

“THIS WASTEFUL USE OF A RIVER”:

Log Driving, Conservation, and British Columbia’s Stellako River Controversy, 1965–72

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“LOGGERS FIRED UPON,” read the title of one newspaper story; “Gunfire Heralds Stellako Drive” read another. Other reports refer to “night riders” and “sabotage.” These accounts were not inspired by an Earth First! confrontation with the forest industry in California or the American Pacific Northwest. The year was 1967, the setting a relatively short, relatively obscure river in north-central British Columbia. How did the Stellako River come to provoke such tension in the heady days of British Columbia’s postwar boom, when resources still seemed limitless and the fate of one short river might seem more or less inconsequential given developments on the Columbia, the Peace, and the Nechako rivers? Clearly, emotions ran high along the banks of the Stellako in the mid-1960s, inspiring this article’s effort to shed light on an under-appreciated series of events in British Columbia’s environmental history.¹

Each spring between 1965 and 1967 events on the Stellako became the subject of heated local, provincial, and even national debate, heightening tension between Ottawa and Victoria, between provincial resource agencies, and between those with a stake in the river’s productivity as a source of salmon and trout and those with a stake in the forest industry. The source of the controversy was one of the grand and destructive traditions of North American lumbering – the log drive. As the logging frontier edged west from the eastern seaboard to the Pacific Coast, splash dam technology provided a means of capturing and releasing the flows of hundreds of rivers. British Columbia was not unfamiliar with the consequences. Adams River sockeye runs had survived the initial

¹ “Loggers Fired Upon,” *Vancouver Province* (hereafter *VP*), 17 June 1967; “Gunfire Heralds Stellako Drive,” *Vancouver Sun* (hereafter *VS*), 17 June 1967; “Night Riders Eye Stellako Log Booms,” *VS*, 16 June 1967; Scott Honeyman, “Stellako Log Booms Sabotaged,” *Prince George Citizen*, 15 June 1967.

impact of the Hell's Gate slides of 1913-14, but an Adams River Lumber Company splash dam at the mouth of Adams Lake, used to flush logs downstream to the company's Chase sawmill, blocked all spawners from the upper Adams spawning grounds. The lower Adams run survived the log runs in sufficient numbers to provide for a gradual recovery. Above Adams Lake, however, the sockeye vanished, leaving a legacy of genetic extinction that biologists have only begun to address.²

The Stellako also had a long history as a "working river," beginning when the Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) Railway's penetration of the central interior sparked demand for ties and other construction materials. A wave of settlers developed a mixed, agro-forestry economy that linked homesteading with wintertime woods work, the Stellako's energy coming into play as a cheap, if not always reliable, way of moving ties and logs cut along the shores of Francois Lake to sawmills on Fraser Lake, where the GTP turned up the Endako River to the Bulkley and the Skeena rivers (see Figure 1). Between about 1914 and 1948, with an interlude until 1965, the rising waters of the Stellako's late spring freshet played a key part in a seasonal rhythm that meshed agriculture and lumbering into rational economic strategy. While some of that story has been documented by historians, the intense debate generated by the resumption of the Stellako log run in the mid-1960s has drawn little scholarly attention.³

² William G. Rector, "From Woods to Sawmill: Transportation Problems in Logging," *Agricultural History* 23 (1949): 239-44; Michael Williams, *Americans and Their Forests: A Historical Geography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 97-100, 170-75; Paul R. Josephson, *Industrialized Nature: Brute Force Technology and the Transformation of the Natural World* (Washington: Island Press, 2002), 69-84; Richard A. Rajala, "The Forest Industry in Eastern Canada: An Overview," in *Broadaxe to Flying Shear: The Mechanization of Forest Harvesting East of the Rockies*, ed. C. Ross Silversides (Ottawa: National Museum of Science and Technology, 1997), 129-30; Stephen Bocking, "Encountering Biodiversity: Ecology, Ideas, Action," in *Biodiversity in Canada: Ecology, Ideas, and Action*, ed. Stephen Bocking (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2000) 3-30; Anthony Netboy, *Salmon: The World's Most Harassed Fish* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1980), 188-205; A.L. Pritchard, "The Effects of Man-Made Changes in Fresh Water in the Maritime Provinces," *Canadian Fish Culturalist* 25 (1959): 3-6. For insight into the Adams River, see C. Heather Allen, "Lumber and Salmon: A History of the Adams River Lumber Company," *Wildlife Review* 8 (1979): 22-24; Heather Allen, "Return of the Sockeye: Can We Help Them Spawn Again in the Upper Adams?" *Wildlife Review* 9 (1982): 30-31; "Facts about the Adams River Sockeye Run," *Fisherman*, 16 November 1954; James R. Sedell and Wayne S. Duval, *Water Transportation and Storage of Logs: USDA Forest Service Technical Report PNW-186* (Portland: Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station, 1985), 9-10.

