence in the valley were fulfilled by the building of the "Vallican Whole" community centre. The settlers' experiences over the years from 1971 to 1976 can best be told by using this story as a point of departure.

Ideally, the new people wanted options which would put their

---

<sup>105</sup> This was the great paradox of the communes: it took "individualists to reject society in the first place, so what you end up with is a community of individualists - what a contradiction!" Denton Coates, one of the founders of the Gully Farm, quoted in Appleton, 1978, p. 297.

skills and training to the best use and would also be reflective of their interest in alternatives to conventional forms of economics and employment. At the same time there was an acknowledged need for the dissemination of the skills and knowledge needed for rural survival.<sup>106</sup> This was the impetus behind the conception, in 1971, of a new community facility, the Rural Alternatives Research and Training Centre.<sup>107</sup> In the words of one of its founders:

"It is the intention of the Centre, besides sponsoring cultural activities, to conduct research into means of creating a more diversified local economy in which there would be a number of small enterprises of a nature that would be socially desirable, and at the same time would not harm the natural environment."<sup>108</sup>

What was envisioned was a structure that would house all of the needs of this enterprise, and would also contain facilities such as a darkroom and library that would be of use to the whole community. There was also a strong desire amongst the newcomers for a community centre that was truly their own; in the past they had been denied use of the halls operated by both the Doukhobors and

---

<sup>106</sup> Much of the alternative literature of that period - the *Foxfire Books* series, the *Whole Earth Catalogues*, *Mother Earth News*, and so on - was directed at filling this thirst for rural lore.

<sup>107</sup> The originators and directors of this project were a group of residents who formed the Rural Alternative Research and Training Society (RARTS). This organization has overseen the operation of the centre since construction began, and in addition has sponsored various projects and grant applications relating to alternative rural lifestyles.

<sup>108</sup> David Orcutt, one of the founding members of RARTS, in a letter to the *Nelson Daily News*, October 23, 1971.

the Anglo community.<sup>109</sup> A ten acre parcel on level ground next to the Little Slocan River in Vallican was sold to the group<sup>110</sup> and a design was prepared.

The RARTS board of directors applied in the spring of 1971 for an Opportunities-for-Youth (OFY) grant to build the structure. The application asked for funds both for labour and materials with the objective being "to teach old and new rural skills so those moving from the cities can survive in their new surroundings". This was to be accomplished by erecting "a building under the supervision of a master carpenter, building instructor, providing training and summer jobs for young people".<sup>111</sup> In June of that year they were allocated \$27,000 for the project. The terms of the grant stated that the money was to go entirely for wages, none was allocated for materials or equipment. This meant that whatever wood was needed for construction purposes had to be donated, scrounged or salvaged labouriously from used materials. They succeeded in getting some donations of wood from local residents and businesses, but most was scrounged or salvaged and often workers were dispatched to work for local residents in return for materials or money to buy them. The tons of rock, sand and gravel that went into the foundations had

---

<sup>109</sup> Those who had settled at the north end of the valley did not have this problem. The venues in which they socialized and gathered were community buildings not affiliated with a particular group.

<sup>110</sup> The site was sold for 5000 dollars, to be paid at the rate of 200 dollars per year for twenty years. The terms meant that regardless of the economic situation of the community, they would always be able to afford the payments. They paid off the outstanding balance by 1984.

<sup>111</sup> An excerpt from the original OFY application, quoted in a *Fed-Up Newsletter* article on the Vallican Whole, August, 1975.

to be hauled in borrowed trucks and loaded and unloaded by hand. The 44 by 44 foot basement was similarly hand-dug.

Providing the labour through that summer was an ever-changing work force of transients and resident newcomers. Initially enthusiasm was high, but, as participant Joel Harris remarked, "morale and dedication dwindled as many people came to work just to make a few bucks to feed themselves for a few days. People new from the cities could not stand the physical demands of strenuous hand labour in the hot sun for \$100 per week."<sup>112</sup> Some days no-one showed up to work. The net effect of this lack of steady labour and the shortage of materials created by the terms of the grant, was that when the grant moneys ran out, rather than a completed structure standing on the site, there was little more than a foundation. "After three months of back breaking labour, money delays of up to four weeks, no money for capital expenses, hostile newspaper coverage telling us we were lazy and worthless transients, and of generally low morals, the project stopped for reconsideration, revision and reorganization".<sup>113</sup> It was to remain in this condition for most of the next two years as ways were considered to finance its completion. In the span of that summer, and in spite of the difficulties, the project started to bring the community together.

The problems they were experiencing on the jobsite were not their only concerns. Among the existing population there was already a general perception that the newcomers did not share the same work

---

<sup>112</sup> Joel Harris, letter to the *Nelson Daily News*, June, 1973.

<sup>113</sup> Joel Harris, *op. cit.*

ethic or morals as the locals. The failure to finish the centre and the fact that it had been done with public money generated a wave of antipathy. Colleen McRory remembers:

"People in the valley worked very hard for very meagre returns. Then along came these new educated people who could get the dollars easily, just by filling out the paperwork. It really pissed a lot of people off."

Resentment had apparently been brewing for a while; this incident was just the trigger. That summer and fall, the local papers<sup>114</sup> were full of angry comments from local residents complaining about the waste and folly of giving \$27,000 to some hippies to dig a hole in the ground. Written by a "Slocan Valley Taxpayer and Resident", these comments were representative of the sentiment:

"These people can call down our society and way of life but they sure must be smooth talkers to get these grants. Maybe other people should grow long hair and a beard, smell to high heaven and see what happens...They lay claim to being educated, is this what higher education has come to only to create a "First Class parasite on society"". <sup>115</sup>

The uncompleted structure was derisively dubbed the "Vallican Hole" and even the local MLA, Burt Campbell, a Castlegar newspaperman, got involved. In an October 1971 letter to the local newspaper, he wrote: "[this project] is a sham and an unforgivable waste of the taxpayers money"<sup>116</sup> and complained that "hippies, draft-dodgers and deserters have invaded the Slocan Valley and have relegated the

---

<sup>114</sup> There was no newspaper published in the Slocan, but valley residents were served by the *Castlegar Herald*, the *Nelson Daily News*, and the *Arrow Lakes News*, from Nakusp.

<sup>115</sup> Anonymous letter to the *Nelson Daily News*, July 19, 1971.

<sup>116</sup> Letter to the *Nelson Daily News*, October 14, 1971.

other residents of the area to third-class citizens."<sup>117</sup> The hard feelings grew in intensity that fall, then subsided over the winter as the numbers of transients fell, only to flare up again the next year.

The result of this backlash was the coming together of the new people into a tighter community. There was a sense among the new arrivals that they were succeeding in creating a new society, an affectively united "tribe" of kindred spirits. One of the stongest expressions of this was the "Flying Hearts Family" a loosely-knit community that came together around the rock group "Brain Damage". Although based in Perry Siding north of Winlaw, their entourage was a "valley-wide extended family" drawn from communities from Slocan Park to Hills. There were frequent large parties and dances.

The extended family also contained a large number of children, who were a vital and respected part of every family and community gathering. As Ruby Truly notes:

"A lot of people stayed here once they had their kids because it was such a good environment for them....In our daily lives we came in contact with many of the community's children - a form of extended family existed. They've always been a priority here and they know it. This kind of involvement of them in the life of the community continues to this day because people see that it works."<sup>118</sup>

Outside this social circle, however, the welcome was wearing thin. Frequently it was the children of the new people who bore

---

<sup>117</sup> Quoted in an article "Hippies, Nudies and a Hole in the Ground", *Vancouver Sun*, September 13, 1971.

<sup>118</sup> Ruby Truly, personal interview, August 10, 1989. John Norris remembers: "...the kids who attended the Goat Mountain School were communal children in a sense....The kids grew up with a more sensible knowledge about what life was about, because they weren't insulated from it....The community was like an extended family - it gave a lot of security to the kids."

the brunt of local hostility. This was especially true in the local schools, where they were a distinct minority and frequent victims of abuse and harassment by the children of local families.<sup>119</sup> There was a growing dropout rate as conditions deteriorated. A few newly-arrived families home-schooled their children. The reasons varied: a dissatisfaction with the quality of instruction at local schools, ideological opposition to the goals of public education, a desire to inculcate their own values in their children, and an unwillingness to regiment their time to the extent that the school schedule required. However, there was a growing concern about the quality of the education these children were getting and the amount of effort and time it took to home-school successfully.

The solution was to create an educational alternative for the children.<sup>120</sup> Thus "The Free School" was born in the late fall of 1972.<sup>121</sup> The first year, the school ran in a log house in Passmore and in two other private homes nearby. The following year, it operated in four locations.

---

<sup>119</sup> Reported in the *Nelson Daily News*, August 7, 1973. Also mentioned in personal interviews with Corky Evans, Joel Harris and Marcia Braundy.

<sup>120</sup> This had already been done at the north end of the valley. The Goat Mountain school started out in Hills in 1972 in an old farmhouse. John Norris was the teacher, assisted at all times by three parents. The school moved to Rosebery after its first successful season, where it continued to operate until 1975.

<sup>121</sup> According to Joel Harris, one of its founders: "We started the school because of the rigidity in the public schools developed over the past 20 years, their lack of responsiveness to the rapid changes in our modern era, and intolerable social pressure on our children leading to discrimination, among other things." Letter to *The Arrow*, Sept 1973.

"Three days a week a group of younger kids meets at two different homes to learn reading, writing, arithmetic, crafts, junior science, etc. At the same time people meet at another home for French and Ecology, while others are meeting somewhere else for Canadian history, geology or jewelry making. Every Tuesday the school as a group goes to Nelson to ice-skate. Last fall judo was taught in a barn. People with something to teach and people who want to learn come together wherever possible.... So the community school takes place in the community."<sup>122</sup>

Tuition was assessed at the rate of the monthly family allowance cheque per child; curriculum and timetable were structured, insofar as courses were being offered at certain times. However, the system was based on the children choosing what they wanted to learn. The teaching staff came from the community and school policy and curriculum were determined on an ongoing basis in general meetings of parents and teachers; consensus was sought on all decisions.

In 1973 the school incorporated as The West Kootenay Educational Resources Society<sup>123</sup> to encourage donations and to secure some degree of credibility with the authorities. Without warning, in March of 1973, the Nelson School Board brought forth a motion to prosecute parents who were sending their children to the Free School.<sup>124</sup> Ultimately the School Board dropped their action when it

---

<sup>122</sup> Reprinted from *The Arrow*, March 1974.

<sup>123</sup> The name of the school changed from the "Free School" to the "Slocan Valley Community School" in February 1974, to the "Whole School" in 1976.

<sup>124</sup> The board appears to have been concerned about the response of the local Sons of Freedom who for years had agitated for the right to take their own children out of public school and educate them according to their own values. In the end, the Sons of Freedom supported the new people against the School Board, while the Orthodox community were opposed, perhaps unwilling to have the whole painful issue, which for years had split the community, re-opened.



was revealed there were nineteen teachers or tutors on staff with adequate credentials; they were in fact, better qualified to teach than the local public school teachers. As the school grew (forty children were enroled in the winter of 1973-74) the houses where it was held became increasingly overcrowded. The obvious need for a structure to house the school reinforced the determination to finish the Vallican community centre, and, by Spring of 1973, a new set of plans had been prepared.

Following this period was the worst era of strained relations between the two groups. The newcomers were often to blame, for many showed an insensitivity to the original residents of the place which further aggravated the tension. In many cases, they just did not see them. "They see that this is a beautiful natural setting and that there are some groovy long-haired people living here or something, but that seems oftentimes to be as far as they see it."<sup>125</sup> It appeared there was, as John Norris notes, "a great unbending narrowness in the hippies; they didn't understand the locals or even try to." Others felt that "a lot who came really abused the locals, didn't respect them. Many were very lost. And there was a lot of drugs around."<sup>126</sup> Even the Doukhobors were beginning to feel their generosity had been taken advantage of too often.<sup>127</sup>

The bad feelings that the influx, the grants and isolated incidents of insensitivity and disrespect produced were not

---

<sup>125</sup> Joel Russ to Linda Herrero, 1979.

<sup>126</sup> Colleen McRory, personal interview.

<sup>127</sup> Dan Zarchikoff, personal interview.

universally shared, however. Within the local community there were at least three perspectives on the question of the newcomers. There were some - a distinct minority, but individually significant - who welcomed them openly and generously. Their reasons varied; they were sympathetic to the intentions of the new people, appreciative of the new ideas and outlooks they brought to the place or perhaps were themselves alienated from the community around them. By far the majority of local residents had been initially tolerant of the newcomers, perhaps from their experiences with the Doukhobors and Japanese in the past. And there was a small minority, fearful of new ideas, frightened by change and critical of anyone who was different. They had persecuted the Doukhobors for years and now they had new victims. The frequent conflict that came to characterize relations between the newcomers and the oldtimers in actuality almost invariably involved a small number of "bullies" from within this group, while the general tone of daily relations remained, if not cordial, then at least civil. Ruby Truly observes that:

"For every hippie versus redneck story there is a story of good things happening between the communities. People have told me of pies being dropped off on their doorsteps, of small and anonymous acts of kindness...One time, the men on the CPR dropped off some clothes here as they passed through... They had come up with a way of making me feel welcome, to get over my paranoia about being a hippie here. Unfortunately, such neighbourly things don't sell papers - thus conflict is the thing that got all the attention."

