

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sadness and thankfulness were the emotions I felt on reading the article "Delusions" by John Winters in the Winter '89 *Nastawgan*. I've spent much of a lifetime seeking (and finding) untravelled canoe country in the near North—long-unused portages or none at all, virgin campsites, and no-one else for many miles. Each time, within a few years, the sportsmen have arrived; toileting the only tent sites, burning the tent poles, and littering the virgin beaches with foot-slitting busted liquor bottles . . . even plundering a food cache. Each time I've moved further on, and had to move again. One such area was that travelled by Mr. Winters. On my first (32-day) trip there in '72 I saw two other people. It might seem that the NWT is the answer for the wilderness seekers, but at a recent symposium on canoeing that area the word from those who know is: "Better do it quickly; it's going . . . going . . ."

The reason for my feeling sad is obvious—but why thankful? I recently read Archie Hunter's *Northern Trader* and P.G. Downes' *Sleeping Island*. Both authors spoke of the "old North" (far North) and were thankful for having been amongst the last whites to experience it. I'm envious. But I'm thankful! Apparently I'm one of the last to have experienced some of the near North before it disappears forever before the onslaught of the population bomb. How nice. Lucky me. But what about future generations? Sportsmen (who have as much right to it as I) desecrate the spiritual, but they do not destroy the material—lumbering and mining do.

In the same issue of *Nastawgan* were the facts of the destruction of Algonquin Park. Last summer I revisited the unique and priceless Canadian heritage area known as Temagami and learned of the destruction in progress

there—some legal and the rest done when no-one is watching. Neither the government nor the MNR have the souls of future generations in mind. They are good businessmen thinking only in terms of present material profit. If some citizens in Minnesota could win preservation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (yes, its heavily used, it isn't true wilderness, but most of what's left is preserved—with constant battles), shouldn't Brian Back's Temagami Wilderness Society and the cheated Teme-Augama nation have all possible support for the sake of future Canadian Generations? Sandy Richardson wrote (same issue): "We now have a Conservation Committee in name only." Glenn Spence wrote in his platform statement: "Conservation activities on the part of the WCA must be increased."

In effect, Algonquin is really all but gone, isn't it? And the Ontario Government is spending vast quantities of taxpayer's money for nice studies done by very nice people in the Temagami area—while legal and illegal destruction continues right along. If an association is a *wilderness* association, should they be sitting by on their paddles while this happens? What desirable wilderness will the members' grandchildren have? What will future writers for *Nastawgan* have to write about? At the rate it's all going, they will only be able to write book reports on how it seemed to have been with their pioneer grandparents back around 1990.

Wilderness-loving people are a small minority, but you should see the masses of minority enjoying the BWCA! Don't future Canadians deserve just as much for their souls as Minnesotans? Considering how many Americans use Canada, I think Canadians deserve lots more! Meanwhile . . . it's going . . . going . . .

Bob McCoubrie