³ For brief accounts in the fisheries literature, see Cicely Lyons, *Salmon: Our Heritage* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1969), 623-25; John F. Roos, *Restoring Fraser River Salmon: A History of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, 1937-1985* (Vancouver: Pacific Salmon Commission, n.d.), 180-82. Both Arn Keeling and Jeremy Wilson mention the Stellako controversy but provide little in the way of analysis. See Jeremy Wilson, *Talk and Log: Wilderness Politics in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 105; Arn M. Keeling, "The Effluent Society: Water Pollution and Environmental Politics in British Columbia, 1889-1980" (PhD

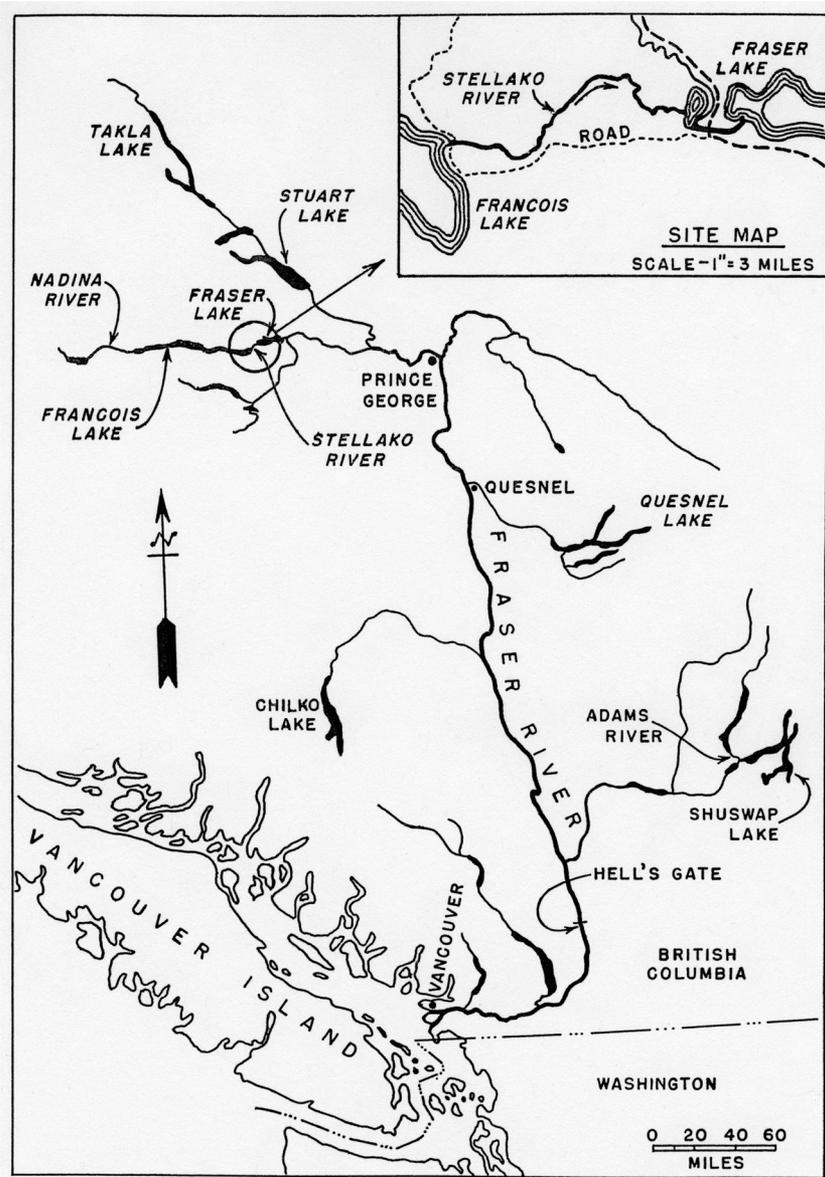


Figure 1. Location of the Stellako River in Northern British Columbia. *Source: The International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission Progress Report No. 14: Effects of Log Driving on the Salmon and Trout Populations in the Stellako River, Vancouver, BC, 1966.*

