

EDITORIAL

BY AND LARGE, *BC Studies* publishes unsolicited submissions that have survived the review process. Therefore a given issue tends to be a rather ad hoc collection of articles and reviews on different topics, which, given its readers' divergent interests, is probably just as well. However, some topics obtrude on this process, creating more focus than we had intended. Such is the case with this issue, which, in effect, has been taken over by the forests of the province and by the controversies in which they are situated.

The foci of drastically different agendas and values, British Columbia's forests are probably the most contested sites in the province. They are not neutral, objective components of nature, but rather, as argument swirls around them, they are constructed in different ways by different groups of people for different purposes. It is not even clear who owns them: they participate in a colonial confrontation over land between colonized and colonizers. If it were established, as has long been too easily assumed, that most of them belong to the colonizers, there would be little agreement about the wisdom of current forms of tenure or about possible alternatives. Nor is there any consensus about how the forests should be used. Almost all British Columbians favour some form of logging, but argue about its extent and about technologies for moving logs that range from the most highly capitalized to horses. The claim is increasingly put that, even in economic terms, many of the province's forests are more valuable for uses other than lumber or pulp wood a claim that sits ill on communities that have come into existence to create these products within the old Fordist alliance of big business and big labour. And, as the recently imposed American duty on softwood lumber

shows only too clearly, the forests are sites where international pressures aimed at the standardization of practice within an increasingly global economy confront national, provincial, or more local practice and, as such, raise issues about the possibility of difference. In another vein, a United Nations report suggests that all the world's remaining mature forests will likely be obliterated within forty years, thereby wrenching the world's ecology even more out of kilter. A not insignificant portion of the world's contemporary mature forests are in British Columbia. What, then, are our forests for? In many cultures, forests have been sites of introspection, and as British Columbians muse about life and forests, they reach different conclusions and argue intensely.

One of the more innocuous and useful byproducts of all of this might just be this unplanned issue of *BC Studies*. In its way, it is an inadvertent primer that introduces many of the issues and locates much of the relevant literature. Used this way, a reader might well begin with the review articles by Bruce Shelvey and Fred Gale, the former dealing with a burgeoning literature in environmental history on western North American forests, the other with the current crisis in the BC forest industry and with possible remedies. The article by Scott Prudham and Maureen Reed compares forest policies in Oregon and British Columbia in order to clarify the particular context of the politics of forests in British Columbia. Lorna Stefanick's article on "Baby Stumpy" examines the different clusters of values (frames) that surrounded the debate over forest practices in Clayoquot Sound. If Christopher Roth's article on Tsimshian naming seems on another track altogether, this is only because most of us do not understand a culture that names and relates to the land – and forests – in ways with which we are deeply unfamiliar. Set against the other articles in this issue, his is a reminder both that forests are apprehended through cultural lenses and that indigenous and very un-European lenses occupy the near background of this province.

The editors