

Highway push on by EDC

by Bruce MacInnis

Millions of dollars will flow into the Comox Valley if a road link is maintained between Cumberland and Port Alberni, the economic development committee claims.

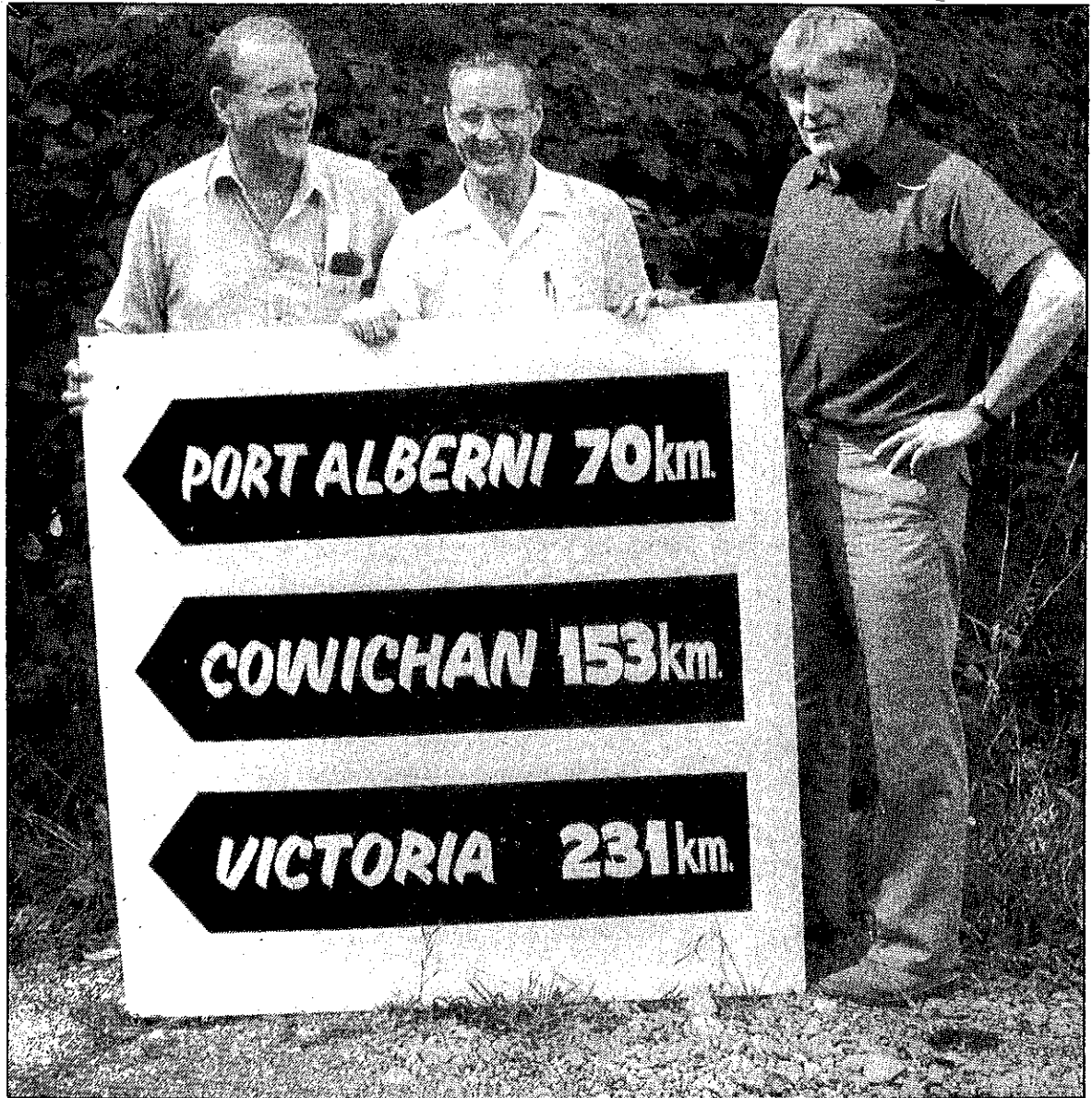
Economic development officer Walt Lengerke, committee chairman Jack Turner and Cumberland Mayor Bill Moncrief want Premier Bill Vander Zalm to approve a gravel road going around the near shore of Comox Lake and linking up with the Crown Zellerbach logging road to Port Alberni.

The seven-mile link would give motorists an alternative to the Island Highway and create a circle route around the lake, Lengerke said.

And if the link couldn't be built, an existing 17-mile logging road around the far shore of the lake would draw more traffic if the public knew it was being maintained, he added.

Figures from the Alberni Economic Transportation Committee suggest a \$17-million paved highway would yield more than \$19 million in increased revenue to the Comox Valley over the next 20 years.

But the local economic development spokesmen say a well-maintained gravel road would cost far less and still benefit the Valley by cutting the by-road distance to Port Alber-



Jack Turner, Bill Moncrief and Walt Lengerke point the way

ni in half.

Moncrief claims the proposed link has already been surveyed by the province and notes Crown Zellerbach already maintains its stretch of road from the south end of Comox

Lake to Port Alberni. He adds, however, that the economic development committee wants some provincial guarantee that the maintenance will continue.

And if the new link cannot be built, the old route around the

far shore of Comox Lake would be a strong second choice, says Moncrief. But again, he wants assurance that it would be maintained by the government.

"Part of the problem is to get people to be aware that it's there," Moncrief said. "Eighty-five vehicles went over it in a cavalcade this spring, but people don't think of it as an alternative."

Moncrief said the new route would also offer access to lakes and recreation areas in the Strathcona Park area and boost business by bringing people into the Valley to shop.

In a letter to Vander Zalm, Lengerke and Turner also asked the department of highways to replace some culverts and grade the road surface at least four times per year.