This article focuses on the 1966 drive, perhaps the most contentious of the three. After agreeing to a drive the previous June on a conditional basis to allow Fraser Lake Sawmills to meet its wood needs, Ottawa used new powers to deny the company a permit for a repeat in 1966. It did so on the grounds of the most extensive study of a North American log drive ever conducted. A collaborative effort by the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission (IPSF), the federal Department of Fisheries, and the BC Fish and Wildlife Branch, the investigation concluded that, in 1965, bark deposits, along with erosion and scouring of the stream bed, had caused a serious decline in the river's spawning productivity. Fisheries minister H.J. Robichaud moved to protect the Stellako – or so it seemed until BC minister of lands, forests and water resources Ray Williston intervened to have the drive proceed on the province's behalf. What had been a conflict between a small sawmill and the Department of Fisheries became a constitutional test of strength between Ottawa and Victoria.

Denying the validity of the not-yet-released IPSF report, Williston proclaimed the Stellako a provincial river, the logs a provincial resource, and Ottawa's desire to meddle in provincial affairs under the guise of federal jurisdiction over salmon intolerable. He would confront the multi-agency report with his own science, commissioning the British Columbia Research Council (BCRC) to study the 1966 drive. The anticipated showdown never took place, however. Despite urging from an infuriated group of Francois Lake resort owners, rod and gun clubs, and commercial fisheries interests, Robichaud backed down. The drive went ahead, Williston scoring another victory in the federal-provincial tussle over water that had seen British Columbia get its way on the Columbia and Peace rivers.

For British Columbians, the meaning of this story depended on where one lived, on what one did for a living, and on how one viewed the relationship between forest exploitation and a well used but beautiful and productive stretch of water. Perhaps most important, the Stellako story reveals a province experiencing a profound sense of unease, of doubt about the supposed benefits of modernization. But the Stellako conflict was not rooted in the ecological consequences of a massive hydroelectric project, a gigantic smelter, or a new pulp mill, although it was connected to the structural changes the arrival of pulp and paper

diss., University of British Columbia, 2004), 295. For a brief but insightful discussion, see Alan George Phillips, "Jurisdictional Conflicts in Resource Management: Perspectives on the Canadian West Coast Commercial Fishing Industry" (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1984), 94-102.

production brought to the central interior forest industry. Rather, this controversy arose over a practice as old as lumbering itself, to feed a relatively small but recently modernized sawmill. Nor were the economic benefits particularly high, except on a local scale, and these, many argued, did not compensate for potential losses to the salmon fishery and tourism.⁴

Indeed, for the province as a whole, the Stellako's importance was entirely symbolic. And the symbols the log drives generated were ones of misuse, of waste, of petty federal-provincial bickering, of the forest industry's power to ride roughshod over other resources and over nature itself. Conservation, defined as the wise use of natural resources, implied that science could be joined with the regulatory power of government to ensure sustainable practices. Conflicts would be resolved through the application of multiple-use planning. That did not imply an equality of uses, however; in British Columbia the forest industry's pre-eminence dictated that its requirements ranked first in the hierarchy of uses. Therein lay the problem, as author-conservationist Roderick Haig-Brown saw it in the early 1950s. Free to devour forests with only "slight attention" to renewing that resource, the industry paid none at all to "preservation of soil or water resources." Multiple use was a convenient disguise for a single-minded approach to resource exploitation driven "by the false urgency and outdated sanctity of progress."⁵

Haig-Brown and the other defenders of Pacific salmon and trout looked to government for the scientific and regulatory capacity to achieve the balance promised by multiple-use rhetoric, but economic realities and the structure of Canadian federalism left them frustrated. The federal Fisheries Act was extended to British Columbia in 1876, and by 1930 court rulings had confirmed federal jurisdiction over sea coast and inland fisheries. Ottawa's claim to salmon and other anadromous fish extended into the non-tidal portions of rivers, but provincial rights

⁴ See Arn Keeling, "'Sink or Swim': Water Pollution and Environmental Politics in Vancouver, 1889-1975," *BC Studies* 142/43 (2004): 69-101. Insightful works on postwar modernization and its consequences include Arn Keeling, "'A Dynamic Not a Static Conception': The Conservation Thought of Roderick Haig-Brown," *Pacific Historical Review* 71 (2002): 239-68; Arn Keeling and Robert McDonald, "The Profligate Province: Roderick Haig-Brown and the Modernization of British Columbia," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36 (2001): 7-23; Tina Loo, "People in the Way: Modernity, Environment, and Society on the Arrow Lakes," *BC Studies* 142/43 (2004): 161-96; Tina Loo, "Disturbing the Peace: Environmental Change and the Scales of Justice on a Northern River," *Environmental History* 12 (2007): 895-919.

