EDITORIAL

Looking over the pages of this issue of *BC Studies*, wondering whether there are any common threads in the contributions of our summer authors, we are drawn back half a century to recall a slogan of the 1960s that has demonstrated a chameleon-like capacity to survive by taking on different hues of meaning as circumstances change. "Power to the People" was a counterculture mantra, expressing youthful resistance to oppression by "the establishment." In 1971 the phrase became the refrain of a John Lennon song apparently inspired by his conversations with new left historians ("Say We Want a Revolution"). A quarter century on, we have *All Power to the People!* – a powerful documentary film examining "problems of race, poverty, dissent, and the universal conflict of the haves versus the have nots." Today the words "Power to the People" are as likely to refer to efforts to introduce renewable energy technologies as they are to social circumstances. So one American non-profit organization takes this phrase as its name to describe its work enlisting volunteers to bring solar electricity to community buildings in rural areas of the Global South, and the *Economist* magazine (2 September 2010) uses it more broadly to describe the growing number of initiatives "promoting bottom up ways to deliver energy to the world's poor."

Our opening article might lead one to frame this reverberating phrase as a question rather than as a statement: "Power to the People?" BC Hydro – formally the BC Hydro and Power Authority – was established by the amalgamation in 1961 of the BC Electric Company and the BC Power Commission, which was established in 1945 to bring electricity to smaller communities across the province. Hydro's mandate has been defined succinctly as the production and delivery of "reliable power, at low cost, for generations." As Marjorie Griffin Cohen and John Calvert of Simon Fraser University show, however, the last decade or so brought a series of changes with far-reaching consequences to the operations of this public utility. For the most part these changes mirrored those in many other jurisdictions, driven by shifting political convictions and broadly informed by the market-driven ideology of neoliberalism, which have forced the deregulation, privatization, and restructuring of state-owned and -operated enterprises around the globe.

In British Columbia and in North America more generally these developments have coincided with a rapid rise in electricity prices, even though the rationale for promoting competition almost invariably

emphasizes the cost savings that will result from the elimination of (quasi-) monopolies. Cohen and Calvert interrogate the reasons for this seemingly paradoxical coincidence, and their conclusions provide much food for thought about the intricate imbrications of ideology and politics and the ways in which these play out in everyday circumstances. The picture they paint is neither simple nor particularly pretty. Muddle, misdirection, and "spin" are all part of a story in which some might also incline to find hidden agendas and duplicity. By Cohen and Calvert's account, at least, policies designed to encourage independent power generation and plans for major, energy-intensive resource development in the province promise a future marked by substantially higher prices for electricity supplied to domestic consumers. The question implicit in their analysis is whether BC Hydro's role is to provide economical power for the people or to underwrite opportunities for private/corporate profit from development of the province's resources.

Power for some people might be the underlying motif of Myler Wilkinson and Duff Sutherland's study of Doukhobor-Sinixt relations in the small corner of southeastern British Columbia where the Kootenay River joins the mighty Columbia. The power with which these two authors from Selkirk College are concerned is not electricity but the power of certain peoples to exercise rights and authority at the expense of others. At one level their story is a depressingly familiar one in this province, of indigenous people dispossessed of their land and marginalized by newcomers. The fundamentals of this process have been well documented by many scholars in learned and important books and in pages of earlier issues of *BC Studies*: and its consequences confront us yet. For all that, this micro-study has a fresh, distinctive, and perhaps especially poignant quality. The encounter at its centre brought a small number of people, members of a communal, pacifist refugee group properly known as the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (themselves subject to considerable suspicion and hostility from the wider Euro-Canadian population), to displace, by what they understood to be legal purchase, an indigenous family (which had sought to adapt as best it could to the changes that accompanied European settlement) from its ancestral lands. More than this, the displaced family, which relocated to its people's traditional lands south of the forty-ninth parallel, saw its group, the Sinixt, officially declared extinct within Canada in 1956.

