

For Whales' Sake
By Jackie Hilderling

Green versus Red?

This will be the first time that I acknowledge potential extinction with a song in my heart. It is my perception that two human stereotypes are dying out: the redneck and the tree-hugger.

There was a time that these two extreme, combative personas thrived - the environmental alarmist era. That was a time when it was a necessity that public awareness be raised about government practices that allowed rampant, unsustainable resource use.

In this current age, however, I believe the line between green and red is becoming blurred and thinned. A healthy common ground is appearing where many may unite in realizing that there are limits to what the environment can bear and that we all want what is best for our children. More of us are recognizing that it is government that must be held accountable for practices that benefit so few and for which the costs are too high.

Be gone the unrealistic "zero-resource-use" posturing of environmentalists. No more "if it's green it'll kill you" attitude from resource-users. Rather, we could unite in adopting a value system that is based on the common valuing of our environment, rather than short-term economic gain. We could recognize that while we do have to harvest from the earth, it cannot be, to paraphrase one local politician, "inviting in all, ALL industry unless it is immoral e.g. gambling."

Business and government are well aware of this increasing common ground. Just look at the explosion of green claims in advertising and green talk from politicians.

It is a time of great consumer and voter empowerment, but also a time to be very alert. Current governments were voted in when environmental awareness is not what it is now. Their alliances are with industry. Government success is still measured in dollars.

It is to the benefit of these governments to breathe life into tree-huggers and rednecks in order to maintain the rift between green and red. Due to my work, I am sadly aware that the increase in public

environmental awareness has forced government alliance with industry further underground.

A few examples:

- Government attempted to remove habitat protection from the Species at Risk Act. (How do you protect an animal at risk without protecting its habitat?)
- Not succeeding in this, there was a recent attempt to remove "presence and availability of salmon" and "acoustic degradation" as activities that could impact the critical habitat or resident killer whales (Recovery Strategy draft Jan, 2008).
- DFO and Environment Canada scientists have had considerable limitations imposed on what they may share with the public.
- Our Prime Minister has eliminated the position of National Science Advisor. The relevance of this is best expressed in a quote from Elizabeth May, "Governing without a science base is like rolling the dice on the future."

Let's not be seduced back into the extreme, opposing roles of red and green but continue to embrace the empowerment to create positive change. At upcoming elections, see you on the common ground.

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