⁵ See, for example, Angus P. MacBean, "The Integrated Use of Public Forests," *Proceedings, Western Forestry and Conservation Association* (Portland: Western Forestry and Conservation Association, or WFCA, 1960), 94-97; Roderick Haig-Brown, "Let Them Eat Sawdust," *Forest and Outdoors* 47 (1951): 10-12.

complicated matters in several ways. First, in non-tidal waters the provinces exercised jurisdiction over property and civil rights, affording British Columbia an indirect say in fishing. Second, British Columbia had possession of the beds of rivers and their surface waters under the provincial Water Act, which was administered by the Water Rights Branch after its 1911 creation. Stream flows within British Columbia's boundaries were a provincial resource, then – a source of industrial and agricultural development and licence revenue.⁶

British Columbia also played a part in the commercial salmon fishery, having named John P. Babcock fisheries commissioner in 1901 to spearhead hatchery development. Six years later, Babcock's fisheries office became the fisheries department, which attained full ministerial status in 1947. In 1932, British Columbia reached an agreement with Ottawa to take over enforcement of regulations for the conservation of non-tidal sport fish. That responsibility fell to the province's game department, which, in 1957 (now known as the Fish and Wildlife Branch), became part of the new Department of Recreation and Conservation. That reorganization came at the expense of the Department of Fisheries, which was relegated to branch status in the new department.⁷

British Columbia advised Ottawa on commercial fishing regulations, sharing responsibility for enforcement of the Fisheries Act, but under the British North America Act the provinces had undisputed authority over the sale and use of public lands and forests. Although the Fisheries Act remained a potentially powerful tool in making regulations to protect salmon habitat, containing clauses that prohibited the deposit of logs and wood debris in fish-bearing waters, education and post-logging cleanup prevailed over strict enforcement. As for the province, neither the Forest Service nor the Water Rights Branch showed much interest in impairing the performance of the key industry to protect a resource

⁶ Frank Millerd, "The Evolution of Management of the Canadian Pacific Salmon Fishery," *Digital Library of the Commons*, available at <http://olc.dlib.indiana.edu.archive/00000999> (viewed 12 December 2007); Douglas M. Swenerton, *A History of Pacific Fisheries Policy* (Ottawa: Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 1993), 12; K.R.F. Denniston, "Water in British Columbia and Its Administration," *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Game Convention* (Vancouver, 1950), 115-19; V. Raudsepp, "Some Observations on Water Resource Management in British Columbia," Victoria, Water Investigations Branch, BC Water Resources Service, Department of Lands, Forests and Water Resources, n.d., p. 7, University of Victoria Archives, Ray Williston Papers, box 6.

⁷ W.A. Clemons, "Some Historical Aspects of the Fisheries Resources of British Columbia," in *Transactions of the Ninth British Columbia Natural Resources Conference* (Victoria: BC Natural Resources Conference, 1956), 129; Lyons, *Salmon*, 476, 526-27; Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 91-92; W.R. Hourston, "The Legal and Administrative Framework of the Fishing Industry," in *Transactions of the Thirteenth British Columbia Natural Resources Conference* (Victoria: BC Natural Resources Conference, 1961), 262-64.

of lesser economic importance that fell under federal jurisdiction, and the Fish and Wildlife Branch and Commercial Fisheries Branch lacked the power to do so.⁸

The lack of regard for fish habitat shown by provincial authorities and the forest industry, and Ottawa's disinclination to offend the major industry, became more alarming after the Second World War. Logging to supply sawmills and a new generation of pulp and paper plants endangered more streams as political and industrial elites mobilized their images of sustained yield and multiple use as terms of legitimization. But in opening up the countryside, logging roads brought more people face to face with massive clear-cuts, crumbling streambanks, and sediment-filled waters. Haig-Brown drew attention to these "silent erosions" at the BC Wildlife Federation's (BCWF) 1966 convention at Prince George. His remarks, quickly published in *British Columbia Digest*, were accompanied by an image of the Stellako River, its bed plugged with logs during the 1965 drive, as a "classic example" of abuse. The Stellako log drives did not go unnoticed. They were events with the potential to capture and focus the attention of a public prepared to question the easy exchange of a river and its fish for a sawmill's profits.⁹