Young people in the established community who wished to stay in the area were feeling an impact from the influx. Colleen McCrory's story was typical:

"I left the valley at 18 for a year in Australia. When I came back in July of 1969 the new people were just starting to come in. I had a feeling then that these people were invading the valley, I felt threatened, didn't understand what they were doing here...Then land prices started to go up and my husband and I began to get quite uptight. We wanted to buy a place for ourselves but didn't have much money."

In the north end of the valley tensions were not as high, although there were incidents there as well. The Newmarket Hotel, a fixture of the New Denver landscape since 1895 and a much frequented social centre for the new people, burned down in mysterious circumstances in 1973. When they tried to patronize the other pub in town they were turned away. This led to a sit-in demonstration and ultimately to a Human Rights Tribunal which found against the owner of the pub.

Meanwhile the newcomers had obtained more grant money to start up other institutions. In December 1972 they recieved \$50,150 to start up a community library. By the following year it had a membership of 250 and more than 6000 books, mostly donated or on loan from other institutions. Funded by occasional grants, fines, membership dues and donations, the library offered much-needed employment to women in the valley. A significant aspect of the library's services was the Cinema Guild. For a number of years this volunteer initiative showed movies every weekend through the year, usually at the Vallican Heritage Hall. Upcoming shows were advertised in *The Arrow*<sup>128</sup> and often showings were arranged for the

---

<sup>128</sup> Opportunities-for-Youth funding was behind the creation, in June, 1973 of this "Kootenay Co-operative newspaper" that published for two years out of Castlegar. In addition to its coverage of cultural events and labour and political issues, it carried a regular page of features from the Slocan - "Valley Notes" - and was a strong unifying agent for the valley community.

Rosebery Trading Post or the Bosun Hall in New Denver.

The issue of grants continued to plague community relations. The new people were caught in a dilemma. On one side was the Federal government "pushing money at us" for projects like the library and the community centre that offered much-needed employment and benefits to the wider community. On the other, were certain locals who used the issue of the grants to stir up resentment. In the spring of 1973, seeking to show the local people how everyone in the valley could benefit from the grant money, they took their latest proposals to a community meeting. One of these was for the creation of a local educational media co-operative, and the other for a community forest management study.<sup>129</sup>

"In order to confer with the general public before asking for any new grants, a delegation of people went to a local public meeting by invitation to explain and discuss what they were hoping to accomplish. These "hippies" were asked to leave before they could say anything."<sup>130</sup>

After this response, they realised a broad community consensus would have to be sought before they could proceed. Over the next six months they created a steering committee to promote and administer the project. Corky Evans, one of the organizers recounts:

"We went to talk with some respected members of the straight community with years of forestry experience. We knew they had to be involved from the start to keep community antagonism down. The grant people were just pushing the money at us but we held off until there was strong mandate from the whole valley community. We enlisted the help of experienced former loggers

---

<sup>129</sup> This was the *Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project*. It will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

<sup>130</sup> Joel Harris, letter to the *Nelson Daily News*, June, 1973.

and the Board of Directors was made up of one-half new people, one-half locals. Throughout all the fights and wierdness of the times this alliance held."<sup>131</sup>

It was clear that to use more government money to finish the Vallican centre - even though it was available - would be to risk a complete breakdown of relations. So it was decided to finish it with a combination of fundraising, donated materials, and volunteer labour. The reborn centre - now the Vallican Whole Community Centre, and changed in design to accomodate the alternative school - was restarted in June, 1973. This was short-lived; the work proceeded for one month before the building's design was rejected by the fire marshall, but the momentum and interest were now there. The next three months were spent negotiating and redesigning the building and then, over the following winter, the community managed to raise another 10,000 dollars through benefits and the sale of a special bond. The following spring, the Building Committee held a meeting to make final design decisions and organize some of the crews necessary for completion of the centre. In its revised form, the mandate for the building had grown from its first intentions. Where once it had been the source of division, the Whole was now seen by Committee members as a centre for inter-cultural contact between the two communities. Support was sought of:

"every member of the general community in the Slocan Valley and surrounding areas. Your support is needed to make this a representational community centre reflecting the rich diversity of skills, talents, backgrounds, cultures and training found within our greater community."<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> Corky Evans, personal interview, September 2, 1988.

<sup>132</sup> Unnamed member of the Committee, quoted in *The Arrow*, April 1974.



Fig. 15. *Raising the beams at the Vallican Whole, Summer, 1974.*

The builders took an unconventional approach to the work. The first summer, a full-time person was on hand to co-ordinate the project. In 1975, three or four community members would each take a day a week and act as co-ordinators and supervisors for the construction that took place during that day. The work was done entirely by volunteers - men, women and children - whose numbers fluctuated daily. When their ranks declined, as they often did during the summers of 1974 and 1975, the organizers decided not to work on the building. Their concern was to sustain the feeling that the place had been built by every member of the community, rather than a committed core group.

One development which greatly facilitated this building project was the emergence of treeplanting as a viable income base for the

alternative community's economy. One of the first to participate in this new industry was Bob Ploss.

"Some treeplanting was done prior to 1973 but only by forestry crews on an hourly rate. The work up until that time had a really negative stigma attached - like it was done by convicts. Suddenly, the Ministry of Forests had volumes of trees and began to let out contracts to private contractors. I planted with John Grandy the first year - out of Edgewood - and a bunch of us decided, hey, we could do this better ourselves, so we formed Evergreen Co-op."

In many respects it was work perfectly suited to the back-to-the-land settlers' lifestyle and temperament: it was physical, it paid well, it was ideologically correct, and it left them time during the summer and winter to work on their own properties. Planting was perhaps the pivotal development in the long-term viability of the new community and the back-to-the-land lifestyle in the Slocan. Without it, people would have likely drifted more and more into the sphere of the mainstream economy and culture or have been forced to move elsewhere. In many ways, the planting life also recreated and preserved the ambiance, idealism and tribalism of the early days of the counterculture. Camps were essentially little communities, often cut off from the outside world for extended periods of time. Camp life forced people into a more primal form of co-existence where the diversions and distractions of society were non-existent. Treeplanting was also an intense emotional experience. The extreme demands placed on the workers by the work itself, mountain weather, and camp life, brought up many personal issues. Treeplanting crews became "encounter groups" using techniques like Gestalt therapy to deal with issues as they arose. Often crews would be formed of a group of friends and neighbours

from a particular area; the group therapy would continue after the season ended in July.<sup>133</sup>

This type of personal growth work has been common within the new community throughout the valley since the 1960's. The early years in particular were a time of experimentation - with relationships, with sexual freedom, with lifestyle - and this invariably brought up conflict with peoples' individual conditioning.

"The gestalt [therapy] and primal scream groups that were happening then - these were formed to deal with the feelings of pain that emerged out of the separation we were making with our parents' world, and with all the things that for so long had stood for security and wholeness and now were all of a sudden real obstacles to living and feeling free and whole."<sup>134</sup>

There was a strong feeling that they were trying to re-invent the whole concept of relationship, but:

"All we had for role models was each other...so we made it up as we went along. There weren't a lot of people who could show us how to raise a family and end up being tight as a family. We were really concerned when the relationships of our friends failed because these were our role models - it always cast our own relationships into doubt."<sup>135</sup>

Also increasingly being questioned was the state of the relationship between the sexes. There was a growing feeling that the whole viability of the back-to-the-land lifestyle depended on the women

---

<sup>133</sup> "At one point a group of us started a treeplanting co-op - "Fiddlehead Co-op". We worked with different combinations of members for two or three years, mostly from the neighbourhood around here. Living in very intimate community like that really magnified the dynamics of the community. Almost all of us were therapy-based friends to begin with so there was always lots of stuff out in the open." Interview with Vicki Allen, August, 1988.

<sup>134</sup> Ruby Truly, personal interview, December 20, 1989.

<sup>135</sup> Ruby Truly, personal interview, August 10, 1989



assuming traditional roles.

"Some very political women came to live in the Slocan and there was growing discussion about division of labour - "the dishes" as we called it...The issues were power - number one - and division of labour. The feminist movement in Canada saw women in the Prairies going out and working in the fields with the men - taking back power in a more real sense than in urban situations. We wanted some of that."<sup>136</sup>

The consciousness-raising started at a co-op meeting in the fall of 1972, with a call for a discussion group to address these issues.<sup>137</sup> The experience of building the Whole was for many women a chance to break out of these stereotypes into a new realm of personal and economic possibilities. Women were welcome participants in this work; womens' work days were held weekly on the jobsite, and for some the experience launched careers in the building trades.

During the summers of 1974 and 1975 visitors swelled the ranks of volunteer workers that laboured steadily throughout the year to close in the Vallican Whole by winter of 1975. The funding of the centre was aided by ongoing benefit performances and auctions held on the site. A benefit in September 1975, for example, had 300 in attendance. The electricity was not connected until the following year and the building was being worked on almost continuously during this time. The Alternative School opened in the Whole in the fall of 1976 with 26 students, aged five to twelve, registered.

---

<sup>136</sup> Nancy Harris, personal interview, January 10, 1987.

<sup>137</sup> Fifteen women stayed at the end of the meeting and then thirty-five showed up to the first formal meeting held a few weeks later. This was self-selected down to fifteen or so who would meet more or less regularly over the next few years.



Fig. 16. *The Vallican Whole* nears completion, Fall, 1975.

The closing in and servicing of the Whole<sup>138</sup> marked the end of the second era of back-to-the-land settlement in the valley. From a loose-knit collection of peers the new people were now an established community in their own right. The institutions they had created gave them a sense of permanence and legitimacy and enhanced the quality of their lives. There were by this time possibly 1000 new residents living there. The influx had fully infilled the existing holes in the rural fabric and had pushed the boundaries of settlement into some new areas - such as Red Mountain Road and the further reaches of Passmore and Vallican. By the end of 1975 a new dimension had been added to the physical and social landscape

---

<sup>138</sup> This was not the end of the building project, however. The Whole has been worked on continuously since.

of the region. The battles over the grants had abated and tensions had eased with the falling off of the numbers of transients through the area and the resumption of work on the Whole. Increasingly, the newcomers were more sensitive to the presence of the existing people and more politically sophisticated in their dealings with the broader community. Although there were still major differences between them and the local people, the "us and them" distinction that had been so characteristic of earlier relations was fading.

### **Outreach (1976-1990)**

With the successful completion of the Vallican Whole - without grants - a relative calm settled over the valley. People continued to move into the valley, but after 1976 there were fewer every year<sup>139</sup>, and far fewer transients passed through in the summer months. Land prices continued to rise and people began to move onto and develop raw land.<sup>140</sup> By the late 1970s people had been established long enough in the area that some clear trends were emerging in regard to household economies and personal survival strategies. These continue to define the economic realities of the place today. As well, the community dimension of life stabilized and involvement in the affairs of the surrounding community was more common. The following section depicts the essential features

---

<sup>139</sup> Rural population in the valley rose by 51% between 1971 and 1976, but in the next five years increased by only 9%.

<sup>140</sup> The sale of Crown land for settlement purposes was common in the late 1970's and was the only way many people could afford land. A large area on Red Mountain Road, south of Silverton was settled in this way.

and trends of the lives of the new people in the years since 1976. It begins at the level of the household and then works outward to discuss the evolution of their community and relationships with their non-alternative neighbours.

For the majority within the new community, the household economy changed during the 1970s - from an initial focus on self-sufficiency and minimal cash income, to a strategy which combined conventional employment with a large component from the informal sector. Few people managed to obtain adequate sustenance independent of the existing economic systems and structures.

"Many households do, however, supplement their income with food raised on the homestead and keep other expenses minimized by applying building skills, etc....Barter of goods and services forms a part of the economic life of many people in the valley. But since we all have need for hardware, tools, staple foods not grown in the area, vehicles and parts, medicine, dentistry and so on, money is indispensable."<sup>141</sup>

Economic patterns emerged, some of which were characteristic of the area, and others which were unique to the new people. By the late 1970s, many people had managed to find more or less secure economic niches in the valley economy or else had learned to exploit local opportunities as they arose. Others had come to the area with secure outside economic connections or else had established these later. These allowed the individual craftsperson, consultant or practicing professional to maintain a rural lifestyle in the valley while receiving income from outside the area. For a significant number, however, none of these strategies proved to

---

<sup>141</sup> Joel Russ, 1988, p. 2.

yield an adequate level of income. These individuals either sought temporary employment outside of the area, or else poverty was an ongoing reality, only lessened by the relative low cost of living in the Valley and the fact that "it's the same for most around here so it doesn't feel as poor - it's easier to survive or to feel better about the level of subsistence."<sup>142</sup> What emerged over the years were a number of architypical survival strategies which the majority of the Back to the Land community - and many of the local people as well - employed at some time or other.

A distinct minority remained engaged in what could be called an "alternative" strategy, in which the primary means of survival came from outside of the cash economy in the form of subsistence agriculture, barter, co-operative labour, and salvage, with the major emphasis on self-sufficiency. Throughout the 1970s, though, there was a decline in self-sufficiency as an objective. People found out that it was a lot of work, and that it took a lot of time:

"At first we tried to be as self-sufficient as possible, you know, the garden, animals, doing it ourselves as much as we could. Then we began to realize that we had to be very careful with time - I mean, do you spend it being hung up on providing food or do you spend it with the kids or hiking in the mountains? People get so hung-up with being homesteaders that they miss out on what the area offers. We saw a lot of people with a lot of money and no time. We wanted to change those priorities, so that we'd be able to look back on our lives and say: hey, that was fun!"<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Colleen McRory, personal interview, August 21, 1988.

