

POWER, PROTEST AND PESTICIDES

In 1978 BC Hydro revealed plans to route the 500kV Cheekye-Dunsmuir transmission line across the middle of Texada Island. This would require clearing the 8km long corridor, erecting the steel towers and constructing the two "reactor sites" with necessary road accesses.

Many residents were concerned when the public utility announced their plan to control weeds by spraying herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T. Many also questioned the need for massive electrical grid expansion and feared a possible tie-in to future nuclear power plans.

However many islanders welcomed the investment and appreciated the construction jobs that would occur.

BC Hydro planted survey pegs to flag the proposed right-of-way, some of which were removed by protestors. When BC Hydro won a court injunction (June 1980) to prevent more disruptions the newly-formed Texada Island Environmental Association rallied at Mout Bay to demand public hearings. The cause drew concerned citizens from all parts of the Sunshine Coast and beyond.

The Province reported on August 11, 1980 that 25 protestors halted bulldozers and 7 were arrested. They were later charged with contempt of court, fined and given suspended sentences (March 1981).

The issue was further complicated when a group calling themselves Direct Action (later known as the Squamish 5) took on the cause. They claimed responsibility for the theft of 200lb of dynamite and the subsequent (May 1982) bombing of the BC Hydro Dunsmuir substation on Vancouver Island. An anonymous phone call to a Vancouver radio station also threatened an attack on the Texada installations. RCMP investigated possible Texada connections but found nothing.



The controversy served to increase islanders' awareness of the misuse of pesticides and resulted in BC Hydro agreeing not to use them on Texada in the future.

In Fall 1986 an overwhelming number of Texada residents voted for a ban on pesticide use in the first referendum of its kind in BC.

Subsequently when the Forest Service required clearing around seedlings planted on Pocahontas more than 60 volunteers of all ages manually slashed the bracken ferns (see photo).

Though the use of pesticides is still concerning, the Cheekye-Dunsmuir line is a permanent reality.