

Oct 23, 1990.

### **Going to Sleep**

This is the season for animals to begin hibernating. According to a recent article in The Globe and Mail, the Columbian squirrel went dormant as early as July. The latest group of beasts to go torpid include lumber producers, distributors and retailers.

True hibernators we're told include bats, prairie dogs, mice, chipmunks and squirrels. Their nervous systems remain active at near freezing temperatures that would kill a non-hibernator. Heartbeats drop from a normal 200-400 beats a minute down to five.

In the case of lumber folk, hibernation is tied to market temperature. That is, sluggishness tends to set in as the market cools. At the same time, extreme freezing market conditions, such as presently prevail, are causing concern for industry longterm health. Some analysts have determined that credit concerns can have rapid cooling effects on market temperature. Interestingly, recession tends to induce a form of hibernation that actually steps up nervous system activity in lumbermen.

In the case of hibernating distributors, second opinion diagnosis has discovered death, with accompanying reduction in traders' effectiveness. During dormancy, hibernation not uncommonly results in loss of up to 40 per cent of total body weight and disproportionate reduction in bank balance.

The phenomenon of continuing to send and receive faxes during hibernation is, of itself, not unusual in the lumber industry. There are several documented instances of wholesalers purporting to carry on business after succumbing. We can report the case of a dearly beloved friend and partner, whom B.C. Tel continued to bill almost 10 years after even Revenue Canada conceded his personal demise. Admittedly the communication in this extreme instance tended to be mostly one way. However, who are we to judge the effectiveness of business communication during hibernation even in its extreme form. Neither would we underestimate the scope of B.C. Tel's service, hereby demonstrated to be out of this world. Moreover, the new age concept of time obviously encompasses more than the traditional two minute LD direct dial rate definition. Not to belabor the point, but what is time anyway? Like the lumber market, is it not a state of mind – as in hibernation itself? With lots of it on hand these days - time, that is - it's perhaps not unusual to find lumber traders embracing mental dormancy as a natural attempt at self-preservation.

Some manufacturers are even embracing hibernation at the same time as their offering lists bravely advertise inventory subject to prior sale. Admittedly, in some instances bankers are influencing altered states of mind - or, at the very least, reserving the right to initiate wakeup calls.

Bears and skunks are not true hibernators. Their body temperature drops only a few degrees and female bears give birth during winter. Marketing bears and skunks will often

continue to roam - even during winter - ( See Goldilocks) - though mostly they surface only occasionally to complain of the frost (perhaps a special abhorrence for cold calling?). Characteristically they cannot envision Spring and rarely give birth to anything worthwhile ( as in ideas, or profitable orders) during hibernation. In the case of some lumber dealers, some have alleged that even abbreviated hibernation can convert into bankruptcy contrived to enhance personal wealth. Their state of torpor has been identified with snakes. We would not make this allegation.

We're told that even a true hibernator wakes up in the winter. For ground squirrels, it's every 15 days; for bats, every 30-40 days. One lumber trader recently told us he awoke as often as three times on the same day - each instance the result of delayed subconscious response to telephone ringing. Retrieval of messages from the answering machine later revealed that, in order, the calls were from a trucker in search of haul east; his wife; and - the third - of a more personal nature - from London Drugs. Though some Oakland A's fans might disagree, Major League Baseball players are not true hibernators. Many play winter ball in the Caribbean.

According to Time-Life Books, at least one bird, the poor-will, has been found to hibernate. Some claim he came by his name as a fly-by-night lumberman.

Some animals, such as snails and lungfish, will "estivate" – become inactive during the summer, if it's very dry. In this regard, lumbermen are unusual in that some are quick to acknowledge states of dryness - that evolve into suspended animation year 'round, depending on market conditions. During such extreme dry spells, measured by sales results - winter or summer - some lumbermen have been known to seek relief from estivation with prolonged lunches at The Marble Arch Pub. While such habits may have minimal longterm ill effects on lungfish or sperm whales - other than reducing their count - with accompanying reduction in dinner invitations to The Cannery. In lumber traders such conduct can lead to early death and slurred speech.

Chemicals in a hibernator's blood can make non-hibernators go dormant. Some call it impotence. Springtime usually corrects this condition, although a lime spray is recommended. The Globe and Mail article concludes that researchers, who do not fully understand hibernation, would like to apply the phenomenon to humans. Since it has already been examined in lumbermen, undoubtedly research in humans will follow.

*(written by Ernie Harder ... at time when the market had turned totally quiet .. as in dead quiet... "gone to sleep" some said) ... article submitted in Oct, 1990 to Madison's Lumber Reporter, who responded "We'll sleep on that.. 'til March" ..*