<sup>143</sup> Pamela Stevenson, personal interview, September 3, 1988.

One of the most labour-intensive subsistence activities was creating and maintaining a large garden. Frequently the work began to conflict with other opportunities, as happened at the New Family:

"It took us seven years to build the soil, using compost, human waste and sawdust mostly, because we didn't have the money for manure. It was three or four years until we got some decent crops off of it....But it was beautiful, and for a number of years Carol and I got obsessed with keeping it that way. But by then there was only three of us left and the garden was producing way too much. And we all began to get really involved in our other pursuits. So it became a bit of a pain and ultimately we scaled it right down...."<sup>144</sup>

Thus, in general, fewer followed this pattern over time. Some people in the valley, however, combined these practices with steady income from social assistance, finding that the two together allowed for an adequate standard of living - at an actual dollar income level far below the poverty line.

The area was also a mecca for artists and craftspeople. The relatively low cost of living in the valley allowed the newcomers to pursue creative occupations there not normally viable in cities. There was an initial expectation that the area would develop as an artisans' colony, similar to Carmel California or Aspen, Colorado. To date this has not happened. In fact during the past decade many craftspeople have left the area to settle elsewhere. Most artisans work in their homes, often miles from others engaged in similar work, and get few opportunities for the cross fertilization of ideas or co-operative marketing. Some sales are local but most are through urban outlets or seasonal shows in major cities and there

---

<sup>144</sup> Nancy Harris, personal interview, January 10, 1987.

is not yet a sufficient flow of tourist traffic to create a thriving crafts economy.

Many people who came were well educated, and had specialized skills. They found work in the conventional economy as teachers, social workers, and nurses. In the valley their influence has been most significant in setting the direction of education in the public schools. Others were trained for professional occupations - among them, architects, planners, educators, engineers and media consultants. As consultants they typically drew their clients from a wide area and travelled extensively, although work was also done for local residents, often on a trade basis. The cities of Nelson and Castlegar are within commuting distance from the southern end of the valley, and many professionals, educators and government workers are employed there. The introduction of new communications technology and computers in the early 1980s extended the range of opportunities and allowed rurally based people to participate even more in the economic life of the outside society. The valley also supports two general kinds of writers: journalists who work for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Globe and Mail, United Press International, local newspapers, etc. on a regular or contract basis; and "creative" writers - poets, novelists, playwrights, and authors of childrens books. This occupation integrates well with other subsistence activities.

From the beginning, involvement in industrial activities such as logging, mining, and mill employment was minimal, except on an occasional basis, but treeplanting and other silvicultural activity fit well with the alternative lifestyle. Currently, it offers

experienced workers an opportunity to earn wages of up to 200 to 300 dollars per day for limited periods of time. An experienced planter may make between ten and twenty thousand dollars in a season that begins in February or early March on the coast and ends in July in the interior. It also guarantees an Unemployment Insurance claim for the next year at maximum, or near maximum, benefits. Over the years many treeplanting companies have come and gone in the valley. In 1990 there are three main ones in operation, employing up to 250 people each season. Many of these employees come from outside of the area, but as many as 300 local residents, most of them from the new community, are engaged in this occupation.<sup>145</sup>

Because there are few full-time, permanent jobs available in the valley, many people are engaged in a personal strategy that combines an ongoing but varied stream of short-term opportunities. The mainstays are carpentry, labouring, and handyman work, often bolstered by U.I.C. This strategy tends to be volatile and not very secure.

Chronically high unemployment in the Slocan over the years has made Unemployment Insurance (U.I.) relatively easy to obtain. In addition, U.I. officials understand the importance of their payroll

---

<sup>145</sup> Treeplanting has been integrally tied to the economy of the alternative community since the early 1970s, and many local people are now veterans of 10 or 15 years of planting. However with advancing age, a lot are finding it no longer possible to do the physically demanding work. This is leading to a good deal of personal soul searching as people look around for another means of making an income. It is causing a lot to look at going back to school or starting businesses to diversify their prospects.



to the local economy.<sup>146</sup> When Unemployment Insurance is employed as a survival strategy, people work at whatever is available to accumulate sufficient weeks to initiate a claim. This is often tied in with seasonal work such as treeplanting or government-sponsored grants for local community improvement.<sup>147</sup> It is unclear how many in the new community have opted for this pattern, but it is universal throughout all communities in the valley (and in most other similar communities across the country). There is a potential threat in changes in the *U.I. Act* which increase the numbers of weeks to qualify and shift the emphasis to retraining. In the Slocan there are few employment opportunities to retrain for.

Frequently, the newcomers found that it was economically unfeasable to move to the valley on a permanent basis. For them, outside employment was often an interim measure until means allowed full-time residency in the valley. Often people moved into the area incrementally, spending longer periods of time in the valley with each year, building and gardening, until they could afford to move there permanently. Other individuals regularly worked outside

---

<sup>146</sup> This amounted to \$420,000 per month in Spring of 1989.

<sup>147</sup> With a local unemployment rate sometimes reaching 40% and a generally weak economy, grants have been very important to the area - for the employment they provide, for the development of infrastructure (sidewalks and water systems), amenities (such as the refurbishing of community halls and the Silverton Gallery), cultural development (Theatre Energy, etc.), and the upgrading of homes (RRAP and rural electrification). With the election of the conservatives in 1984 many of these grants were no longer available, and the vulnerability of the alternative economy to political change was highlighted. Another negative implication of a reliance on grants and other government programs for subsistence is that this "safety net" may have kept the new people from developing strategies more reflective of the ideals of the movement. Such reliance may also affect the credibility of recipients who actively work for social and political change in the broader community.

the area for 4 to 10 months of the year - then returned to improve their properties and participate in community life. Such employment was either regular or seasonal in nature (teaching, winter resorts) or sporadic. Today, people who leave generally work in B.C.'s Lower Mainland area, but a number go to large cities in Eastern Canada, Banff-area resorts, or even to Los Angeles.

Finally there were a number of non-traditional occupations that emerged over the past decade and were engaged in almost exclusively by members of the new community. These have included workshop leadership, cottage industries, adventure tourism, and the cultivation of marijuana.

Over the past two decades, most of the newcomers have passed through a number of the preceding strategies, responding to changing opportunities and restraints. Most households draw on two or more of these at any one time and find that it takes great versatility to survive. Even then, few could be considered well-off by conventional standards. Nonetheless, most remain committed to the area, finding, like John Hodges, that the hardships are worth it:

"Living in the Slokan has been a grind economically, but the lifestyle, the place and the community of people is still very satisfying. We live very well here, under the poverty line.. ..Everyone in the valley really wants to be here, even if its difficult. We tread much more lightly here, step on very few toes in the course of our daily lies, need much less to survive than elsewhere."

Part of the reason that survival at this level is possible is that informal economic activity - trading, barter, and mutual assistance - is still part of the alternative community's economic

life. Many feel though, that this dimension of community life has declined over the years. Colleen Bowman found that people in her neighbourhood in Hills were becoming more involved in their families and other personal pursuits, and this tended to take the focus away from collective activity:

"The farm was a sort of hub for a lot of people living on the hillside. Together, we kept the land producing, but never in a formally arranged way. People just gravitated to what they did best. We also helped the neighbouring people get their trip together....By the late 1970s most people were wanting their own homes, their own gardens and so forth. After that the co-operative nature declined. But for some things everyone needed help - ridge beams and the like - and we were there for them."

Barter too, has declined in some circles. In the Silverton area:

"There are still work parties but money is much more in the scene. You see people bartering and trading less and more into renting and buying stuff. It seems that they are wealthier and have less time to spare...maybe keeping more to their families and having less time for others."<sup>148</sup>

Further down the valley though, the barter economy appears to be strong still. According to residents, trading occurs regularly and encompasses a broad range of goods and services.<sup>149</sup> At least two attempts were made in the late 1970s and early 1980s to enlarge the potential of the informal economy by introducing formalized credit systems. One of these, the Slocan Community Alternative to Money (S.C.A.M.) system, was based on a unit of one hour of labour;

---

<sup>148</sup> Burgit Schinke, personal interview, August 20, 1988.

<sup>149</sup> A couple who live in Appledale, recall that they were personally involved in exchanges of hay, haircuts, produce, boarding for their horses, carpentry on their house, milk and eggs, bedding plants, childcare, clothing, dental work, artwork, and fruit trees.

participants exchanged goods and services, and credits and debits were noted on a central computer. Both attempts failed after a few years of operation, primarily because most of the valley residents still needed money for mortgages and car payments, and most local businesses were unwilling to participate.

The continued viability of the informal economy is partially due to the tight bonds that unite the community's members:

"This is a different culture than in Vancouver. The bonds here are much stronger because people have helped each other through some very hard times. We're isolated, so we must sink or swim together. We can't live the life of people in cities. We also must rely on each other because we don't have the services - like child care and crisis counselling....Unemployment helps since people have more time and are community oriented and thus can contribute to strengthening it."<sup>150</sup>

The changes in the levels of co-operative economic activity paralleled changes in the social life of the community. Three factors - more money, television, and less time due to family and work commitments - meant less people at dances and the end of the Cinema Guild:

"In the beginning there were lots of big parties. We also had a movie night on Saturday in the School house in Vallican, then in Appledale. Every Saturday. Then, with the introduction of televisions less people started coming out."<sup>151</sup>

Increasingly, people focused their energy in specific projects or issues rather than involvement in the larger group of their peers. After the mid-1970s, the Whole School, Valhalla Park, and watershed activism were major foci of activity, and so, to a lesser extent,

---

<sup>150</sup> Rita Moir, personal interview, September 3, 1988.

<sup>151</sup> TC Carpendale, personal interview, September 2, 1988.



Fig. 17. *The 10th Annual "Rosebery Regatta", September, 1989.*

were personal growth groups such as EST and Gestalt, and the ongoing responsibilities of RARTS.<sup>152</sup> The community solidarity which had emerged around the completion of the Vallican Whole began to fragment as individuals were drawn to these other sub-communities of interest. The institutional landscape became more diverse. There were restaurants which served wholesome natural foods, such as the Interm Cafe in Silverton and Robert's Restaurant, south of Winlaw, and these became popular meeting places for members of the alternative community from throughout the West

---

<sup>152</sup> The Rural Alternative Research and Training Society is the volunteer body responsible for the maintenance and (gradual) completion of the Vallican Whole.

Kootenay. A Burial Society<sup>153</sup> was created, as well as a community cemetery in Winlaw.

These were also years in which the newcomers began to look out and see the human fabric and history of the place around them, and began to take an active role in the day-to-day affairs of the valley. Once they had become established and more sensitive to the needs and opportunities of the local scene they began to contribute to the overall community. In 1977 two Silverton women restored the interior of the New Denver museum. In 1978 the Arrow Lakes/Slocan Valley Arts Council obtained grants to restore the old two-room school-house in Silverton as an art gallery and performance space. Groups such as the Valhalleluja Rangers and Theatre Energy<sup>154</sup> produced original musicals and dramas based on life in the Slocan which reached out to an audience outside of their peers.

During the period following the completion of the Vallican Whole, relations between the newcomers and the local community stabilized.

---

<sup>153</sup> The Burial Society was an offshot of RARTS. Founded in 1979, its volunteer members perform the functions of a funeral parlour: local people prepare the body of the deceased, build the coffin, dig the grave, and deal with the government agent. Society members have "filled out all the necessary forms in advance, to keep things fuctioning smoothly."

<sup>154</sup> This ensemble started in 1973 as the "Potluck Players" and drew together many talented people from the local area. Their first production was Ibsen's "A Dolls House", a politically significant choice. The theme of the play - a woman pondering her status in society and the options available to her - expressed many of the feelings of local women becoming disillusioned with the division of labour and power in the back to the land scene. In the winter of 1977 Theatre Energy collectively created and produced "Renderings" on a \$5,000 Canada Coucil grant. Its subject matter was the trials and tribulations of the new people trying to make it on the land. Later that year Theater Energy broadened their portrayal of West Kootenay society with the creation of "Voices", a work about the experiences of the area's pioneers.

The alliances which had been forged during the community Forest Project held, and led to other broadly-based efforts to implement reform in land-use and forest practices (these will be elaborated on in the next chapter). Corky Evans, a member of the new community, was acclaimed in 1979 as the area's representative to the Regional District. It appeared that much of the early conflict had been superficial: it had come more from a lack of sensitivity and propriety than a difference over fundamental values.

Between 1980 and 1985, however, antagonism surfaced again. It stemmed from disagreement over the creation of a land-use and settlement plan for the valley which was being prepared jointly by the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) and the provincial resource agencies. Most of the newcomers, and a large number of the long-term residents, supported the planning process as an opportunity to protect the scenic, environmental (particularly water supplies) and recreational values of the area, as well as promote a diversification of the local economy. However, it was opposed by a small but well-organized and outspoken minority, whose "Can the Plan" campaign attempted to derail the process and maintain the status quo in the valley. This group, comprised primarily of members of the mining and logging fraternity, perceived the Plan as a threat to their continued unhindered exploitation of the valley's resources. The conflict, because it stemmed from the clash of widely divergent worldviews, split the community deeply in a way that has not healed in five years. Proponents and opponents of the Plan surfaced frequently on opposing sides of the various conflicts over logging and resource

development through the 1980s. Although day-to-day relations between the newcomers and most of the other residents have continued to improve and deepen, the Anglo, Doukhobor and alternative communities remain affectively separate and distinct entities.

