

[Page 52 - On the Trail of Elizabeth May](#)ISSUE : [Issue 53](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1990/1/1

fighting the interests of the biggest industry, the logging companies involved. So that was really critical. And if I hadn't been there, it wouldn't have happened. You know, that's not to say that I did it by myself. It's just that someone needed to be in the Minister's office, doing the things I did. And there'd never been anyone in a Minister of the Environment's office who was there because they were an environmentalist. They're always there because they're either Liberals or they're Tories or they work for a minister, (What have we saved in South Moresby?) It's 1500 square kilometres of incredibly precious ecosystem. It's called the Canadian Galapagos because it has more rare and endemic plants and animals than any place else in Canada. It was either missed by the Ice Age, or pockets of it were missed by the Ice Age. So you have species that aren't found anywhere else. You've got old-growth forest with trees a thousand years old. You've got the traditional cultural and spiritual connections to the Haida nation, that lived on those islands for the last 10,000 years. And then the Haida population was mostly wiped out by smallpox in the late 1800s. But their totem poles and things are still there in various abandoned villages along the coast. It's got 11 species of whales and it's got the rare Peale's peregrine falcon, and it's got--it's just an incredibly beautiful and diverse ecosystem. And of course, before I started working in MacMillan's office, the Haida nation had been blocking the logging roads, and over 70 people had been arrested in November '85. People will remember that, because it was in the news--of Haida Indians, especially the elders--the old "Ice Cream Company Ltd, Cape Breton Shopping Plaza Sydney River, N. S. , 539-0424 'The finest Ice Cream Made Here \*Especial(y for 'ou OPEN 7 Days a Week ICE CREAM PARLOUR and BAKERY ladies--sitting in the logging roads with their Bibles open, being led away by the Mounties because they were blocking the logging on Lyall Island. I mean, it's not important (only) in terms of what was saved physically, but also in terms of the larger symbolic issue of: if we couldn't save South Moresby with all that going for it, what hope was there for anything else? If you didn't save an area the United Nations has already recognized as a world cultural site. And you've already got Prince Philip saying it should be saved. And you've got the Prime Minister saying it should be saved. And every political party at the federal level saying it should be saved. And still, it was only saved by the skin of our teeth. It was very, very nearly logged... It sounds like I'm boasting. Okay, but I played a role. I mean, I don't want to boast. But I felt pride and accomplishment in a number of areas. In the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Process leading to new legislation, which still hasn't come out. But it was hard to get the government to agree that we'd even reform the process. And the new Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Even though it got really sabotaged towards the end by the provinces, there are a lot of measures in there to protect the environment, and a lot of consultative mechanisms. The Priority Substances Advisory Board, which is a citizen-government-industry panel to decide what chemicals were the most high-priority to get under regulation. There were all kinds of things that were, if you will,



my influence. And a lot of it, too, was changing the atmosphere of government--the way the government dealt with environmental groups. And I don't know if that's completely fallen back to as bad as it was before I got there. But just convincing bureaucrats that the environmentalists were reasonable. Introducing the 1990 Z7, Hyundai. We sell cars that make sense. > Completely redesigned exterior and interior. • Now equipped with a peppy 4-cylinder multi-point fuel-injected engine • 3-cubic-foot larger interior • Available in sporty 3-door, practical 5-door, and handsome 4-door models. 34 STATE STREET ' --' SYDNEY, NOVA SCOTIA 539-4711 P.O. BOX 728 B1P6H7 people. And that it wasn't too big a risk to share confidential information with environmental groups. They'd do that kind of thing with provinces; and they'd trust a number of industries; but they really weren't going to trust a bunch of environmentalists and say, "This is the direction of our legislation--what do you think?" And convincing them that you could do that. That environmentalists were mature, important players, and had