Like other stories of British Columbia's postwar modernization, the Stellako affair gives us a glimpse of people striving to strike a balance capable of securing the material benefits of resource exploitation without, in the process, sacrificing too much of what nature has to offer. Commercial and sport fishers, fisheries managers, local tourism interests, and a host of opinion makers all had reasons to defend the Stellako, united by a sense that driving this particular river involved a sacrifice out of all proportion to the gain when measured in dollars, development, or human welfare.¹⁰

For British Columbia's minister of lands, forests, and water resources Ray Williston, control of rivers was both a means to an end and an end in itself. Rivers supplied the energy for province building, whether for hydroelectric power or log transportation. They also provided vital

⁸ Thomas L. Burton, *Natural Resource Policy in Canada: Issues and Perspectives* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1972), 97-100; P. Scott and W. Schowenber, "Environmental Foresight and Salmon: New Canadian Developments," in *Pacific Salmon Management for People*, ed. Derek V. Ellis (Victoria: University of Victoria Press, 1977), 126.

⁹ Roderick Haig-Brown, "Fish and Wildlife in the Development of BC's Future," *British Columbia Digest* (hereafter *BCD*)(1966): 32-40.

¹⁰ Keeling and McDonald, "Profligate Province," 7-23; Richard A. Rajala, "Clearcutting, Multiple Use, and the Politics of Salmon Habitat in British Columbia, 1945-1970," paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Society for Environmental History, Boise, Idaho, 12-13 March 2008.

spawning and rearing areas for salmon. However, forests drew more investment capital, created more jobs, and captured greater revenue, and the disparity between the two was widening. In 1950, forestry activity produced almost \$400 million in wealth, while the commercial fishery produced \$63 million. By 1965, forestry generated \$980 million in annual wealth, the fishery just \$52 million. The Stellako's value as a salmon stream relative to its worth as a log transportation corridor generated a quite different set of numbers given its contribution to the Fraser River sockeye catch. Williston, however, with the larger balance sheet in mind, would fight to keep his, BC Hydro's, and the forest industry's options open as the river became a prize in the arena of federal-provincial conflict.¹¹

Ottawa's timid response to the challenge is easy to document but more difficult to explain. Although Robichaud's officials remained committed to the self-evident fact that log drives on shallow streams like the Stellako were bad for salmon, Robichaud continued his retreat, agreeing in a spirit of federal-provincial cooperation to a study (the third such) of the 1967 log drive. The explanation for Robichaud's commitment to compromise, Phillips argues, lay in the uncertainty of Ottawa's jurisdiction in matters of habitat protection. Other scholars agree that "duplication and overlap" mark intergovernmental power relations in natural resource management, and not until a pair of 1980 court cases involving prosecutions of loggers under the Fisheries Act did Supreme Court decisions provide some clarity regarding the scope of federal power in relation to forestry.¹²

Scientific uncertainty, and the problem of meeting the burden of proof in court, likely contributed to federal reluctance to test the Fisheries Act. While the collaborative 1965 study documented significant damage to the Stellako's sockeye spawning grounds, the BCRC's report on the 1966 drive offered a more benign analysis. That the report's credibility came under immediate suspicion mattered little. The logs had been run, and science, even conclusive science, had always played only the loosest part in BC forest practice regulation.¹³ Contributing to that

¹¹ L.H. Eyres, "Address of Welcome," in *Proceedings of the Fourth British Columbia Natural Resources Conference* (Victoria: BC Natural Resources Conference, 1951), 1-2; Mike Poole, dir., *Stellako River Log Drive*, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1967.

¹² Phillips, "Jurisdictional Conflicts," 102; Anthony H.J. Dorsey, Michael W. McPhee, and Sam Sydneysmith, *Salmon Protection and the BC Coastal Forest Industry: Environmental Regulation as a Bargaining Process* (Vancouver: Westwater Research Centre, University of British Columbia, 1980), 76-77.