In 1987 a dispute erupted over the valley's two secondary schools which continues to the present. The dispute is ostensibly about parents wanting their children to get the best education possible, and Mount Sentinel School, located in South Slocan has a reputation for academic and athletic excellence. However, preferences also reflect the long-held feelings of some residents who identify Slocan, where the other secondary school is located, with its "red-neck" past.<sup>155</sup> Some people are going to the extent of renting houses at the south end of the valley in order to "legally" enrol their children in the preferred Mt. Sentinel. The issue has had a divisive effect between the two communities and within the alternative community itself.

## Conclusions

The experiences of the back-to-the-land settlers in the Slocan Valley since 1968 may perhaps be best summed up in an observation made by Marcia Braundy: "People came here with an *idea* and became committed to a *place*. So the idea naturally took other forms."

---

<sup>155</sup> "The dichotomies between the new and the old communities were perhaps most clearly drawn in Slocan. In the south end of the valley, by 1976, most of the new/old relations had been worked out - the completion of the Whole was pivotal. But tension in Slocan persisted quite a bit longer - they were tougher nuts to crack." Marcia Braundy, personal interview, December 16, 1989.



Most of the newcomers came to the Slocan with the intention to live an "alternative lifestyle", but ultimately their primary concern has been to be able to stay in the valley. Some people have found ways to do this without giving up their ideals. The majority however, have been forced to compromise in some aspects of their lives: they work for the government or on grant-sponsored projects, collect Unemployment Insurance, or commute to jobs in town. As well, there appears to have been a general acceptance of many of the things offered by the mainstream culture - conveniences and luxuries that they had initially rejected. Today, their lifeways do not appear to differ much from those of their straight neighbours, yet differences persist and are significant - especially the type of relationships they have with each other and with their children, how and with whom they socialize, the food they eat, the causes they espouse, and how they spend their discretionary time.

Community life has been eroded somewhat by the proliferation of televisions and VCR's, and by increased affluence and decreased time, but it is still a very important dimension of life for most of the new people. Valley residents are continually forming new communities of interest around different foci - music, Reiki (a form of healing massage), and the local NDP riding association. Alternative community solidarity is most readily seen in these smaller sub-communities within the larger group. Few of the new people have been significantly integrated into the Anglo or Doukhobour communities. There is still a vocabulary of "us and them", hippies and rednecks, which tends to work against the resolution of common problems. However there are signs of a

broader consensus emerging on certain issues, notably watersheds and pesticides.

Over the past twenty years there have been two themes of development at work in the Slocan - a theme of social development, which saw the creation of things like the Vallican Whole and the Free School, and a theme of political development. The latter has been directed towards community control of resources and the local land base, and asking: "who makes the decisions, and what are the value criteria being used?" It is in this area that the new peoples' commitment to the place has been most clearly expressed. This is the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter Four

### Making Change

#### Introduction

The new people who were attracted to the Slocan perceived it as beautiful, natural, unspoiled, "non-industrial", and "like a museum". But they soon found out that this was not the case. Despite appearances, there was a long history of resource extraction and a growing modern forest industry in the area. This industry, which first developed to provide the mines and local market with building materials and was comprised of small mills, during the 1950s and 1960s underwent modernization and integration into the corporate forest economy. These trends - changing technology and concentration of control - placed the industry on a collision course with the values, expectations and personal welfare of the new people. Since 1970, a battle - sometimes subtle, sometimes heated - has been waged between the interests typified by the newcomers and the industrial forces in the valley. It has involved a range of tactics - from public education, to intimidation and direct action - and has seen victories and losses on both sides.

The valley today is at a critical juncture, and must choose between markedly different, and mutually exclusive, visions of its future. This chapter describes what in many ways has proven to be the most serious challenge faced by the newcomers as they in their turn have become native to the place: altering the economic, social

and political environment around them to make the valley a place where they can, and want to, remain. Although there have been numerous initiatives undertaken with this aim, this chapter will focus on three significant developments: the 1974 Community Forest Management Project; the establishment of Valhalla Park and preparation of the Slocan Valley Plan; and the creation of the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance. Each represents a different approach to making change.

### **Assessing the Situation: The Community Forest Management Project**

For years logging was carried out by relatively small crews of men using labour-intensive technology to fell the trees and teams of horses to haul them from the woods. Every spring, a log drive down the Slocan and Little Slocan Rivers brought wood to numerous mills dispersed along the valley bottom. Even in the 1950s and '60s - long after log trucks had replaced the annual drives - the industry was characterised by the many independent crews in the woods and the large numbers of small sawmills.<sup>156</sup> By the late 1960s, technological change - the introduction of light, efficient chainsaws in the 1950s and the powered skidder in the 1960s - meant that it took fewer men to cut and mill a unit of wood and led to a general increase in the rate of timber extraction.<sup>157</sup> Logging

---

<sup>156</sup> In 1952 there were 19 mills and 38 private logging operations in the Valley. *Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project Interim Report*, 1974.

<sup>157</sup> Thus production levels increased threefold in the twenty years after 1950, while employment grew by only 25%. *Ibid.*

became increasingly capital-intensive, requiring much higher margins of profit and limiting entry into the industry. Control of the forest resource became increasingly concentrated in the hands of a single licensee.<sup>158</sup> The 81,000-hectare Tree Farm License #3 was granted in 1950, followed by an ever greater allocation of the region's public timber in succeeding years. The Passmore Lumber Co. and those that succeeded it, have effectively outbid local loggers for timber sales from public lands throughout the valley.<sup>159</sup> By the early 1970s Triangle Pacific operated the valley's sole remaining sawmill and controlled 90% of the area's Annual Allowable Cut.<sup>160</sup>

From the beginning the Forest Ministry had maintained a non-interventionist approach to the local industry. As a result, consistent overcutting combined with inadequate reforestation had reduced the forest base and resulted in environmental degradation, increasing conflicts with other forest resource users, and the prospect of a looming shortfall in the timber supply.<sup>161</sup> By 1965, this industry was thus well established as the dominant force in the valley - economically and politically - and had long surpassed mining in its potential to alter the local landscape.

---

<sup>158</sup> The licensee has been known variously as the Passmore Lumber Co., Eriksen Lumber Co., Pacific Logging Co., Triangle Pacific Forest Products Ltd., and now Slocan Forest Products as ownership has passed from Canadian to American to Canadian hands.

<sup>159</sup> *Community Forest Management Project Final Report*, p. 2-28.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2-42.

<sup>161</sup> This was the overall assessment of the situation in the *Final Report*.

The first evidence that the new people knew of and were concerned about the condition of the local environment comes from the minutes of a meeting held in November, 1970 at the Riverside Hall. The December 1970 issue of *The Tribal Drum*, the local alternative newspaper, recounts that "Since early spring, meetings of people interested in the future of the valley have been happening - over pollution control and zoning, primarily." Concern about environment and resource issues had started that year with attempts by local residents to halt the construction of a smelter planned for the flats above New Denver. The project was stopped by public protest, although its foundations were in before anyone knew about it. In May 1973, a petition was created to stop the discharge of mine tailings in Slocan Lake, the construction of a marina, and a log dump at one of the lake's most beautiful beaches.

Notwithstanding this early consciousness-raising, prior to 1973, few of the new people were aware of the condition of the area's forests, or the way logging was being carried out. It was at a meeting to discuss the completion of the Vallican Whole that events were to take a major turn in a new direction. As Bob Ploss remembers:

"The Community Forest Management project came out of a meeting at the Vallican Hall where we were discussing finishing the Vallican community centre, about where we could get donations to do it. Someone suggested that we try to get some lumber from the Triangle Pacific mill in Slocan. Most people thought this was fine, but Corky stood up and began to raise some serious ethical issues about the company, their logging practices and so forth...I myself had just started planting trees up Lemon Creek and was becoming very aware of the problems with the logging going on around here. So we stayed on after the meeting and discussed forestry issues, what we could do about the situation...."

The idea of a research project grew out of that discussion in

Vallican. The forests and the forest industry were emerging as a central focus of the newcomers' concern for the future of the valley, and for the economic opportunities available there. Even though forestry was not a major source of employment for the new people, it affected the quality of their water, the aesthetic qualities of the landscape, and the health and viability of the community around them. The project was conceived to look into the ways that the local forest industry could be changed - to provide more jobs, use the wood from the Valley's forests more completely and productively, and to deal with some of the environmental problems that were being caused by unsound practices.

In the spring of 1973, a LEAP grant application was assembled. Under the grant program, the federal government provided initial funding to organise small industries which are designed to become self-sustaining. The forestry proposal suggested organising small-scale logging and lumber concerns in ways which would provide residents with part-time employment and a cheap source of firewood and finished lumber. Aware of the political sensitivity of the grant issue, the project's initiators were anxious to involve local people. During 1973, they worked at building local support, and that winter received a Federal grant of \$50,000 to undertake the project. It was sponsored by a group of ten valley residents who acted as a hiring committee and oversaw the research. The aims of the project were broad:

- to study the effects of industry and recreation on the environment and make recommendations;
- to determine what logging and milling wastes were not utilized that could be reprocessed, and to find capital for their manufacture;

- to make recommendations on land use, agricultural opportunities and forest use.

The staff included seven full-time and three part-time persons and two professional consultants and operated out of a motel in Winlaw. In addition to the research, the project held public hearings to gather community input - ideas and concerns - that generally drew 40 or 50 people.

When the *Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project Final Report* was published that summer, it contained both a critique of current forestry practices in the valley and a blueprint for a radically different approach. The report's authors concluded that in the existing situation, the Slocan Valley's public forests were not public (they had been committed to three companies to harvest on an 88-year rotation cycle), were not being managed on a sustained yield basis, were being harvested and milled in ways that wasted up to 65% of the standing timber, and were not managed as a geographic unit but rather as the uncoordinated overlapping of a number of resource agency jurisdictions.

Their proposal comprised nine recommendations, each one designed to reflect specific objectives. In order that there be greater local control of management decision-making, the report recommended that a "resource committee" be formed, made up of six elected, unpaid representatives of the local community plus individuals from each of the provincial resource management agencies. The committee would have jurisdiction over the resources of the Slocan public forests, and would hire a resource manager to co-ordinate the services of the government agencies. To give local people more



access to the resource, it was recommended that the government institute a system of rural woodlots of from 10 to 1500 acres, to be held by local residents. To ensure that industry respected ecological limits and managed for sustainability, they asked that the existing Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) in the valley be lowered to exclude poor and low growing sites, until it could be recalculated based on consideration of all resources. To protect the environment from degradation during harvesting, they requested that the government build a good-quality access-road network and follow a policy of selective cutting on immature and sensitive sites, while reducing demands on the forests by taking steps to increase the utilization of waste. The economic benefit of the forests to the local community was to be increased by the construction of a small "product mill" in the valley, to produce end products - such as boards and mouldings - to supply the local market. To fund the program of reforms, they asked that all stumpage from the area's public forests be re-invested in the area for five years, and administered by the resource committee. Finally, to preserve the unique recreational and scenic values of the mountains west of Slocan Lake, the report recommended that the Valhalla Range be designated a roadless nature conservancy area.

The committee's intention was thus to ensure the stability, prosperity, quality of life, and long-term sustainability of the Slocan Valley community. The Report acknowledged the importance of community permanence in achieving these goals:

"The local community represents the only visible group with a binding interest in the long-term sustenance of this valley's resources, for it is they who will have to live with the results

of our management policies, good or bad."<sup>162</sup>

That summer, the project's organizers set up the "Slocan Valley Community Resources Society" to promote the implementation of the recommendations. Society members met with the local MLA, Bill King, and Bob Williams, the New Democratic Party Minister of Forests in Victoria, where they found general support for the *Final Report's* conclusions. In 1975, the province acceded to the residents' request for a resource committee. This group, the "Slocan Valley Resource Management Committee", brought together members of the public, labour and industry and government agencies, to prepare capability maps for future resource development. However, acting against the recommendations of the report, the government appointed the members of the committee rather than allowing them to be elected locally, and this body did not receive the public support necessary to continue after 1976. The Resources Society though, was to remain active for the next ten years advocating the reforms outlined in the *Final Report* - particularly woodlots, a reduced AAC, and elected resource committees - and criticising management and harvesting practices in the local industry.

The completion of the study marked a turning point in the evolution of the valley. It identified for the first time the threats to the aesthetic, economic and ecological values of the valley and brought these to public attention. As a critique of

---

<sup>162</sup> *Final Report*, p. 4-1.

current practices and a blueprint for reform of the forest industry, it is considered to be valid still, by local residents, foresters and independent loggers. It was also a catalyst for virtually all of the major developments in the area since: Valhalla Park, the Slocan Valley Plan, and the creation of watershed committees and the Watershed Alliance.<sup>163</sup>

### **The Park and the Plan**

Although the recommendations of the *Final Report* were not immediately implemented, it had informed local residents and established a momentum for change. Over the next few years, individuals gravitated toward involvement in more specific issues, and creation of the Valhalla Conservancy received growing interest and support. The unfolding of events as this proposal evolved from a vision in 1975, to a concrete reality in 1983, can be understood only as it related to the other significant episode of this period: the creation of the Slocan Valley Plan.

