

Book Reviews

First Growth: The Story of British Columbia Forest Products Limited, co-ordinated by Sue Baptie. Vancouver: British Columbia Forest Products Limited, 1975. Pp. xi, 286; *illus.*; paper \$8.95.

First Growth is not history as analysed by a historian but history remembered by participants. Company archivist, Sue Baptie, interviewed over fifty present and past employees and dependents of B.C. Forest Products. The interviews represent a fair, but not complete, cross-section: from sawmill workers, through various managers, to E. P. Taylor, the founder of the company; from loggers who worked for the company's predecessors in the 1930s to the wives of the pioneers of the company's town of Mackenzie established in 1966. The interviews, however, are generally more informative about the 1930s and 1940s than they are about the 1950s and the 1960s. Mrs. Baptie has skilfully edited these recollections to present what the introduction correctly describes as "an entertaining and informative kaleidoscope" of the company (p. xi). The largely anecdotal approach does not lead to a comprehensive account of the company's development but it suggests the many dimensions, especially the human ones, in the history of a business.

The interviews, even that with E. P. Taylor, reveal little about the financial dealings preceding the formation of B.C. Forest Products in 1946. Yet almost every interview with former employees of Industrial Timber Mills, Malahat Logging Company, Cameron Lumber Company and the Hammond Cedar Company shows their surprise upon learning their firms had been taken over by B.C. Forest Products. Significantly, perhaps indicating the increased size and impersonality of the corporation or bias in the selection of interviewees, only a few senior officials even mention the 1969 transfer of controlling interest from Taylor's Argus Corporation to Noranda Mines Limited. Some senior officials also make tantalizing references to the arrangement whereby H. R. MacMillan Export Company managed BCFP and acted as its sales agent until 1953.

As BCFP director John McDougald trenchantly explained, "the relationship between Argus and H. R. MacMillan has always been right at the top — bearing in mind that MacMillan looked after MacMillan" (p. 32).

Management officials say little about labour relations. The recollections of loggers and mill workers, on the other hand, supplement published material about the early years of the International Woodworkers of America in British Columbia. The loggers of the 1930s corroborate Myrtle Bergren's description of the difficulties of IWA organizers.¹ Interviews with long time sawmill workers add some "grass roots" evidence to Irving Abella's account of the IWA's efforts to divest itself of Communist leadership after the war.² Incidentally, both union organizers interviewed now work for BCFP in management positions. Is this mere coincidence?

Apart from many references to accidents caused by carelessness of employers as well as by individuals, the interviewees seldom criticize BCFP or its forerunners. They reminisce about hard times, their wives recall many inconveniences but they seem to remember best the friendly social life of the larger logging communities. They also mention the presence of separate quarters for Chinese and East Indians. Regrettably, no interview of a Chinese or East Indian employee is included in this volume. Thus, the ethnic diversity of the camps and the mills is not completely explored.

Although it is never quite explicitly stated, technological changes caused many alterations in the way of life of wood workers. To the lay person, a major strength of *First Growth* is its many references to industrial technology. Interviews and many excellent photographs illustrate such dramatic changes as that from rail to truck logging and from the mammoth Davis rafts to BCFP's own contribution, the self-loading, self-dumping log barge.

Oral history is a relatively new technique. *First Growth* demonstrates how it can underscore the human factors, unlikely to come out of a more traditional examination of a company's files and balance sheets. Yet one wonders if the frequently repeated subjects and emergent themes reflect the selection of interviewees and the questions asked more than they record the complete story. This volume whets the appetite for a more formal study of B.C. Forest Products and the major forest companies whose histories are so interwoven with that of the province. British

¹ Myrtle Bergren, *Tough Timber* (Toronto: Progress, 1967).

² Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-56* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

Columbia Forest Products deserves commendation for having undertaken this project and, within its limits, having succeeded so well. Let us hope there will be a second growth.

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Natural Resource Revenues: A Test of Federalism, edited by Anthony Scott. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1976. Pp. xvii, 261; \$7.50.

The preoccupation of Canadians with federalism is perhaps only matched by our preoccupation with natural resources. Students of both subjects will benefit from a careful reading of this volume, which is based on the papers presented to the Victoria Conference on Natural Revenues in 1975. At least fifteen of the nineteen contributors are professional economists, and the profusion of graphs and equations in the volume is likely to deter many readers whose training is in other fields. Yet the reader who perseveres bravely to the end will not regret having done so.

The central focus of the volume is on the concept of resource rent, or the surplus remaining when all costs of bringing resources to market are deducted from their market value. John Stuart Mill and Henry George helped to popularize the belief that resource rent should be captured by the community rather than by the entrepreneur, but the idea is in fact much older, as suggested by the common-law principle that minerals belong to the Crown. Essentially the same principle is a basic theme of Third World demands for a new international economic order and has found expression in both the Kierans report to the government of Manitoba and the very similar Fitzgerald report to the former Labour government of Australia.

Acceptance of this principle in a federation, however, does not assist one in identifying the relevant community or in specifying the level of government that should act on its behalf. Although section 109 of the BNA Act appears to answer both questions, the recent spectacular increase in the price of crude oil and the concentration of that resource in a single medium-sized province have led many Canadians to question whether section 109 should stand as the last word on the subject. In any event, as W. R. Lederman suggests in this volume, the constitution is more a basis for bargaining than a source of unambiguous rules, since its provisions can often be cited to support both sides of an argument.