

*Land Grab: One Man Against the Authority*, by Donald Waterfield.  
Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1973. pp. 193, \$7.95.

Three years after the publication of his first book on the Columbia River controversy (*Continental Waterboy*), Donald Waterfield has produced another dealing with the same public policy question. Only this time his focus is much narrower, for his concern here has been to record in detail the experiences of one Arrow Lakes Valley resident, Oliver Buerge, parts of whose land holdings were submerged by a major new reservoir. Mr. Buerge rejected the compensation offered him by the Canadian entity in the Columbia's development, the B.C. Hydro and Power Authority, fought Hydro on the issue in the courts, and almost uniquely, Mr. Waterfield suggests, ended up a winner.

Mr. Waterfield's evocative power with his pen prompts the reader to empathize — as he clearly does — with the little man in the contest. Furthermore, his skillful blending of careful editing with an informative commentary helps sustain interest (and understanding) when he reproduces some very long verbatim excerpts from transcripts of courtroom proceedings. One of the real merits of this book is the manner in which it underscores the cost to people, in material and non-material terms, of expropriation proceedings which are unduly protracted. What Mr. Waterfield has to say on this subject is dealt with at greater length in J. W. Wilson's *People in the Way*.

While one cannot help admiring this persuasively engaging author, who peripherally was a participant observer in the contest he is describing, one is still left wondering how balanced his record really is. To be fair, he does make it clear on a number of occasions that he felt Mr. Buerge was inclined to push his claims too far. But nowhere, really, does he attempt to put himself in the shoes of an authority which had negotiated agreements with the vast majority of those dispossessed, and which did have to consider the implications, in equity terms, of reaching belated settlements with a very few hard-nosed hold-out bargainers. The issue is complex, as indeed Mr. Waterfield agrees. To repeat my point, what the reader will not find here is B.C. Hydro's side to this story.

There are a few factual errors in the manuscript — for example, the Columbia River Engineering Board was not commissioned by Prime Minister King, nor was it to report to the Canadian section of the IJC (p. 13) — but these are minor. What the reader needs to be reminded of again in conclusion is that Mr. Waterfield is not a dispassionate observer. Take, for example, the description to which he certainly sub-

scribes on the dust jacket of this book: "In the wake of one of the worst sell-outs in Canadian history — the signing of the Columbia River Treaty in Washington in 1961 . . ." Mr. Waterfield of course is quite entitled to his opinion, which is very much in the tradition of Canadians' nationalistic reconstructions of so many of our past trans-border negotiations with the United States. But, as George Glazebrook reminds us, opinions of this sort need not, and frequently do not, accord with the facts. In the absence of dispassionate reviews of the record (and oft, long after them), views of the sort cited above remain opinions, and should be identified as such, as they were not identified in this case. It is not clear here, however, whether my quarrel on this issue is with Mr. Waterfield or his publisher.

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