The idea of a park in the mountains west of Slocan Lake had been raised at least twice before, so that the idea was not new when in January 1975, the Valley Resources Society, sponsored a meeting to discuss the proposed Valhalla Nature Conservancy. In order to

---

<sup>163</sup> The groundbreaking nature of the project was frequently mentioned: "The original initiative for the Slocan Valley Plan came from the Community Forest Management Project. It was the first cry in the province for community control of resources....A whole lot of issues surfaced at the same time over the watershed logging developments, the advocacy of the park. It was clear that a broader planning view of the valley was needed." Marcia Braundy, personal interview, December 16, 1989.



Fig. 18. The Valhalla Range and Slocan Lake, from Idaho Peak.

focus public attention and garner support, later that year the Valhalla Wilderness Society was formed, whose mandate was to work specifically for the establishment of the Valhalla Provincial Park. To increase public awareness, an audio-visual presentation was produced by members of the group. This toured widely and instigated hundreds of letters of support.

Media interest in the project was supportive, and the slide documentary was shown on CBC

television's Klahanne program in 1978. The next year, a public petition to save the area containing 5000 signatures was presented to the B.C. premier, Bill Bennett.

Concurrent with this community action, agencies of the provincial government were doing an evaluation of the economic implications of declaring the area a park. In 1975, the Ministry of Forests conducted a study which concluded that timber volumes lost to the

park could be absorbed by the local Forest Reserve with no loss of logging jobs. In 1976, a moratorium was placed on development in the area by the Ministry of Mines and the Forest Service.

Within two years, however, the government had changed, and with it, Forest Service policy in regard to the Valhallas. In 1978, Slocan Forest Products announced future plans to log the Nemo Creek drainage - located in the centre of the Valhalla Range immediately across Slocan Lake from the village of Silverton. By 1980, the provincial government had made no commitment to the park, and, in fact, the Forest Service had initiated new studies to assess the area's resource potential, and began assembling resource development folios for a number of the drainages in the Valhallas. The Wilderness Society realised that the government had had a change of heart and intended to allow logging in the park area.

The situation was further exacerbated by a letter sent by Slocan Forest Products to its employees exhorting them to lobby the government against the formation of the park in the interests of job security. The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) reacted negatively to these tactics and pointed out that, in fact, no actual figures had been compiled to verify or discredit the company's claims of job losses, and resource agencies again urged for reimposition of the moratorium on Valhalla Park development to give time to prepare a "Slocan Valley Comprehensive Regional Study".

This study was a joint effort, undertaken by the Regional District and provincial resource agencies, with the objective of making informed choices regarding future land uses and economic

development of the Slocan Valley.<sup>164</sup> The Regional District appointed an Advisory Planning Commission to act as a liaison between the planning agencies and the valley residents. The Commission, made up of newcomers and long-term residents, was influential in determining the terms of reference for the ensuing process. Among their specific requests were: a full-time information centre; public meetings throughout the valley; a newsletter to keep the public informed about the progress of the study; and local control over the planning process.

In March 1981, the provincial government approved the planning commission's terms of reference and public hearings began. These were held valley-wide and initially attracted a representative cross section of the local populace.<sup>165</sup> In public meetings and briefs the park issue dominated the planning process,<sup>166</sup> and there was a realization that this issue needed resolution before any long-term vision of the valley's future could be articulated. In the public input gathered in the planning process, most valley residents were strongly supportive of the park proposal.

---

<sup>164</sup> Preparation of the Plan involved: "assessment of the resources, settlement pattern, service levels, environment and local economy; identification of land use and economic development issues; identification of alternative solutions to issues identified, based on an assessment of demands and the capability of the Valley to support various types of development; and proposal of regional plan policies." RDCK pamphlet "What is the Future of the Slocan Valley: Help Us Prepare the Plan", 1981.

<sup>165</sup> In later meetings, eyewitnesses note, the newcomers were disproportionately represented.

<sup>166</sup> This was particularly true in the northern section of the valley. Residents in the southern end generally expressed more concern for watershed quality. Reported in the *Nelson Daily News*, June 8, 1981.

In the fall of 1981 the incumbent Regional District representative, Corky Evans, was challenged by long-time resident Colleen McRory, a founder of the Valhalla Society and a major proponent of the park. In the ensuing debate, McRory attempted to focus the discussion entirely on the park issue, confronting Evans, who refused to declare an unequivocal position on the park - preferring instead to "back the Plan that the valley forges together."<sup>167</sup> Evans was subsequently re-elected, but the debate was deeply divisive among the members of the alternative community. The resolution of the park's fate became pivotal to the resolution of all the other planning issues.

Meanwhile, the Valhalla Society had begun a massive campaign to solicit public backing for the park.<sup>168</sup> Letters of support poured in from individuals and conservation groups across the continent. Finally, acceding to widespread public demand, pressure from residents, and the desires of village councils and the Regional District, the provincial government granted Class A status to the 49,600 hectare Valhalla Provincial Park in February of 1983.

Once the park issue was settled the planning commission was able to turn their attention to other areas of the plan as yet unresolved. In October 1983, a draft version of the Slocan Valley Plan was released to the public, for comment and revision. This release prompted a strongly negative reaction from a segment of the

---

<sup>167</sup> *Nelson Daily News*, November 16, 1981.

<sup>168</sup> At that time, it was the largest letter-writing campaign ever undertaken in support of the preservation of a wilderness area.

population which until that point had been silent.

By March of 1984, a group of local citizens calling themselves the "Slocan Valley Residents Alliance", had formed to derail the plan. Their main spokesperson, Ted Fitchett of Hills, articulated their position, saying "...the Plan is designed to conform to a pre-determined end goal of the planners or Valhalla Park proponents" and contained "vague but overbearing references" to visual management.<sup>169</sup> The concept of visual management alarmed some private landowners, in addition to miners and loggers, who strongly opposed zoning and "over-regulation" and refused to discuss amendments to the Plan. An anti-Plan verse circulated by the group called for "a bonfire with Corky Evans and the RDCK on top of it." The Residents' Alliance released a "poll" of community feelings on the issue; the results: 565 opposed, 5 in favour.

Following a year of revision to the plan in response to public input, the final version, re-christened the *Slocan Valley Development Guidelines*, was released to lukewarm public response.<sup>170</sup> The revised version made a number of concessions to the concerns of the Residents' Alliance<sup>171</sup> but certain industrial and private

---

<sup>169</sup> *Nelson Daily News*, April 2, 1984.

<sup>170</sup> During 1984, the provincial government removed land-use planning authority from the mandate of regional districts. This had great implications to the efficacy of the revised Plan. The change was reflected in a letter to valley residents which accompanied the new Guidelines: "The name has been changed to "Development Guidelines" to emphasize that it is a set of guidelines and not laws. The guidelines mainly affect government policy on Crown land, rather than individuals on private land. The guidelines themselves do not set up regulations."

<sup>171</sup> These included: the clear identification of logging and mining as the main industries; allowing logging to occur in watersheds - with specific rules on how to do it; limited application of the concept of visual management; a request to the province



interests in the valley continued to dispute the legitimacy of the whole planning process and the representativeness of the views expressed in the recommendations.<sup>172</sup> The area's water users found that, despite the detailed watershed management process outlined in the report, they in fact ended up with no guaranteed protection of their water supplies. Environmentalists and planning advocates generally felt that the substantive content of the recommendations had been eliminated in the plan's final version. The Valhalla Society condemned the final report and the revision process:

"The gutting of the Slocan Valley Plan has been for political self-serving purposes by people who don't believe in integrated use and the overall good for the Slocan Valley."

Notwithstanding the general lack of support for the final guidelines, the process was felt by many to be significant as a first step in the articulation of a common vision of the valley's future. It was the first time a rural community in the province had attempted to create a coherent development strategy based on a broad public consensus.<sup>173</sup> Despite these positive aspects there are still lingering negative repercussions felt in the valley from the four year process. Amongst them are the divisions between pro-

---

to review its policy prohibiting mining in Kokanee Glacier Park; and the relaxation of zoning regulations throughout the valley.

<sup>172</sup> As Ted Fitchett said: "What we're negotiating is whether the people in the valley ever wanted this thing - but they [the committee of elected representatives] are saying, 'What do you want in it?'" Quoted in the *Nelson Daily News*, May 14, 1984.

<sup>173</sup> The Plan was also the first time the province, which has jurisdiction over Crown land, and the Regional District, which controls settlement patterns on private land, had worked together to plan land use and economic development in B.C.

planning community members and those who fought to preserve the status quo. There was also a deep schism within the new community, between those, such as Colleen McRory, with a radical and confrontational approach to change, and those who, like Corky Evans, preferred to work towards change from a community consensus.

**Organizing for action:  
The Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance**

Concurrent with the formulation of the plan and the establishment of the park, another issue was moving to centre stage in the political arena. This was community activism in preservation of domestic watersheds in the Slocan. An awareness of watershed issues had surfaced in the early 1970s over concern about rising spring runoff levels in the Slocan River. This awareness was heightened by the findings of the environmental studies undertaken for the Community Forest Project of 1974. This research disclosed that careless logging practices, poor road construction and clear-cutting on steep slopes, were contributing to erosion, siltation, and the degradation of water quality in many watersheds where industrial activity was occurring.

In 1979, residents living on the eastern slopes of Perry Ridge in the mid-valley, organized the "Perry Ridge Watershed Committee" the first of its kind in the province, in response to Slocan Forest Products' intention to log in their watersheds. They received the strong backing of the Slocan Valley Resource Society as well as the Regional District. Watershed problems also emerged as a major concern during the initial phase of the planning process, and in

1982 those affected formed the Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance. This group consisted of representatives from three municipalities and a number of local watershed groups. Its purpose was to support co-ordinated planning for all Slocan Valley watersheds, and to encourage the establishment of land-use priorities for watersheds which would avoid inconsistent standards and a patchwork approach to regulation.

In the years since its formation, the Alliance has been actively engaged in a dialogue with the provincial government, demanding environment and land-use policy changes in regard to the use and preservation of watersheds. In 1982 and 1983 this group was also an active and vocal participant in the Slocan Valley planning process. Their concerns were translated into the Integrated Watershed Management Process (I.W.M.P.), which was an integral part of the final version of the valley plan. The FLOW (For Love of Water) conference they sponsored in Winlaw in 1984, brought watershed activists from throughout B.C. together to form a (short-lived) network of watershed groups and activists to lobby for changes in environmental and forest legislation on a provincial scale.

The harvesting carried out in the previous two decades had, by this time, depleted timber supplies in the large lateral valleys, such as Lemon Creek and Koch Creek, putting increasing pressure on the timbered slopes of the main valley. The first of the domestic watersheds to experience major harvesting pressure was Springer Creek, which is an area home to a number of the new community and the source of the auxiliary water supply to the village of Slocan.

The village passed a resolution in council asking the Alliance to intervene on its behalf in negotiations with the Ministry of Forests to protect their interests in the watershed. This was the first test case where the I.W.M.P. process was implemented.

The experience of the participants in the Springer Creek I.W.M.P. was inconsistent and found unacceptable by some. At issue were a number of primary concerns, each of which pointed to the lack of meaningful public participation in the decision-making process. The Springer Creek residents and Watershed Alliance representatives involved, found that the Ministry of Forests would not provide them with the pertinent information they requested - including hydrological and soils studies - to enable them to understand the management decisions being made in the watershed. In addition, since many logging-related impacts (such as changes in watertables, debris slides and watercourse diversions) are known to occur years after harvesting activity has ceased, responsibility is often hard to determine. The Watershed Alliance had proposed that a "no-fault" compensation fund be established, to reimburse water users in the event of future damage to their supply. This was denied. Both the Ministry of Forests and Slocan Forest Products refused to prepare comprehensive inventories of proposed logging sites (recognizing all resource values) from which they could design logging activity. Finally, there was no guarantee that the domestic water supplies would be given first priority in the watershed.

The failure of the Ministry of Forests to respond adequately to these concerns subsequently led to a breakdown of trust and

communication between the Ministry and the Alliance, and between the residents and Ministry as well.<sup>174</sup> The Ministry also disregarded a further concern that the watersheds of the valley be considered as a whole, rather than dealt with on a piecemeal basis.

At present, these fundamental differences are unresolved, and a stalemate prevails. With cutting slated to begin soon in a number of other watersheds, including Hasty Creek south of Silverton, there is talk of, and preparation for, civil disobedience if the issues are not satisfactorily resolved before road-building and harvesting activity begins.

Throughout eight years of activism and negotiation the Alliance has consistently advocated meaningful public input, sustainable forest management and harvesting techniques, and local public control over the decision-making process whereby logging is managed in the valley. In the Alliance members' belief, local people have the greatest long-term interest in the condition of their watersheds and consequently are most suited and most entitled to control them. This belief underlay the recent proposal, at a public meeting held in New Denver, September 25, 1989, for a Community Tree Farm Licence, which epitomised the spirit of the recommendations contained in the community Forest Management Project of 1974.<sup>175</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup> Interview with Herb Hammond, Slocan Valley Watershed Alliance co-chairperson, November 30, 1989.

<sup>175</sup> The brief which was presented to area residents and Ministry and company representatives in New Denver, September 25, 1989, revived many of the *Final Report's* recommendations. It called for an elected Community Forests Board which would plan the management and use of the valley's forests. The Board would hire

The Community Tree Farm proposal was unenthusiastically received by the Ministry of Forests and industry representatives in attendance at the meeting,<sup>176</sup> but it is felt by many local residents to hold great promise as a viable, community-sustaining alternative to the existing regime.

