

Bill Hall

Idaho as a Boise Cascade tree farm



The ham-handed advertising campaign that Boise Cascade Corp. is now running in newspapers across the state in an attempt to convert Idaho into a government-subsidized tree farm is doubly disappointing:

Idaho primitive areas have a higher use than that. And this patronizing campaign to shuck the yokels into letting Boise Cascade get away with it represents a reversal in attitude by a major Idaho corporation that was once the epitome of a company that respects the intelligence of the people of the state it calls home.

Any time a major corporation is headquartered in an underpopulated state, there is a suspicion that the corporation regards the state as a company town that should do what it is told — whether the suspicion is true or not. For years the suspicion was less true of Boise Cascade than of most large Idaho operations.

Today the charge would appear to be more true of Boise Cascade than almost any other corporation. Even Idaho Power Co., which used to treat Idaho as its private fief, has become conscious of its previous excesses. Idaho Power still tries to run the state, but now it has the courtesy to say please.

Boise Cascade isn't demanding that the state do this or that. It is trying to con the state. It is telling the state how

beneficial it would be to let the corporation reduce the size of Idaho's primitive areas. Boise Cascade wants to carve up the forest and make the people think it is for the general welfare rather than for Boise Cascade's welfare.

And that is the most unsettling part of the corporation's change in attitude. This is a corporation that has come to believe its own propaganda. It really believes that what's good for Boise Cascade is always good for Idaho.

If that attitude succeeds at this juncture and in this era, the slabs of primitive area that Boise Cascade wants to convert to logging area would be only the first losses to this corporation and others.

The so recently awakened movement to save some unspoiled corners of America before it is too late has now run up against the energy crisis. The nation is now entering a period of shortages that is caused in part by population growth, in part by growth in per-capita consumption and in part by a corporate and governmental tendency to satisfy any level of consumption while remaining oblivious to the consequences.

The consequences are the shortages that are now beginning to develop. And the remedy is not stepping up consumption even more. That merely compounds the problem.

The present struggle over how much of the primitive areas Idahoans must give up to Boise Cascade is a pivotal point in this state between the belated attention to conservation and the plunge into a new era of industrial rape.

If the primitive areas are sacrificed on the altar of people who want to place today's customers ahead of tomorrow's grandchildren, then the same attitude will carry over into similar decisions on other matters. If this move succeeds — especially by these deceitful methods — then other conservation causes will be jeopardized.

The salmon and steelhead will have to

give their lives for unlimited and unfettered power production. The bottom of Hells Canyon will disappear below hydroelectric reservoirs. The White Clouds peaks will be turned over to the open-pit miners.

If the convenience of providing available primitive area timber to Boise Cascade carries the day, then the expedient course will be more tempting everywhere.

Boise Cascade formerly had some self-restraint in such matters. Today the corporation will do anything to get more timber the easy way, including the invasion of primitive areas.