

EDITORIAL

SINCE WE TOOK OVER THE EDITORIAL DIRECTION of *BC Studies* almost two years ago, we have not, until now, published a theme issue. This was quite deliberate. The readership of this journal is exceedingly diverse, and topics of great interest to some are tedious to others. Any theme issue will “miss” a fair portion of our readers, and a succession of such publications may mean that a given reader finds nothing of interest in several consecutive issues. We did not want this to happen. Nor are we really equipped to be book-sellers — which is where the production of theme issues leads. *BC Studies* is a scholarly journal, one that we seek to make as diverse, intriguing, and accessible as possible.

But from time to time it will be important to publish theme issues, and this is one of them. Two years ago there was an important conference, *Trouble in the Rainforest*, at UBC and Simon Fraser. It was held partly to honour the centenary of the birth of Harold Innis, probably Canada’s principal thinker about resource industries; economic development; and the social, cultural, and political effects of distance. It was also an opportunity to bring together a diverse group of highly qualified people to reflect on the momentous changes taking place in BC’s principal industry. Some twenty papers were presented, and here we publish three of them, all devoted to aspects of the pervasive current restructuring of the spatial economy of BC, particularly as it bears on the forest industry. There could hardly be a single topic that affects more British Columbians, or inserts itself more pervasively in the province’s ongoing political debates.

Roger Hayter and Trevor Barnes, both economic geographers, analyze the transition in the coastal forest industry from a system of production — Fordism — centered on the assembly line and routinization of work, to another system — flexible production —

based on much less standardized methods. Fordism was characterized by production inflexibility and a rigid division between management and labour. Management organized work practices, many of them repetitive and dull, and unionized labour received a substantial wage. More flexible methods introduced in the last twenty years are breaking down the Fordist divide between management and labour, and are tending to replace it with a core of well paid, well educated, and versatile employees, and a periphery of the poorly paid, the semi-employed, and the unemployed. Different forest communities, Hayter and Barnes show, have responded to and fared differently in this transition, full as it is of promise and dangers.

Clark Binkley, a forest economist, argues that our forest tenures have imposed a rigid and uniform grid that has discouraged flexible, varied approaches to forest management. Forest land should be zoned, he argues, some of it devoted to high input, high yield forestry, designed to maximize growth production, some of it preserved in parks, and some opened to limited, ecologically sensitive forestry. Binkley thinks that such zoning would yield *more* wood than is currently available *and* enhance our capacity to protect forest ecologies.

Thomas Hutton, an urban planner, explores the changing relationships between Vancouver and the rest of the province. He points out that Vancouver is becoming less the core of a provincial economy based on primary resources than a focus of service industries, high tech industries, and trans-Pacific connections. The offices of resource companies no longer dominate the central business district, the city's east side is less clearly a working class district tied to resource industry employment, and the sawmills along the Fraser River are less prevalent than formerly. To some extent, Vancouver and the rest of the province are decoupling. As with the passing of Fordist production, a relatively fixed set of relationships yield to more varied and flexible arrangements.

These three articles intersect with each other in various ways, and raise basic questions with which, community by community, British Columbians will have to grapple. Especially in the province's smaller settlements, economic and social pressures are enormous, and they relate in good part to the changes in production, land tenure, and relative location addressed in these articles.

In retrospect, the province has lived within a simple system of capital-intensive, primary-resource production that has created much

prosperity while depleting the resources on which this prosperity depends. For much of the post-war period BC's abundance of resources has shielded us from competitive pressures and from the need to develop more subtle land uses and larger returns from resources. That shield is now breaking down. Heirs to a long boom that, in a sense, has discouraged learning, we are not as a society particularly well placed to cope with the new realities.

Clark Binkley is probably right that forest tenures will have to be changed, and that the province should move towards a zoned forest. Zoning is already happening to some extent. The old tenures face increasing criticism: from Native peoples and other local communities that are without decision making capacity about the forests around them, and from the forest industry itself as it demands secure territory for high-cost, high-yield forestry. Even the Barrett and Harcourt NDP governments, bent on a measure of forest reform, did not tackle the issue of tenure, judging it too explosive politically. Sooner or later it will have to be faced. As tenures are loosened up and access to the forest is gained in a greater variety of ways, and as work is reorganized within increasingly flexible regimes of production, it may become possible to think of a whole new set of relationships between the people of British Columbia and the forests amid which we live. At one extreme, high yield industrial logging in designated areas, at the other, perhaps, small scale wood lot logging. In some areas, large mills, large companies, and farmed forests. In others, low impact community based forestry tucked into treasured landscapes and yielding small, high-value-added manufactures. The permutations and combinations are numerous, and they point away from the sharp polarities — civilization and wilderness, parks and industrial land uses — that dominate current debate.

Such, it seems to us, is the importance of the articles published here. They describe a set of basic British Columbian relationships, currently in flux and open to improvement. They should promote long discussions, less perhaps in our universities than in our varied communities, discussions that can be expected to lead in different places to quite different conclusions. Out of them just might begin to emerge a set of made-in-BC solutions that point towards a saner relationship between people and land than, for the most part, has been our recent lot in British Columbia.

The editors



Alpulp, photo by Jack Cash, Sep. 9, 1957. Special Collections, UBC Library, MacMillan Bloedel Limited Photograph Collection, Box 27, BC1930/526/9758.