Further, if we accept John Livingston's belief that an ecological disaster may already be upon us, then, as Mary Anne Warren said, "We need a wedding, not a war" but between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism so that the common purpose of saving the environment, for whatever reason, may proceed with dispatch.

I compare the above debate to two people standing at the fork in a road. They both agree with respect to which branch of the fork they should take. They only disagree as to how far each will go along that same branch.

University of British Columbia DAVID H. SEARLE, Q.C.

This Was Our Valley, by Earl K. Pollon and Shirlee Smith Matheson. Calgary: Detselig, 1989. Pp. 401.

When the history of twentieth-century British Columbia is written, the 1960s and 1970s will be remembered as the decades of megaprojects. The Arrow Lakes, Mica, and Revelstoke dams on the Columbia River, the Bennett and Canyon dams on the Peace River, the southeast and northeast coal projects and the extension of the British Columbia Railway to Fort Nelson were all built in these "decades of development." Each of these projects grew out of its own political and economic context, involved very large capital expenditures (both public and private), and all were undertaken in the name of progress and economic opportunity. Each had, and continues to have, major socio-economic and environmental consequences for the people and places in which it is located. In *This Was Our Valley*, Earl Pollon and Shirlee Matheson write in a semi-popular way about the inter-relations betwen the upper Peace River and those frontier people who went to live in its valley in the 1930s and the changes brought about by the construction and operation of the Bennett and Canyon dams. The book contains a number of photographs (some poorly reproduced) but has no index or collated list of references. The legibility of the maps on the inside cover leaves much to be desired in a book in which, particularly in the first section, the reader is taken all over these northern parts of B.C.

In Part One, Earl Pollon chronicles his life on the frontiers of settlement during the period 1930-65. In fourteen chapters he describes his experiences as trapper, carpenter, prospector, hauler, lime burner, and more in places as far afield as Germansen Landing to the west and the Sikanni Chief River to the north. Stylistically he has some difficulty in making a

cohesive narrative out of his recollections, and one often wishes that he would move away from his experiences somewhat and provide the reader with some background about his family and the politico-economic circumstances of the region. Nevertheless, his stories (and a selection of his poems) bring the reader close to the Peace River and the fascinating backgrounds and the caring values of his tough frontier neighbours and associates.

In Part Two, Shirlee Matheson narrates aspects of her life as a "newcomer" to Hudson's Hope and documents many elements of the planning, construction, and operation of the Peace River power project, drawing on her experience as secretary to the Hudson's Hope Improvement District. Her twenty chapters deal with two major themes: the economic potential of Hudson's Hope and the upper Peace Valley and the impact of the power project upon the river, its valley, and people. Under the first theme she reviews the potential of coal and other minerals, the prospects of resource processing industries and the need for road and rail links to markets. She tells all too briefly the fascinating story of the formation of the Peace River Power Development Company and the complex inter-relations between British, Swedish, and British Columbian interests. She also writes of the tension between "locals" expecting employment on the dam project and those thousands of workers brought from outside the region by the Allied Hydro Council.

Under the second theme, Ms. Matheson systematically deals with the impact of the power projects upon the town of Hudson's Hope, the people of the upper Peace Valley, and the biophysical character of the river and its valley. The problems and heartbreaks of the settlers who had to give up their hard-won homesteads are vividly described, as are the dramatic changes to wildlife habitat and river regime resulting from power production and the deep flooding to accommodate Williston Lake. In the concluding chapters she reflects, with the people of Hudson's Hope, on the benefits and costs of "harnessing the river" and the expectations which remain unmet.

This book may be compared with that of James Wilson (*People in the Way*, University of Toronto Press, 1973), in which he describes "the reality of the Columbia River project in relation to the people of the Arrow Lakes region" of southeast British Columbia. In *This Was Our Valley*, Pollon and Matheson seek to do the same thing with respect to the Peace River projects and the people of Hudson's Hope and the upper Peace region. One difference is that Wilson wrote as an outsider looking in (he had been an employee of B.C. Hydro based in Vancouver), while Pollon and Matheson write as insiders looking out. The authenticity which this pro-

vides helps to overcome the otherwise somewhat contrived linkage of the two quite different styles and subject matter of the two authors.

Vancouver, B.C. J. D. CHAPMAN

Continental Dash: The Russian-American Telegraph, by Rosemary Neering. Ganges, B.C.: Horsdahl & Schubart, 1989. Pp. 215, illus.

The Russian-American Telegraph — commonly known in B.C. as the Collins Overland Telegraph — was an ambitious attempt to link Europe and North America by a telegraph line through the virtually unknown lands of northern British Columbia, Russian America, and Siberia. In the early 1860s, the telegraph was the ultimate means of rapid communication and an essential element in the military, diplomatic, and commercial life of both continents. The Atlantic Ocean, however, remained an effective barrier to linking the two continental systems despite several major efforts by Cyrus Field to lay a trans-Atlantic cable from Ireland to Newfoundland during the 1850s.

The brainchild of Perry McDonough Collins, a San Francisco promoter and adventurer, the overland route was intended to solve the problem of the Atlantic and link the United States with Europe via Asia. As early as 1855, Collins promoted the idea of a land route as part of a grander scheme to advance the commercial interests of the United States in eastern Asia and the North Pacific. In his view, the United States and the expanding Russian Empire had much in common and much to gain through co-operation. Collins' travels in Siberia further convinced him of the desirability of trade between the two countries and of the power that a telegraph link through the area would bring to the United States.

Despite interviews with the governments involved and vague promises of support, Collins was unable to finance the project himself. In 1858 he gained a powerful ally in Hiram Sibley, head of the Western Union Telegraph Company, which had emerged as the giant of the North American industry after a series of mergers and acquisitions. By 1864 Sibley and Western Union were sufficiently convinced of the improbability of a successful trans-Atlantic cable that they were willing to gamble on the overland route. The company acquired the rights to construct the line assembled by Collins in negotiations with the Russian, British, and United States governments since 1856, and formed the Western Union Extension Company to undertake the work.