Unfortunate though these events were, and unpropitious though the prospects of Sinixt recognition may have seemed in 1956, Wilkinson and Sutherland's story has a surprising and empowering twist. Descendants

of the displaced family earned considerable success in American society, and a few years ago Doukhobor and Sinixt representatives came together on the banks of the Kootenay River for an apology to be given and accepted at the dedication of a memorial stone for the displaced Sinixt family. In these small gestures we might see seeds of the reconciliation and understanding necessary for a future in which indigenous peoples are granted voice, justice, and some part of their traditional lands to enhance their prospects in a more inclusive and equitable society. To paraphrase Wilkinson and Sutherland, "For both settlers and indigenous peoples in British Columbia," this would be a welcome "story of beginnings, not conclusions; of departures, not arrivals."

The longer history of the imbalances of power between peoples into which the Doukhobor-Sinixt story fits is sketched in part in the final article in this issue, by former *BC Studies* editor Cole Harris of the University of British Columbia. This is Harris's deposition as an expert witness to the court in *Tk'emlups Indian Band v. Canada and BC*, to be heard in Kamloops. Necessarily printed here as submitted to the court, this report relates to two specific questions: (1) whether the Kamloops Reserve was lawfully created in 1862 and (2) whether it was lawfully reduced in 1866. We include this document in *BC Studies* for several reasons. It deals with an important facet of the provincial past (and present); it provides a most useful account of the formulation of land policy and the creation of Indian reserves in British Columbia; and it demonstrates something of the differences between an academic article and an expert report prepared for court proceedings. In this latter regard it is important to note that the duty of an expert witness is to assist the court and not to be an advocate for any party and that, in this particular commission, Harris was asked to: describe the reserve creation process in colonial British Columbia; describe imperial and colonial approaches to reserve establishment during Governor Douglas's administration; describe the same during Governor Seymour's administration; and consider other relevant aspects of reserve creation in colonial British Columbia from his vantage point as a historical geographer.

Our third piece in this issue, by Simon Fraser University doctoral student Ron Verzuh, focuses upon four concert performances by the African-American singer and actor Paul Robeson at the Peace Arch Border Crossing between 1952 and 1955. Organized by the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, these events are here subject to detailed scrutiny and revealed to be more about power than about music. The concerts were precipitated when the US government exercised

its power to prevent Robeson, an "un-American activist," in the argot of the McCarthy era, travelling beyond its bounds. They revealed the power of rhetoric when Robeson said that no power on earth would prevent him from speaking out for his people. They sought to capitalize on the power of people assembled en masse to influence government policy, and they were both instruments and reflections of the power of union organizers and of unions. Using reports on the concerts, Verzuh is able to demonstrate the power of the press in shaping perceptions of public events, and he also reminds us of the power of legendary and heroic figures to inspire others when he points out that young trade unionists in attendance at the 2002 commemoration of the 1952 concert were sufficiently moved by their encounter with history to consider taking up leadership responsibilities in the future.

To conclude, from these remarks and the pages that follow, that power is everywhere is to produce another echo, not of John Lennon or the 1960s counterculture, but of postmodernist Michel Foucault. And it is both appropriate and accurate to conclude thus. We may think first of power as the discrete and direct power of electricity, of the sun, of machines, of human actors, and of groups, but power is also pervasive, diffuse, and discursive. Politicians act within a neoliberal discourse to shape the policies of BC Hydro. Governor Douglas and the Doukhobors who founded the settlement of Brilliant lived and worked within a discourse that they accepted and made function, and the regime of truth that they helped to instantiate left its dispersed and pervasive mark upon the lives of Sinixt and Tk'emlups. So, too, Mine-Mill leaders and Paul Robeson were – however consciously – working from the deck of a flatbed truck in the no-man's land between national territories to renegotiate and reshape the prevailing "regime of truth" in 1950s North America. Among other things, these articles remind us (to borrow from pages 98 and 131 of Foucault's *Power/Knowledge*, published in New York in 1980) that power is "employed and exercised through a netlike organization" and that each society turns on a particular "politics" of truth, which is to say that it embraces certain "types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true." To realize as much is to draw large insight from the small and tightly focused studies that fill these pages.

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