

Log exporting companies may lose federal timber

By CATHERINE SIEGNER
Of the Emerald

U.S. Rep. Don Bonker, D-Washington, has introduced a bill that Pacific Northwest timber companies are not likely to support.

The measure, introduced last week, would prohibit privately-owned mills from purchasing national forest timber if the mill's own logs are exported.

Timber exporting has been a controversial topic in the Northwest for many years, and Bonker's legislation is only one of many attempts to limit or end the practice.

Federal law currently prohibits the export of timber from national forest land, but logging companies may purchase federal timber equal to the amount of their own that has been harvested for export, in a practice known as "substitution."

"Bonker's bill would phase out substitutions over a six-year period," says Dave Fidanque, Eugene-based aide to Fourth District Congressman Jim Weaver, D-Ore. "It's the best way the government has of getting at log exports."

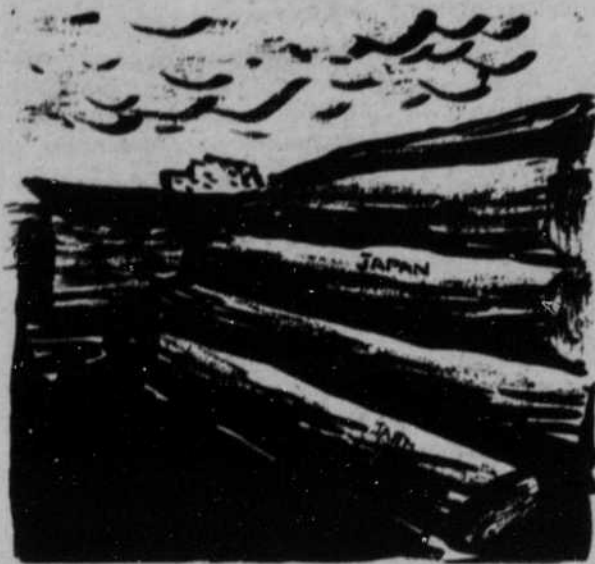
Fidanque admits the government could ban exports outright if it wanted, but he says such an action would undoubtedly polarize sentiment on the issue even more.

"There has always been two sides — to export or not to export," says Dale Rettmann, who works with timber sales and administration for the Willamette National Forest. He says an existing federal law that went into effect in 1974 limits the amount of national forest timber private companies may substitute to the average amount purchased between 1971 and 1973.

The Willamette National Forest sold \$165 million worth of timber to private companies in fiscal 1978 (from Oct. 1977 to Oct. 1978), but it is difficult to tell how much of that was actual substitution because not all private timber companies export their own logs.

A Willamette Resource Technician says the problem is compounded because the figure includes timber that is contracted out but may stand for two years or more before actual cutting.

Since 1973, many companies have stopped exporting logs, according to Rettmann. "They've



Graphic by Tom Etter

stopped exporting because of the hassle of it. There's a lot of paperwork involved, and they are gradually losing their own timber base (against which their allowed amount of national forest timber is calculated).

Previous exporters such as Boise-Cascade, Champion International and Georgia-Pacific no longer do so. Weyerhaeuser does not export its timber because it "has enough of a land base of its own," Rettmann says.

Fidanque says his boss has introduced legislation similar to Bonker's "every year he's been back there," (in Washington, D.C.). Weaver is co-sponsoring the current bill and chairs the forestry subcommittee to which it will be assigned. If passed out of the Forestry Committee, the bill will next be heard by the full House Agriculture Committee, and then voted on by the House and Senate, he says.

There's a possibility Bonker will attempt to tie the export bill to the RARE II legislation regarding Forest Service wilderness allocations, Fidanque says, but that hasn't happened yet.

"If the timber industry is concerned about land being set aside as wilderness, they should be concerned about timber exports," he adds. "If you export a log, you're exporting American jobs."

EPA to reduce laboratory staff

Citing a "change of mission," the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's laboratory in Corvallis is reducing its staff 22 percent by Oct. 1.

The lab conducts tests on water samples to determine if pollution is present among other activities.

EPA Information Officer Karen Randolph says the cut-back is a result of administration policy and budget priorities.

"The decision has economic implications," she says. "EPA's

focus is turning to health issues instead of just protection of ecosystems."

Randolph says the EPA will still be involved in ecosystem protection through food chain research, but will do so more indirectly. Work previously done by the lab staff will now be contracted out, she says.

Although health research is not the EPA's specialty, Randolph says some work in the area will be done at the agency's lab in Las Vegas.

Exactly what positions will be

eliminated in Corvallis has not yet been decided, she says, but the reduction is now in process and should be completed by the start of fiscal 1980. After the layoffs, there will be 83 permanent, full-time employees, compared to the current 106.

"There is a variety of options for these people," Randolph says. "Some will be transferred to other Civil Service jobs, or shifted to other lab positions."

She emphasizes that the staff cutback will not adversely affect the environment in Oregon.

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