Dr. Moore-or-less: Judas of the ecology movement

ONE OF THE uglier personal disputes going on within the environmental movement (an arena famous for its ugly personal disputes) is the struggle between Monte Hummel, president of the World Wildlife Fund Canada, and Patrick Moore, chairman of the Forest Practices Committee of the Forest Alliance of B.C.

Patrick Moore... Wait a second! That wouldn’t be Pat Moore, the former president of Greenpeace, would it?

It would indeed. Dr. Moore-Or-Less, as we used to call him. A formidable dude, as the environmental movement, which once spurred him, is beginning to learn. The brainy PhD had another nickname. I should warn them: Dr. Beaver. Talk about foreshadowing!

Actually, Pat is the guy I hand-ed the job to after I quit, having served for a couple of years as the Greenpeace press and chairman of the board. Ask. For seven years in all as a backroom media advisor, idea man, fundraiser, campaign coordinator, and all-round volunteer eco-flack.

Moore served as press for a couple of years himself, until he was finally toppled in a combined coup d'état and multi-front assault, with Moore’s presidency in Vancouver being the final bulwark against the true internationalization of Greenpeace—or at least that’s how it was viewed at the time.

In the end, an international headquarters was set up in Amsterdam, and a guy named David McTaggart, not Moore, was named executive director. Perhaps the only sweet irony was that an international revolt began against a Caesarian, Moore, had ended in another Caesarian, Canadian, McTaggart, in the name of internationalism.

Of course, McTaggart has since been shown the door too. (Only those of us smart enough to resign avoid getting sooner or later dumped.)

McTaggart is now merely the honorary chairman of Greenpeace International, which he ruled for a decade after Moore. It happened last year. Since then, as far as I can gather, the international council has been in disarray.

I often say, out on the lecture circuit, that if Greenpeace had sired in any other country than Canada, the head office would still be there.

Can you imagine the Germans or Brits or Americans or Spaniards giving up the title? Not on your life. Believe it or not, all that back in the fight between Monte Hummel and Pat Moore, a

conflict that has its roots in another environmental battle long ago, one that Moore lost.

In 1979, having won an important court case over ownership of the Greenpeace name, the Vancouver office was in a position to rule the rapidly expanding organization by fiat, if it wanted. And that’s how Moore, who was then running the show, wanted it. He had packed the home board of directors with allies, and was in a solid position to hold on to power for life.

It was only after the Old Guard of the group in Vancouver ganged up on him, applying irresistible peer pressure, that he finally surrendered control. If he had not burned off so many old buddies, who turned on him because of his hubris, Dr. Moore-Or-Less might today still be chief poopah at Greenpeace, which would then presumably rule the world organization with an iron fist from Vancouver.

At the time, I was one of those who believed a true international organization could only be achieved by headquarters being in Europe, with equal representation for each country. An impeccable internationalist doctrine. In retrospect, I wonder. Maybe it would have been better if it had remained a home town dictatorship. Might have got more work done with less time wasted on internal politics.

Under Moore, it is unlikely that Greenpeace would today be campaigning against current forestry practices in B.C., but that would have put the organization so far out of whack with the rest of the environmental movement as to be laughable. The likeliest event is that, as chief executive, Moore would find himself stuck with some kind of policy, and would be forced to join the battle against Jack Munro, boss of the International Woodworkers of America, and Noranda kingpin Adam Zimmer-

Instead, Dr. Moore-Or-Less is working for Munro and Zimmerman.

I submit the poor reader to such arcane detail in order to prepare her or him for the news that, having been deposited at Greenpeace, and eventually manoeuvred out of the organization entirely by a cruel political trick, Pat Moore has been trying to re-define himself, first as a fish farmer, and now as a champion of "sustainable forestry practices," working through the medium of an industry-backed front organization called the B.C. Forest Alliance.

It would all be very disgraceful, except that, much as I hate to reveal this detail, the fact is that Moore was emphasizing the intellectual contest between conservation and conservationism a long time ago. He was always a Green Tory at heart.

His father, Bill, is a successful logger on the northwestern corner of Vancouver Island, at Winter Harbour, and Pat, the scion of a lumber baron, was always very touch a believer in the one-corporate-one-voice style of rule.

This is one of those columns where I want to continue the discussion in the next edition, partially because Dr. Moore-Or-Less is an intellectual and a tactician of considerable stature, to say nothing of being, in some respects, a genius, and his "defection," if that’s what it is, to the forest industry side of the argument, is bad news indeed for the environmental movement.

Poor Dr. Moore has been called the Judas of the eco movement, and even some old friends are afraid to acknowledge him in public.

People make the sign of the cross in front of him, and avert their hippie-children’s eyes.

Some environmentalists, like the WWF’s Monte Hummel, think Moore has "gone too far" in the zealotry of his attack on his former allies. He wonders why. Stay tuned, I’ll explain.