

present eco-labelling systems being thrust forward in British Columbia. As the battle lines form around whether to apply the Canadian Standards Associations (CSA) certification scheme, the Forest Stewardship Council scheme, or some revised amalgam of both, understanding the biases underlying both schemes should be a major requirement.

Proponents of ecosystem-based forestry (not the authors in *Wealth of Forests*) all too often claim solidarity with British Columbia's Aboriginal peoples and their quest for just and equitable treaties. However, the bottom line of these ecosystem-based forestry advocates entails a no clear-cutting, no old-growth cutting position (i.e., Greenpeace regarding coastal rain forests, Friends of the Valhalla Society regarding boreal forests) that would

leave most Aboriginal communities with only the desert lands around Osoyoos. So Aboriginal leaders are justifiably sceptical of such solidarity, as we witnessed with Greenpeace's summer 1997 campaign during the mid-coast Great Spirit Bear campaign to have the whole area protected as a park.

Having raised these many questions and critiques, I welcome Chris Tollefson's *The Wealth of Forests* as timely, well presented, but incomplete. The intensifying dialogue concerning British Columbia's transition from sustainable yield to sustainable forestry requires books such as *The Wealth of Forests* as well as the University of Victoria's 1995 conference, from which it sprang. We need more debate and dialogue about the future of British Columbia's forests.

Red Bait! Struggles of a Mine Mill Local

Al King with Kate Braid

Vancouver: Kingbird Publishing, 1998.
176 pp. Illus. (8096 Elliott, Vancouver v5s 2P2)

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In his introduction to *Red Bait!* Al King notes that his book is not a history; rather, it is a record of his experiences in the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (Mine-Mill) from the late 1930s to its merger with the United Steelworkers of America (Steel) in 1967. King's characterization of his book is bang on. A solid historical analysis of Mine-Mill, the Steel raids, and the subsequent merger has yet to be written. Nor is it

a Communist Party history, although King has been a member of the party since 1938. Instead, *Red Bait!* is a series of telling anecdotes, ably organized and presented with the assistance of Kate Braid. The sum total is a memoir that serves as an entree into the world of industrial unionism from the 1930s to the 1970s. With colourful language and nearly unbridled passion, King shows the reader just how rough and ready that world could be.

King's memoir is a highly personal account of over forty years of union and political work, which included the organization of Trail smelter and chemical workers in the 1930s and 1940s, the travails of a Communist living in a small company-dominated town, battles with the Steelworkers' Union for control of Mine-Mill, and various other skirmishes big and small. Al King has spent most of his life fighting for what he believed to be right and fair, and the reader is treated to his take on the unions, politics, and personalities that made up that life. It is safe to say that King has opinions on pretty well everything and everyone and that he is not chary about offering them to his readers. You might not always agree, but you better damn well listen.

King's memoir exposes a world primarily dominated by males, where families often took a back seat to the union and where women were either office workers or the wives of members. It was a world where the occasional fist fight and heavy drinking were part of the landscape, and organizing sometimes involved a carload of booze and a fistful of union cards (by the 1970s it apparently included a joint or two). For Al King it was also a world where politics were *very* personal. Sixty years down the road King still refers to members of Cominco's company-dominated Workmen's Co-operative Committee as "human barnacles" and "suckholes." All of this may make today's

progressive unionists a tad uncomfortable, but it all rings true, even if a little raconteur's spice has been added. This may not be history, but it's a pretty sure bet that it won't be ignored by historians when the social context of trade unionism is discussed.

King's passionate support of trade unionism and of the left leaps from the pages of *Red Bait!* So, too, does his implacable belief that the demise of Mine-Mill, born of anti-Communist paranoia and the naked opportunism of the Steelworkers, was a near-fatal blow to progressive trade unionism in Canada. According to King, there was no alternative to Mine-Mill's merger with Steel. The rank and file were tired of the constant turmoil, the union was broke, and Steel agreed to keep on Mine-Mill's leadership. So King swallowed his pride and "voted for the goddamned thing too." All of his reasons are valid, but his commentary is curiously staid. The denouement of a thirty-year commitment seems to demand more than mere explanation, especially from the fighter revealed in the preceding pages. Kate Braid must have felt the same way. When she pushed King on the subject, specifically asking him how it felt to give up the long fight against Steel and agree to the merger, King replied, "You're turning the knife in me." Those words embody the "real" chapter on the merger. In the messy reality of lives lived, sometimes six words is all you get, even from Albert Lorenzo King.