### **The Current Situation**

In 1990, the battle lines in the fight to define the area's future are by no means clearly drawn between the new people and the longer-term residents. For one thing there is a lingering resentment on the part of many within the logging community and the more general "straight" community against the forest company.<sup>177</sup> They feel it is a poor public citizen with no interest in the welfare of the local community. According to residents, it destroyed the popular beach at Slocan when it relocated its mill, has reneged on promises to provide certain amenities, and gives preferential treatment to certain favoured contractors (who

---

expertise to develop and implement "forest plans", and employ contractors to carry out the specific tasks outlined in the plans. Unlike the earlier proposal, however, a Tree Farm Licence would give the community tenure over the area's forests and it could then sell local timber to the highest bidder on the open market - giving first option to existing local mills.

<sup>176</sup> This was personally observed by the author. Ministry and Slocan Forest Products representatives refused to discuss the proposal, preferring instead to describe their own programs and reiterate that the current situation was functioning well and did not require change.

<sup>177</sup> These perspectives emerged during a series of interviews conducted with area loggers, miners, local politicians, and other long-term residents in April and May, 1989.

themselves practice blatant nepotism). Similar strong feelings are directed at the Ministry of Forests, particularly its policies which favour clearcuts, the sale of un-manufactured wood "cants" overseas, the contracting out and general reduction of regulatory activities, and stumpage and tenure policies which require loggers to use environmentally unsound harvesting practices in order to make ends meet. As Corky Evans, a logger in the area, observes:

"The working class is currently being paid to make it impossible to live and work here in the long run. In the time we have lived here the local harvest has tripled, while those into doing logging responsibly are weeded out by economics."

The recent "Spike" protest is also indicative of a blurring of conventional alliances over formerly controversial issues. In 1988 this incident brought out a broad coalition of residents to take direct non-violent action to halt the spraying of pesticides on CPR rights-of-way in the valley.<sup>178</sup> In addition, many of the long-term residents have actively supported the efforts of the Watershed Alliance to protect the quality of their water supplies. The Villages of Silverton and Slocan have been members of the Alliance since its inception.

The lines are perhaps more clearly expressed as the difference between reactionary individualists and the forward-looking community-minded. Herb Hammond, a local forester who has been active in watershed and community forest activity throughout the

---

<sup>178</sup> This has resulted in the development by the railway company, of a more environmentally sound weed-eradication technology, which was tested successfully in the Slocan during the summer of 1990. The new device uses super-heated steam to kill vegetation along railway rights-of-way.

1980s has this perspective:

"The problems we are facing now come from the collision of two quite radically different types of people. On one hand there are the individualists who came to this place because they didn't want to live with restrictions to their freedoms, people without a long-range outlook on the future who put their faith in technology to bail us out of any problems. When planning for the future is taking place they are thus nowhere to be seen. These people don't have a group affiliation such as the Watershed Alliance or the NDP to represent and advance their interests and largely stay right out of the public debate. When, however, something happens that looks like it will affect them directly, they react quickly and strongly - not well prepared with the facts of the issue, just grasping at whatever evidence exists to justify their position.

"The others are concerned about the future and acknowledge that sustainable existence will require limitations to everyone's freedoms. But they have a belief that they can choose their destiny from a range of alternatives - that they don't have to be content with what the situation offers them by default. Because they belong to groups...they also have an experience of power and a knowledge of the system that allows them to advance their concerns with a hope of response. And because they see their lives as inseparable from the place in which they live, their concerns encompass all of those who live here. Thus the conflict is between the proactive and the reactive, between those who look down the road and see the need for immediate action and those who construe any change as a threat to their immediate self-gratification. Where is the solution?"<sup>179</sup>

## Conclusions

Throughout the past two decades, the new people - and their allies within the larger community - have not been content to wait for the political process to work in their interest: experience has shown that this frequently does not work. Their response has comprised two different strategies. Firstly, they have educated themselves about the issues. The Community Forest Management Project was the first major attempt to this. Their knowledge of the existing

---

<sup>179</sup> Herb Hammond, personal interview, November 30, 1989.



situation, and a range of possible alternatives, has been further extended in the intervening period through the research and public education activities of the Slocan Planning Process and the Watershed Alliance. Then, prepared with the information, they have acted.

There now exists a significant portion of the local population who are educated on forestry issues and dissatisfied with the existing situation. Yet there remain significant obstacles to the implementation of the new ideas brought into public discourse by the new people and like-minded members of the broader community. In the Slocan, boundaries are still drawn between communities on the basis of ethnicity and lifestyle preferences, and only a few can claim to have a valley-wide vision for the future. This is a serious impediment to local people working together to manage the forests, and has most recently been clearly expressed in regard to the proposed pulpmill expansion in Castlegar.<sup>180</sup> Perhaps the most serious obstacle of all remains the unwillingness of the provincial resource agencies to acknowledge the right and the unique qualifications of local residents to manage their own resources - particularly the forests, whose health and long-term productivity

---

<sup>180</sup> In December 1989, Celgar Pulp Co. released an in-house environmental impact statement regarding the potential impacts of its \$600 million expansion project in Castlegar. Public pressure from throughout the West Kootenay region forced the Province to initiate an official review of the proposal, and the review panel conducted hearings in the area in August and September of 1990. Of concern to many people are the increased fibre requirements of the new mill, increased air and water pollution, and the hazards and cost to the community of transporting wood chips to the mill by road. Mill proponents tend to overlook these potential impacts and focus on the jobs and short-term boom that will result in Castlegar. Both sides are represented in the Slocan, and the contentious issue has once again divided the community.

directly impacts upon nearly all aspects of their lives.

As the residents of the Slocan confront the critical choices of this bifurcation process, they are being torn between two types of society: the old "industrial" mode - which fulfilled a function by opening up the area to settlement but which increasingly is no longer appropriate for the place or the times - and the new "post-industrial" mode, represented by the ecological, decentralist values of the new people.

## Chapter Five

### The Meaning and Legacy of the Movement

Twenty-five years after the first migrants left the San Francisco Bay area for the Northern California countryside, the back-to-the-land movement they started continues. Across the continent, members of this movement continue to inhabit rural communities, pursuing lifestyles and political agendas often at variance with the mainstream. What, then, is the significance of this ideology and lifestyle alternative to mainstream contemporary society, and what does the experience in the Slocan tell us? Is it, as some critics suggest, a subsidized indulgence of the system; a self-centred flight from participation in the "real" society which is fast-paced, competitive, consumption-oriented, and urban?; or is it a viable, responsible and morally correct lifestyle choice which may have a positive impact, both in terms of the lighter demands made of the earth by its participants, and as an exemplar for the rest of society?

This can be partially answered by considering first, these peoples' impact on the Slocan, where their presence has revitalized a declining community, and their actions have left a legacy of concrete accomplishments, changed attitudes, and promising new ideas. The experiences in the valley are also indicative of the relevance of the alternative critique and vision to the contemporary situation of the broader society. The evidence suggests that the back-to-the-land vision of a decentralized, ecologically-sensitive agrarian society is not a relic of an earlier naive era. Rather, it speaks to current crisis in the valley and, by exten-

sion, to the crisis-ridden world of the 1990s. Standing in the way of the implementation of the alternative agenda, however, is the distribution of political and economic power in our society, and the orientation of government and industry to the goals of corporate capitalism rather than sustainable communities. In the following sections I will examine these perspectives in greater depth, consider the significance of this study to the discipline of geography, then conclude with the implications of the back-to-the-land ideology for the future.

### **The Legacy of Back-to-the-land Settlement in the Slocan**

"...a lot of us came out here thinking that we could build a model world counter-culture, and that we all had some part to play in that."<sup>181</sup>

When back-to-the-land migrants began repopulating the Slocan in the 1960s and early '70s they had a belief - not universally held, but widespread - that they could create an alternative order, and succeed in implementing a vision of the world which derived from their critique of the system. The area's remoteness, the critical mass of like-minded people, and the fervid climate of experimentation all suggested the potential emergence of a new kind of society. However, after they had spent some time in the valley, it was clear this was not going to happen easily or quickly. For one thing, the demands of survival imposed a hardship which left less time for social activism. For another, some found that their commitment to changing the world was limited; when the going got tough they returned to the city. In addition, there were powerful,

---

<sup>181</sup> Joel Russ to Linda Herrero, 1979.

well-established political, social and economic forces extant in the valley which tended to uphold the status quo in most dimensions of local life. The pursuit of the alternative vision thus soon had to compete with the demands of survival for the time and energy of the new settlers.

Instead of the revolutionary transformation of the Slocan into a model society as envisioned by the early migrants, a process of incremental change has taken place. The new people have succeeded in establishing institutions which reflect the tenets of their ideology. They have created new economic survival strategies different from those of the older community, and they continue to exert a strong and consistent force for change in local land-use and economic development. At the same time, they have been in large part integrated into the economic fabric of the local community and their lifestyles have converged significantly with those of their non-alternative neighbours. In many respects, the Slocan Valley in 1990 is a much different place from that of 1966, yet the same large-scale exogenous forces (government and corporate industry) continue to control its political and economic agenda and ultimately, its long term prospects. This section summarizes the essential impacts the newcomers had on the Slocan, and the reciprocal impact of the area upon their lives.

It is, of course, impossible to reconstruct the course the Slocan Valley might have taken over the last 20 years, had it not been resettled by the back-to-the-land migrants. With few areas in the province similar enough to act as a "control" for a comparison, we

can nevertheless extrapolate from trends which were underway at the beginning of the study period, and draw inferences from the fate of other industrialized small rural communities in B.C. It is likely that the forest industry would have continued to dominate the local economy and, increasingly - in a negative sense - the landscape as well.<sup>182</sup> In other areas of the province where this industry has predominated - most of Northern Vancouver Island,<sup>183</sup> the Central Coast, and Sunshine Coast, for example - populations have declined and smallholdings have been abandoned. To isolate the changes effected by the new people from those which may have occurred in the ordinary course of events, is also impossible. A growing environmental awareness and a shift in values towards conservation and diminished material consumption, which were characteristics of the 1970s and of the late 1980s, may have impacted the local consciousness even without the presence of the newcomers. Finally, it is difficult to say which changes resulted from the alternative ideology per se, and which derived from the fact that the newcomers had more education and different aesthetic preferences and needs which were not being met by local facilities. We can look, however, at the concrete accomplishments of the new people - their institutions, lifeways and political techniques - as one concrete dimension of their legacy to the valley.

---

<sup>182</sup> It is generally acknowledged that without the creation of Valhalla Park, the input of the new people into the Slocan Valley Plan process, and the vigilance of the Watershed Alliance, the walls of the main valley would by now have been extensively clearcut.

<sup>183</sup> Few places illustrate this impact better than the communities of Sayward and Kelsey Bay on Northern Vancouver Island's Salmon River.

Overall, the hundreds of newcomers who re-inhabited what was once a declining rural community, have had profound effects on the quality of life in the area. Increased population has meant higher enrolments in local schools, a greater demand for the services of public facilities and agencies, and an injection of new money into the local business economy which has revitalized the community. New services have been provided to the people of the area (such as accounting, graphic and architectural design, publishing, counselling, massage, and community planning) and increased the range of local employment options and the pool of skilled labour. The newcomers' involvement in the public schools as teachers and parents has improved standards of education to the point where the valley schools are currently ranked among the highest in the province.

The institutions created or restored are another aspect of the legacy. The alternative schools, library, restored halls in Vallican, Appledale, and Silverton, the Vallican Whole, Burial Society and community cemetery, and numerous restaurants over the years, have brought new dimensions to the cultural life of the valley. There is a growing appreciation of the arts among the broader community, and a concern about the quality of food. There is also a sense that local people now see the beauty of the place in a way that they did not in the past.

The new people fought to preserve wilderness areas and the visual integrity of the landscape; and provided amenities and a diverse cultural experience of music, theatre and visual arts. This has also enriched life in the valley, while it has enhanced the potential for future diversification of the local economy into

tourism.

Another dimension has been the confrontation of the Slocan Valley community with new ideas. Integral components of the back-to-the-land ideology - self-sufficiency, mutual aid, barter, growing one's own food - were already an established fact of life in the area. In other respects, however, there have been challenges to established mores, values and ways of looking at the world. The idea of being content with less, of voluntarily choosing to be less affluent was familiar to the Doukhobors but more challenging to the values of other local people. So too was the idea that the local landscape's aesthetic value should be considered equal to its value as a source of raw materials for industry, or that ecological wholeness should be considered an appropriate objective for land-use policy, outside of human needs and desires.

The main areas where the ideology of the new people has made significant inroads is on the watershed issue and pesticides - both environmentalism with a very tangible and pragmatic slant.<sup>184</sup> There is also the general sense that economics is viewed in a broader way than it was previously. People in the valley now recognize, for example, that culture and the arts are good for the valley's general economic prosperity, and that some form of low-impact tourism may relieve the area's dependency on Slocan Forest Products.

---

<sup>184</sup> In both of these cases, and on the broader issues of local participation in decision-making and local control of the area's resources, the Regional District of Central Kootenay has consistently supported the positions maintained by the new people.



The new settlers advocated local control, the decentralization of decision-making power, and the transition to a more service-oriented economy. They have sought to bring resource extraction activity within the regenerative capabilities of the local ecosystem, maximize local benefits from local assets, and be responsible stewards of the land. Inevitably, these initiatives have met strong resistance from established industrial interests and certain government bureaucracies, and the local consensus necessary to overcome it has not yet been created. Thus, perhaps the most significant impacts of the newcomers in the Slocan Valley have yet to be realized. Both the Community Forest Project's recommendations and the Watershed Alliance's Community Tree Farm Licence proposal, developed and promoted by the newcomers (in association with local people), have the potential to transform the environmental, economic and political situation in the valley, but have not yet been put into practice.

