

*Green Gold: The Forest Industry in British Columbia*, by Patricia Marchak. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983. Pp. 454.

... the present policies inevitably lead to depletion of the resource base and increasing peripheralization of the economy. The province, initially allowing itself to become a regionally specialized resource production area, eventually becomes a denuded, dependent and impoverished region within the world economy. The book is written in the conviction that this is unnecessary and that even as late as the 1980's the process can be reversed: the people of B.C. can develop a self-sufficient and stable economy without destroying their environment. To do so, however, would require very different public policies, a toughness in dealing with the multinational corporations which dominate the economy, an enlightenment of understanding by organized labour, and a determination to put development with appropriate technology and on a modest scale ahead of high wages and continued dependence on imported consumer products. (p. 2)

These statements, coming at the beginning of *Green Gold*, set the stage for an involving political debate on the nature and direction of the forest industry in British Columbia. And debate there is, as Patricia Marchak makes telling point after telling point. Political and economic theory are linked with historical analysis and supported with well-chosen facts. It is a one-sided exchange, but the views of the opposition are well known and their inability to respond does not diminish the sense of arguments flying back and forth across the floor of the House. Then, for some unaccountable reason, Marchak interrupts herself with a filibuster, giving the reader time to go for coffee and wander around the grounds. Upon return, the debate has resumed, but the sense of urgency is gone and the legislation she proposes has lost the force of rhetorical and political necessity. As a result, the overall effect is one of a collage, a set of poorly integrated elements.

Part One (Capital) contains some of the most interesting arguments in the book. Despite the massive quantities of wood removed from British Columbia's forests (the "green gold" of the book's title), very little of the surplus has gone into general economic development. Why has this happened? Marchak turns to the ideas of Innis under the rubric of "staples theory." When this approach is coupled with the dominance of multinational corporations and the efforts of unions to restrict the outflow of surplus value, many features of B.C.'s forest sector are illuminated. This analytical framework could have underlain the rest of the book, but the author proceeds by referring back to these ideas only occasionally, rather than by developing them rigorously.

Part One also contains a brief historical account of the forest industry in B.C. and a discussion of the current industry-government relationship with several appropriately critical comments. Finally, the structure of the industry is examined in a chapter that echoes Peter Newman's recent books on the Canadian Establishment, yet lacks the humanity of his writing.

Part Two (Labour) begins with a provocative analysis. Marchak argues persuasively for a theory of class divisions in the labour force based on gender, family, and geographic origins. Her arguments are securely grounded in survey data. She goes on to draw a distinction between the different segments of the forest sector (pulp mills, sawmills and logging) in terms of employment patterns. Her conclusion challenges conventional wisdom; the tradition of unemployment in the forest sector reflects not the unstable personalities of loggers but "rational" economic behaviour by their employers.

The remainder of Part Two suffers from the fascination of the researcher with her data. The detailed discussion of statistical tests and results is incongruous with the relatively more superficial treatment in the other sections of the book, and the point of the analysis is lost. A comment similar to one found in many textbooks would have been appreciated; e.g., chapters 8 through 10 may be omitted without loss of continuity.

The last Part (Communities) sketches in the recent history of two towns dominated by the forest industry. Despite the differences in size and extent of resource exploitation, the two towns (Mackenzie and Terrace) are very similar in the consequences of external political and economic domination. The residents have very little say in the decisions which affect the future of their communities. Part Three concludes with a useful summary of the author's arguments and an outline of proposed legislation. Her political program is disappointing for the apparent lack of democratic input from the communities she studied.

A lot is at stake. Decisions made by the provincial and federal governments in the next few years will determine whether British Columbia is relegated to an increasingly dependent hinterland or begins to diversify its economic and social life. The positions taken in this debate by Patricia Marchak deserve a thoughtful examination by policy makers and the general public alike.