EDITORIAL

Politics and the environment loom large in the public discourse of British Columbia, and they thread through the articles in this issue of *BC Studies*. In "Crown, Company, and Charter," Barry Gough offers a "case study of empire making" by examining how officials in the British Colonial Office between 1846 and 1849 pondered the form that sovereignty would take and what colonization might look like in the territory confirmed to their possession by the Oregon Treaty, 1846. Following imperial historian John Darwin, Gough sees British expansion driven "by the chaotic pluralism of British interests at home and of their agents and allies abroad." In this view, the Empire was not acquired in a "fit of absentmindedness," as the historian Sir John Seeley remarked in 1883, but consisted of "numerous accretions, each predicated on a different reason or set of reasons." Each colony had its own specific raison d'être, and, by Gough's assessment, Vancouver Island was "a form of counter-empire whose purpose was to stay the tide of nascent American 'manifest destiny.'" "It fell to the Colonial Office," Gough writes, "to develop on newly defined British sovereign territory a defensive regime that would withstand the threat of American settlement." Aware of the financial resources of the Hudson's Bay Company, and impressed by its long presence in the region, knowledge of local trade and commerce, and stable "Indian policy," Earl Grey of the Colonial Office worked with Sir John Pelly of the HBC to secure the Island for British settlers.

Similar themes are prominent in Ian Pooley's study of the competition among Canada's transcontinental railway titans, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and the Canadian Northern Railway, companies that vied for access to the Okanagan's emerging agricultural areas. By 1908, there were successful orchard settlements at Peachland, Summerland, Kelowna, Naramata, Coldstream, Oyama, Winfield, and elsewhere, and orchardists in these places relied on a network of packing houses; cold storage plants in Vernon, Kelowna, and Penticton; and CPR sternwheelers, tugs, and transfer barges to store the fruit and get it to market. Not until 1912, during the frenzy of railway building at the height of British Columbia's Edwardian boom, did the Canadian Northern contemplate a branch line from Kamloops to Kelowna, but this plan, which would have spelled direct competition with the CPR lake steamer service, was shelved during the recession of 1913. The Kamloops-Kelowna railway scheme was revived after

the war by the newly created Canadian National Railways (CNR) and completed in 1925 through a track-sharing agreement with the CPR, which recognized the advantages of a direct rail connection between the Okanagan orchard districts and the transcontinental mainlines to the north. By 1928, the line carried four hundred freight cars of fruit a week at peak season out of Kelowna. The CNR's Okanagan branch line, Pooley concludes, "became the Okanagan's main fruit-shipping corridor for the ensuing forty-five years" and assured Kelowna's urban and commercial dominance in the Okanagan.

Richard Rajala's examination of the interlinkages among clearcutting, fish habitat, and forest regulation in British Columbia in the first half of the twentieth century deals with the tensions between those interested in exploiting the two great coastal resources – timber and salmon – as they adopted mass production methods and factory regimes. Rajala considers the ecological consequences of industrial forest practices, especially the degradation or outright destruction of salmon habitat by companies employing high-lead logging, a form of industrialized extraction introduced to British Columbia in 1911. While ideal for yarding large old-growth sawlogs, this logging method often produced considerable incidental damage to river habitat and spawning salmon as logs were dragged across streambeds. To loggers, rivers were simply obstacles to be overcome by their powerful steam-driven engines, and they paid little regard to debris or "slash" accumulations in rivers, on riverbanks, and in the surrounding clearcuts. With other newly introduced heavy logging and bridge-building equipment able to cross all but the deepest rivers on their own steam, only government legislation stood in the way of salmon habitat destruction, and this was hindered by a contentious and acrimonious jurisdictional situation: forests came largely under provincial control, while fisheries came under federal control. Regulation was almost absent, and fisheries managers were in a subordinate relationship to foresters and to the forest industry. In Rajala's account, logging managers demonstrated "a capacity to have environmental law rendered meaningless." As a result, coastal salmon conservation measures met "a united front that ranged from indifference to opposition." Valuable streamside timber was logged and watershed dynamics and riparian zones were ignored, leaving the streams and salmon runs vulnerable to bank erosion, sedimentation, higher water temperatures, and debris torrents.

Similar problems of scale bedeviling environmental policy formulation are at the heart of Sarah Giest and Michael Howlett's effort to clarify

the options and challenges confronting climate change adaptation initiatives in jurisdictions under multi-level governance. In Canada, they note the "lack of federal leadership" on climate change issues and the jurisdictional limits on provincial powers that have hamstrung the development of climate change policies. In consequence, much climate change work has devolved to municipalities, but they face barriers to action and enjoy little autonomy in areas such as industrial policy, water, and resource or agricultural management. Looking to Europe as a model, Giest and Howlett conclude that addressing the problem of climate change requires multi-level governance with strong horizontal linkages, high-capacity national and local leadership, and the resources necessary to sustaining and organizing both. From this conclusion they argue the importance of "place-based" policy approaches: "territorially grounded policies that are multi-level in their governance structure and tailored to the reality of individual regions." In their view, the European Union exemplifies how local community resilience can be enhanced under a multi-level government system and suggests that key governance concepts such as subsidiarity, key ideas such as transition management, and key institutions such as trans-municipal networking developed in the EU, can be usefully applied to Canada and British Columbia.

Taken together, these articles seem to us to convey a couple of simple but important lessons. Perhaps the first of these is that, although historians often emphasize the role of contingency in shaping events, most things don't "just happen." Outcomes are products of debate, contestation, and compromise, which is to say that politics is everywhere, at least in the loose and informal sense of that word. In Gough's account, "politics" turned on the interests of imperial officials and those of a great trading company. In the Okanagan, changing technologies and shifting economic circumstances shaped the outcome of a long-standing rivalry between railway companies. In coastal British Columbia, the division of political powers between federal and provincial jurisdictions allowed the powerful economic muscle of the forest industry to override the interests of those charged with protecting fish habitat. By contrast, in Giest and Howlett's telling, the European Union exemplifies how a multi-level government system can work to enhance environmental resilience at the local level. The second lesson would be the importance of seizing the moment. What might the future of the area that is now British Columbia have been had Earl Grey not acted quickly to stay the incursion of American interlopers? How might the Okanagan have developed without rapid and effective rail access to Prairie markets?

Sometimes the consequences of procrastination or impasse compound as inaction continues. By the 1990s, Rajala tells us, almost five hundred rivers, streams, and lakes in British Columbia had suffered major losses in fish habitat as a consequence of industrial forestry. He continues: "Habitat degradation more generally has played a part in the extinction of at least 140 salmon runs." This lesson surely adds potency to Giest and Howlett's arguments in favour of finding effective models for dealing with the problem – at once both local and global – of climate change.

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