In some cases the newcomers' message was obscured in the beginning and made less acceptable by attitudes and beliefs that were a barrier to understanding, and demonstrated little consideration for the people already living in the valley. Frequently, the greatest conflict came between the newcomers and the younger generation of locals - those raised on television and mass culture and much more attached to the "American Dream" of monetary and material accumulation than their parents were. The oldtimers have moved very little from the positions they held when the new people first arrived, and have proven to be resistant to change.

The newcomers have changed far more than the local people in terms of their lifestyle, but both communities have shifted in their willingness and abilities to listen and care about what each other is saying.

Life within the back-to-the-land community in the early years reflected the ideals and beliefs of the counterculture. With the passage of time, the demands of life - getting along with Anglo and Doukhobor neighbours, achieving particular political objectives, and raising children and finding economic subsistence - led to compromises. So too did changes in personal priorities, such as came with the realization that time was a more scarce commodity than money. The demands of life in this valley - its fragile, undifferentiated economy tied to the vagaries of outside markets and vulnerable to government interference, its distance from markets, and its long, dark winters - have exacted a toll on peoples' early intentions, just as they did for the miners, orchardists, and Doukhobors before them. The ways they have found to cope and stay here often meant decisions which conflicted with tenets of the back-to-the-land ideology. As a result, lifeways which were initially strongly alternative began to converge towards the norms of the local society. The degree of this convergence has varied between individuals, and generalizations are hard to make. It has come in outward appearances - the cars they drive, the types of houses they live in, where their children go to school - but also where their money comes from. Many are integrated fully into the business or bureaucratic economy, while Unemployment Insurance and welfare appear to remain a permanent source of income for many

valley residents, new and old alike. In my interviews, many have expressed the opinion that while the initial objectives of the counterculture remain valuable, they have yet to be realized.

At the same time, many residents feel their lifestyle is still an important and viable alternative to those which conventional society offers. They believe they live in a more ecologically-sensitive manner, their personal and community relations are deeper and stronger than those elsewhere, and they have at least the choice of being self-sufficient and independent from the system, even if they presently choose to be otherwise. It would seem that many of the original aspects of the ideology are still important to those living in the valley, even if they have not been able to live up to them. Often, people invest all their energy for making change in one or two specific areas, while leading otherwise "normal" lives. Despite the apparent convergence, many people within the new community desire change. With this, the fight to determine the valley's destiny continues.

Large-scale forces outside of local control have pushed the valley towards a bifurcation point, and its residents are currently engaged in a battle over which vision will dominate the valley's future. The old vision is a familiar one, particularly in B.C.: it sees industry dominate the landscape in every respect - visually, ecologically, socially, and economically. If industry continues on its current trajectory, it will, within a decade, have exhausted the local timber supply, degraded the visual and ecological integrity of the valley, and extinguished post-in-

dustrial options - such as tourism, retirement communities, and information-based service and professional businesses - in the process. The mill may close, or be forced to obtain its timber supply elsewhere. The highway that runs through the Slocan from north to south and now connects the scattered members of the valley community, will become increasingly but a conduit for chip trucks to Castlegar, ore trucks to the Cominco smelter in Trail, or tourists passing quickly through in search of the very things that the Slocan Valley offers today.

The conflict in the valley encapsulates the broader global picture. If we can resolve it in the valley (which will require an accommodation by the broader society) we can have a "window on the future". All the area's conflicts, up to the Celgar expansion, have been examples of corporate viability versus community sustainability. The people who are in power will have to change.

### **Implications to politics**

Forward-looking Slocan Valley community members acting to protect and enhance the quality of life in the area have introduced a new political process. This process has evolved in response to a different set of objectives and a different understanding of the policy environment than the model used by government and corporations. The intention of government policy has been to enhance the province's position in the world market in forest products, and the means to this end is ensuring the profitability of international forest corporations. On the other hand, the goal of the Community

Forest Management Project, the Slocan Valley Planning process, the Valhalla Society, and the Watershed Alliance, has been to maintain the qualities which make the Slocan a good place to live, while enhancing the long-term prospects for employment. Government and industry have limited time horizons; the local community is, hopefully, a permanent fixture of the landscape. The government resource agencies and industry have tended to manage for one thing - wood fibre - and have been reluctant to acknowledge the value of other resources. The local people perceive a wide range of values in the land - beauty, clean, abundant and reliable water, recreation opportunities, wilderness, and wildlife, as well as jobs and a monetary return to the community - and want these safeguarded as well.

The result, articulated in the recommendations of the Community Forest Management Project and the Community Tree Farm Licence proposal of the Watershed Alliance, is a political process for managing the local "household" that is very different from the current regime. Firstly, it is *decentralized*. Decision-making control over local resources would lie with the local community which, through an elected board, could hire personnel to plan and manage the community's resources. The process is *consultative*, i.e., local residents would have input into the setting of policy and management objectives; and *responsible*, since the elected committee would be accountable to the local community. It offers *continuity* since it would exist independently of the four-year time frame of provincial elections. And it is *co-ordinated* - the interconnectedness of all aspects of the local environment would

be reflected in the management process.

Sustainability is the thrust of the new political agenda, but there must be radical changes to public policy for it to be implemented. The Ministry of Forests appears to see things only through the eyes of an international forest industry, and consequently, local priorities and the unique aspects of the valley's environment are invisible to them, or appear remote to their concerns. Local people have a broader range of local knowledge and information, and a greater commitment to the place than professional managers operating from outside the area, and therefore have a greater concern about the results of industrial activity and a better grasp of the total implications of this activity on their environment and personal welfare. While recognizing the vital importance of a viable forest industry to the local economy, their concerns are not short-term nor focused exclusively on maximizing the monetary return from the resource, but rather in managing and developing it to the continuous benefit of all the valley's residents. This unique local perspective would seem to be the right approach for maintaining sustainable communities and mitigating the effects of the uncertain and turbulent contemporary environment.

The Slocan is a microcosm of the planetary situation. Over the past two decades, some progress towards another vision has been made, and the local system has changed subtly to become more viable. Yet, the fundamental organization remains the same. With the triumph of the industrial view still a real possibility, the establishment of a sustainable community remains in jeopardy. This is an allegory for the situation facing the rest of the world.

## **Implications to the Study to Geography**

This study is an insider's chronicle of the new peoples' experiences in the alternative community in the Slocan. An adequate description of the events of the last twenty years in the area would be impossible without drawing on the insights and perceptions of those who precipitated and participated in them. By using their words, both the texture of the valley and the nature of the new peoples' experience is portrayed in a manner that has meaning to the residents, and therefore should authentically inform the reader unfamiliar with the area or its people.

Geographers, with their traditional synthesis of the human and physical dimensions of the landscape, must recognize their potential role as agents of positive change towards a new social and political order. The Slocan Valley, like many other communities, is a potentially sustainable region. However, its sustainability is dependent upon the attitudes and values of the people, as well as the required structural changes to the system as a whole. Rural communities have traditionally been the "front line" in humanity's assault on nature, yet in the long term, the sustainability of their forests, agricultural lands, fisheries, etc., is crucial to the well-being of the larger society. Consequently, efforts to create a sustainable society must begin by helping communities recognize and respect the carrying capacity of the land, and by empowering the people to be good stewards of that land.

## **Implications to the Future**

I began this project as an exploration of the potential value of what was happening in the Slocan and other similar places with the feeling that it was an important and under-appreciated phenomenon. From my research it is concluded that the alternative ideology of the back-to-the-land movement offers no easy panacea, either to individuals looking for a saner and healthier way to live their lives or to societies concerned about equity and sustainability. Yet it is a direction we might well consider as a strategy to deal with the planet's ongoing deterioration under the industrial/capitalist model.

The counterculture vision describes a new paradigm; the study of the experience in the Slocan gives a glimpse of its potential and shows many of the obstacles to its emergence. Some of these obstacles are within the people themselves - particularly their difficulties in establishing dialogue with the pre-existing residents. Others have to do with the open system context within which they live. It is clear, from the evidence as expressed in their own words, that they are not masters of their own destinies. They control only a small fraction of their area's land base and their input into decision-making processes which directly affect their lives is limited because of the structural frameworks of the broader provincial economy and society. These kinds of obstacles must be overcome if the values, goals and aspirations that these people represent are to be realized.



The new people - and some of the local people who have been informed or activated by their presence - in the Slocan and in other similar places, have taken the first steps towards making this vision a reality. Through a common experience in confronting the opportunities and limitations of the place, and the experience of each other, they have seen what works, what does not, and what lies in the way. Many of those who came are not yet themselves ready to live in the world they have envisioned. Those who hold the real power over the destiny of the Slocan are not yet ready to acknowledge that their own worldview and *modi operandi* will not enable a sustainable community. But a process for change exists, and the weight of the global argument is shifting ever more in its favour.

I, like many others, believe there is promise for a new society in the vision articulated by people like Murray Bookchin:<sup>185</sup>

"We hope for a revolution which will produce politically independent communities whose boundaries and populations will be defined by a new ecological consciousness; communities whose inhabitants will determine for themselves within the framework of this new consciousness the nature and level of their technologies, the forms taken by their social structures, world views, life styles, expressive arts, and all the other aspects of their daily lives."

I believe there is hope for a society of justice, equity, ecological sensitivity, personal realization and fulfilment, and communality: a society where all participants acknowledge the bonds of their humanity, and where, above all, they recognize the fragility of this planet and vow to make their life upon it a

---

<sup>185</sup> Murray Bookchin, 1980, p. 45.

blessing for those to come. My immersion in the life of the valley in the past 10 years, and the research that followed from it, has given confidence that these overarching goals are possible - particularly where people remain intimately connected with place.

## Bibliography

- Adachi, K. The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976.
- Appleton, F. "Where Have all the Communes Gone?" The Harrowsmith Resourcebook. Camden, Ont: Camden House, 1979.
- Armstrong, W.H.G. Yesterday's Tommorows: A Historical Survey of Future Societies. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968.
- Bell, R.R. Social Deviance. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1971.
- Bellah, R. N., et al. Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life. New York: Harper and Rowe, 1985.
- Berg, P. and R. Dasmann. "Re-inhabiting California" Ecologist 7: pp. 399-401, 1977.
- Billington, R.A. ed. The Frontier Thesis. San Fransisco: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1967.
- Bookchin, M. Post-Scarcity Anarchism. Palo Alto: Ramparts Press, 1971.
- Bookchin, M. Toward an Ecological Society. Montreal: Black Rose, 1980.
- Bookchin, M. The Ecology of Freedom. Palo Alto: Cheshire, 1982.
- Bradley, T. and P. Lowe eds. Locality and Rurality: Economy and Society in Rural Regions. Norwich: Geo Books, 1985.
- Bradshaw, T.K. and E.J. Blakely. Rural Communities in Advanced Industrial Societies. New York: Praeger, 1979.
- Brinkerhoff, M.B. and J.C. Jacob. "Quality of Life in an Alternative Lifestyle: the Small-Holding Movement (North America)." Social Indicators Research. 14(2): pp. 153-73, 1986.
- Brown, L. Building a Sustainable Society. Washington: Worldwatch Institute, 1980.
- Campbell, R.R. and L. Garkovitch. "Turnaround Migration as an Episode of Collective Behavior." Rural Sociology 49(1): pp. 89-111., 1984.
- Cayley, D. New Ideas in Ecology and Economics. Transcript of "Ideas" series broadcast, C.B.C. Radio, May-June 1986.
- Clark, S.D. et al. Prophecy and Protest: Social Movements in Twentieth Century Canada. Agincourt, Ont.: Gage, 1975.

- Cotgrove, S.F. and A. Duff. "Environmental Values and Social Change." British Journal of Sociology 32(1): pp. 92-110, 1981.
- Cross, M.S. The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas: the Debate on the Impact of the Canadian Environment. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970.
- Devall, B. and G. Sessions. Deep Ecology. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985.
- Dickstein, M. The Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties. New York: Basic Books, 1976.
- Elgin, D. Voluntary Simplicity: Towards a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich. New York: William Morrow, 1981.
- Ellul, J. The Technological Society. New York: Vintage Books, 1964.
- Fellman, M. The Unbounded Frame: Freedom and Community in 19th Century American Utopianism. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973.
- Ford, T.R. et al. Rural USA: Persistence and Change. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1978.
- Gale, D.T. and P.M. Koroscil "Doukhobour Settlements: Experiments in Idealism." Canadian Ethnic Studies pp. 54-71.
- Gardner, H. The Children of Prosperity: Thirteen Modern American Communes. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.
- Goldsmith, et al. A Blueprint For Survival. Wadebridge, Cornwall: Ecosystems, 1973.
- Graber, E.E. "Newcomers and Oldtimers: Growth and Change in a Mountain Town." Rural Sociology 39(4): pp. 504-511, 1974.
- Goodman, M. ed. The Movement Towards a New America. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1970.
- Gower, J. No Clocks/No Mirrors: Late Twentieth Communalism in the Slocan Valley. Unpublished paper, UBC, 1987.
- Gower, J. The Slocan Valley Community Forest Management Project: A Stewardly Alternative?. Unpublished paper, UBC, 1987.
- Hamrin, R.D. A Renewable Resource Economy. New York: Praeger, 1983.
- Harris, R. Cole. "Industry and the Good Life Around Idaho Peak." Canadian Historical Review LXVI(3): pp. 315 - 43, 1985.
- Heath, D. et al. America in Perspective: Major Trends in the United States Through the 1990's. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.
- Hedgepeth, W. and D. Stock. The Alternative: Communal Life in New America. London: Collier-Macmillan, 1970.

- Herrero, L.A. The Conserver Society Alternative: A Community Values Study. MA Thesis, University of Calgary, 1981.
- Hine, R.V. California's Utopian Colonies. San Marino, CA: Huntington Press, 1953.
- Hine, R.V. Community on the American Frontier. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980.
- Hodgson, M. The Squire of Kootenay West: a biography of Bert Herridge. Saanichton, B.C.: Hancock House, 1976.
- Holloway, M. Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America 1680-1880. London: Turnstyle Press, 1951.
- Illich, I. Tools for Conviviality. New York: Harper Collophon, 1973.
- Illich, I. De-schooling Society. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.
- Inglehart, R. The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1977.
- Jacob, J.C. and M.B. Brinkerhoff. "Alternative Technology and Part-Time, Semi-Subsistence Agriculture: a Survey from the Back-to-the-Land Movement." Rural Sociology. 51(1): pp. 443-59, 1986.
- Johnson, W. Muddling Towards Frugality: A Blueprint for Survival in the 1980's. Boulder, Co.: Shambhala, 1978.
- Kantor, R.M. ed. Communes. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
- Kern, K. The Owner-Built Homestead. Oakhurst Ca.: Owner-Builder Publications, 1975.
- Kostash, M. Long Way From Home: The 60's Generation in Canada. Toronto: James Lorrimier, 1980.
- Langer, R.W. Grow It. New York: Avon, 1972.
- Larson, O.F. "Values and Beliefs of Rural People." in T.R. Ford (ed) Rural USA - Persistence and Change. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1978.
- Lewarne, C.P. Utopias on Puget Sound, 1885-1915. Seattle: University of Seattle Press, 1975.
- Lipset, S. Revolution and Counter-Revolution: Change and Persistence in Social Structures Basic Books: New York, 1968.
- Luov, R. America II. New York: Penguin, 1983.
- Marcuse, H. One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society. Boston: Beakon Press, 1964.

- Marx, L. The Machine in the Graden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Marien, M. "The Two Visions of Post-Industrial Society." Futures 9(5): pp. 415-431, 1977.
- Meadows, D. et al. The Limits to Growth: A Report From the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind. New York: Universe Books, 1972.
- Mealing, F.M. Toil and a Peaceful Life: The Doukhobours in British Columbia. Victoria: Provincial Archives Sound Heritage Series, VI(4), 1977.
- Nash, R. Wilderness and the American Mind. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Nearing, S. and H. Nearing. Living the Good Life. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.
- Norris, J. Old Silvertown British Columbia. Silvertown B.C.: Silvertown Historical Society, 1985.
- Ophuls, W. Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity: a prologue to a political theory of the steady state. San Fransisco: W.H. Freeman, 1977.
- Parrington, V.L. American Dreams: A study of American Utopias. New York: Russel and Russel, 1964.
- Perrow, C. "The Sixties Observed." in M.N. Zald and J.D. McCarthy eds. The Dynamics of Social Movements. Cambridge: Winthrop, 1979.
- Price, M.L. and D.C. Clay. "Structural Disturbances in Rural Communities: Some Repercussions of the Migration Turnaround in Michigan." Rural Sociology. 45(4): pp. 591-607, 1980.
- Raspiorch, A.W. "Utopian Ideals and Community Settlements in Western Canada 1880-1914." in H.C. Klassen ed. The Canadian West. Calgary: University of Calgary: pp. 37-62, 1977.
- Reich, C. The Greening of America. New York: Bantam, 1970.
- Roszak, T. The Making of a Counterculture. Garden City: Doubleday and Co, 1969.
- Roszak, T. Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Post-Industrial Society. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973.
- Ruddy, J. "The Americans Who Voted with their Feet." Macleans Magazine, 1968.
- Russ J. "The Slocan Valley" Mimeographed Manuscript published in Columbiana, 1988.

- Sale, J.K. Human Scale. New York: Putnam's, 1980.
- Sale, J.K. Dwellers in the Land: the Bioregional Vision. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1985.
- Schumacher, E.F. Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered. New York: Harper and Rowe, 1973.
- Shadrack, A. A Study in the Development of the Political Economy of the Slocan Valley of British Columbia: A Response to the Community Forest Management Project. M.A. Thesis, University of Regina, 1981.
- Shi, D. The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Simmons T.A. But We Must Cultivate Our Garden: Twentieth Century Pioneering in Rural British Columbia. PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1979.
- Smith, D.W. Quicksilver Utopias: The Counterculture as a Social Field in British Columbia. PhD Thesis: McGill University, Montreal, 1978.
- Solway, J. Canadian Alternatives in 1975. Ottawa: Secretary of State, 1976
- Steele, A. An Examination of the Cash and Technological Dependencies in a Self-Reliant Lifestyle. MA Thesis: University of Toronto, 1981.
- Trist, E. "The Environment and System-Response Capability." Futures, April, 1980: pp. 113-127, 1980.
- Udvardy, M.D.F. A Classification of the Biogeographical Province of the World. I.U.C.N. Paper #18: Morges, Switzerland, 1975.
- Vance, J.E. "California and the Search for the Ideal." Canadian Geographer. June: pp. 185-210, 1972.
- Vance, J.E. "Utopia on the American Earth." Geographical Magazine 52(8): pp. 555-60, 1980.
- Vining, D.R. "Migration between the core and the periphery." Scientific American 247(6): pp. 45-53, 1982.
- Westhues, K. Society's Shadow: Studies in the Sociology of Countercultures. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1972.
- Woodcock, G. and I. Avakumovik. The Doukhobors. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Young, D. et al. America in Perspective. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.



## Appendix A

### Schedule of Interviews

Much of the insight into the evolution of the Slocan Valley alternative community over the past twenty years has come from a series of semi-structured interviews with present and past residents of the area. To streamline the flow of text in the preceeding chapters, the names, dates, and locations of the interviews referred to in the text have been recorded in this Appendix.

Interviewee	Date of Interview	Location of Interview
Nancy Harris	November 22, 1986 January 10, 1987 January 17, 1987	Vancouver
Linda Rae Grabler	January 03, 1987	Winlaw
Erin Harris	February 14, 1987	Vancouver
Eric Clough	February 18, 1987 February 20, 1987	Owen Sound, Ont.
Carol Gaskin	February 20, 1987 February 22, 1987	Owen Sound, Ont.
Joel Harris	February 20, 1987	Owen Sound, Ont.
Judy Maltz	August 17, 1988	Silverton
John Herrmann	August 19, 1988	Hills
John Norris	August 19, 1988	New Denver
Burgid Schinke	August 20, 1988	Silverton
Richard Burton/ Barbara Foreman	August 20, 1988	Silverton
Colleen McRory	August 21, 1988	New Denver
Sam Tichenor	August 22, 1988	Silverton
Danyele Pernitzki	August 22, 1988	Silverton
Colleen Bowman	August 25, 1988	Hills

Jim Rutkowski	August 25, 1988	Silverton
Vicki Allen	August 28, 1988	Silverton
Sally Hammond	August 28, 1988	Silverton
Corky Evans	September 2, 1988 April 13, 1989 July 25, 1990	Winlaw  (by telephone)
TC Carpendale	September 2, 1988	Vallican
Pamela Stevenson/ Sandy Stevenson	September 3, 1988	Appledale
Rita Moir	September 3, 1988	Vallican
John Hodges	September 5, 1988	Winlaw
Fran Wallis	September 7, 1988	South Slocan
Ken Minchin	September 8, 1988	Silverton
Sarah Wearmouth	September 8, 1988	Silverton
David Orcutt	April 30, 1989 January 25, 1990	Perry Siding Nelson
Helga Copeland	April 20, 1989	Slocan
Herb Hammond	April 17, 1989 November 30, 1989	Vallican Slocan Park
Joel Russ	April 30, 1989 August 28, 1990	Perry Siding (By telephone)
Marcia Braundy	June 6, 1989 December 16, 1989 August 30, 1990	Vallican  (By telephone)
Ruby Truly	August 10, 1989 December 20, 1989	New Denver Rosebery
Bob Ploss	December 15, 1989	Passmore
Sally Lamare	August 17, 1990	(By telephone)
Larry Avis	August 20, 1990	Nelson
Dan Zarchikoff	August 25, 1990	Nelson

In addition, I have excerpted personal quotations from the transcripts of interviews conducted with Joel Russ and Lou Lynn, and Judy Maltz, by Linda Herrero in the Slocan in 1979.

## Appendix B

### The Ideology of the Alternatives Movement

The decline of the "hippie" aspects of the counterculture did not mean the end of the alternative critique or the new vision for society. During the 1970s, "there was a continuing search on the part of a large segment of the public for a more personally meaningful and socially responsible existence than that offered by conventional affluent or corporate life."<sup>186</sup> This search was fueled by a growing concern about the costs of uncontrolled economic and industrial growth (i.e. Meadows et al, 1972) and the deterioration of the environment. It led in many related directions: towards appropriate economics, political activity, and the creation of new bases for human association and development.

In the seminal work *Small is Beautiful*, E.F. Schumaker (1973) laid out the foundations for an ecologically- and socially-appropriate alternative economics. In his analysis, people and their communities, and nature and its ecosystems were being destroyed by the same things - large-scale technology and corporations. What was needed was human-scaled institutions and "appropriate technology", which allowed a wider distribution of economic power, minimized the impact of human activities on the environment, and did not rely on non-renewable resources. The "deep ecologists" like Murray Bookchin, and Arne Naess, saw the roots of the environmental crisis in the basic underlying attitudes of western publics. They spoke of the need for a radical re-orientation of

---

<sup>186</sup> Shi, 1985, p. 262.

personal values and beliefs in order to turn society in a more life-enhancing direction. Changing laws or increasing the regulation of industry was not enough; introspection and self-analysis were needed to discover the root of the problem. To disseminate the new values necessary to change the world, Ivan Illich and others advocated a revolution in our approaches to education. Waldorf (Rudolf Steiner), Montessori, and other types of alternative schools became popular. One lifestyle response was the concept of "voluntary simplicity" (Johnson, 1978; Elgin, 1981) stemming from a concern about the limits to growth, the rate of consumption of resources, and the spiritual and physical costs of acquisitiveness and affluence. It taught that "less is more" - that we could be content to consume less if our lives were satisfying and meaningful in other ways. In this intellectual climate of personal responsibility and environmental awareness, a preferred political orientation emerged. In 1973, Roszak observed: "Almost without exception these experiments [of the alternatives movement] blend into the tradition of anarchist socialism....Their politics runs to workers' control and community home rule."<sup>187</sup> In general, the intellectual developments of the alternative movement were holistic; i.e., they sought to see every aspect of life in the context of how it related to every other aspect, and considered ecology and economics together, in recognizance of their common root in the "oikos" or household. This thinking was the direct precursor to the idea of "sustainable development" popular in the 1980's (i.e., Brown, 1980, the Brundtland Commission report, 1987).

---

<sup>187</sup> T. Roszak, 1973, p. 288.

Most of the preceding movements have tended to support the argument for the back-to-the-land lifestyle, as in this observation by Ophuls (1977, p. 238):

"Where the [new recognition of limits and the need for a steady state] seems to lead is toward a decentralized polity of relatively small, intimate, locally autonomous and self-governing communities rooted in the land (or other ecological resources)."

In addition, throughout the decade there was an ongoing cross-fertilization between alternative thinkers in these various fields, and the people living on the land who were attempting to put the movement's ideals into practice. By the 1980s, the "alternatives movement" had become a sophisticated and comprehensive ideological and practical response to the limitations of the dominant society. Salway (1975) identifies its value orientations:

- communitarian/co-operative/convivial
- ecologic/minimalist/conservatory
- egalitarian/non-authoritarian/non-hierarchical
- oriented to personal, social and institutional growth and change
- decentralist/community-controlled/self-helping/member-run/grass roots
- non-sexist/non-manipulative/non-exploitative/informed/educated/activated<sup>188</sup>

One of the clearest examples of this marriage between theory and praxis is bioregionalism:

"Bioregionalism specifically values the local and the regional, seeing the revitalization of local places, peoples and cultures as perhaps the only sure way of healing the planet. Fundamental to the bioregional outlook is the idea of respecting natural boundaries over artificial, human-imposed boundaries; learning to live within the limits of the places we inhabit in a sustainable manner, over time, learning to care for the land, not exploit it....Rooted in ecology, the bioregional movement places emphasis upon all our relations - with the earth, with all other

---

<sup>188</sup> Quoted in Herrero, 1981, p. 29.

life-forms, with each other."<sup>189</sup>

This is the intellectual legacy of the alternatives movement and it has remained central to the lives of many engaged in the back-to-the-land experience. Each of the various strands of the alternative ideology have had, at some point, advocates and practitioners among the community of new people in the Slocan Valley and have consistently underlain their actions to alter its destiny.

---

<sup>189</sup> Excerpted from "What is Bioregionalism" - a brief explanation of the aims and beliefs of the movement - contained in an application form for the third North American Bioregional Congress, held in Lillooet, B.C., August, 1988.