¹³ Richard A. Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest: Production, Science, and Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 88-167.

pattern in this case was the absence of analysis of the relationship of logs and the river's productivity over time. Williston could claim with some legitimacy that the long-term impacts of log driving remained in doubt. That uncertainty, when mixed with the jurisdictional question and Williston's determination to force Ottawa to yield, produced an outcome that, in the final analysis, boiled down to a question of will. While Williston proved adept at contesting scientific findings that supported a log drive ban, and seemed prepared, even eager, to have the jurisdictional issue settled, Robichaud took the path of least resistance at every opportunity.

The Stellako does not rank as one of British Columbia's great rivers in terms of length or grandeur. Just short of thirteen kilometres long, it flows in a northeasterly direction from its source in Francois Lake to Fraser Lake. Surveying the river's limited hydroelectric potential in the early 1940s, E.H. Tredcroft noted that its initial stretch flowed through a narrow forested valley before meandering through "low-lying bench lands" and joining the Endako at a lagoon known as Little Lake, then emptying into Fraser Lake. A number of channels, gravel bars, rapids, and small islands marked the lower half of the river as it wound through its most productive spawning grounds. Although few sockeye arrived to spawn at the time of Tredcroft's visit that was about to change, and the Stellako had already gained a reputation as one of the interior's finest trout streams.¹⁴

Describing the wonderful sport fishing opportunities awaiting in the Lakes District of central British Columbia in 1946, F.W. Lindsay cautioned that the region was "not a land of milk and honey"; rather, the trappers, loggers, sawmillers, farmers, and ranchers inhabited "a primitive land of hard work" where the pursuit of a "small measure of independence" took precedence over wealth accumulation. Lindsay's characterization captured the hardscrabble existence that had developed after the GTP connected the region, after a fashion, to forest and agricultural product markets. Tie cutting to meet railway construction and maintenance needs provided homesteaders and the Carrier people with a source of cash income, with much of the cut destined for a small sawmill on Fraser Lake, which provided loading facilities for the GTP. By 1920, the Stellako River had become an essential link in this commodity chain, the drive an annual rite timed to make use of the spring freshet produced by the melting snowpack. After burning down in 1922,

¹⁴ E.D. Tredcroft, *Water Resources Investigation Report on the Stellako River* (BC Department of Lands and Forests, Water Rights Branch, 1943).



Start of Stellako River Log Drive, 1929. Source: BC Archives NA-05726.

the mill reopened within a couple of years as Fraser Lake Sawmills. Demand declined during the 1930s, but logs and ties continued to come down the Stellako, and the mill survived the Depression by sawing for the local construction market.¹⁵

Healthier postwar markets prompted Fraser Lake Sawmills owner Louie Dahlgren to embark on a project to “improve” the Stellako in 1948. Log jams had always been a problem on the shallow, fast-flowing

¹⁵ F.W. Lindsey, “Land of the Sunset Trail,” *Cariboo and Northern British Columbia Digest* 2 (1946): 87-90; Douglas Hudson, “Internal Colonialism and Industrial Capitalism,” in *Sa Ts’e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia*, ed. Thomas Thorner, 190-94 (Prince George: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989); Morris Zazlow, *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 202-7; Richard A. Rajala, *Up-Coast: Forests and Industry on British Columbia’s North Coast, 1870-2005* (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 2006), 56-57; Ken Drushka, *Tie Hackers to Timber Harvesters: The History of Logging in British Columbia’s Interior* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1998), 102-9; Doris Ray with Grace and Roy Foote, “Ties for the Railroad,” in *Deeper Roots and Greener Valleys* (Fraser Lake: Fraser Lake and District Historical Society, 1986), 92-93; “Paragraphs,” *Western Lumberman* 19 (1922): 44; “Notes from the North,” *Pacific Coast Lumberman* 7 (1923): 32; “Northern Logging Activities,” *British Columbia Lumberman* (hereafter *BCL*) 8 (1924): 98; “New Mill Replaces One Destroyed by Fire,” *Western Lumberman* 23 (1926): 18; “Prince Rupert District,” *BCL* 11 (1927): 34; G.A. Hunter, “Northern British Columbia,” *BCL* 12 (1928): 32; G.A. Hunter, “Northern British Columbia,” *BCL* 14 (1930): 20; Club members, “Fraser Lake Sawmills,” in *Deeper Roots and Greener Valleys* (Fraser Lake: Fraser Lake and District Historical Society, 1986), 96-98.

river. “Sometimes they’d jam up clear across the river,” drive foreman Harvey MacDonald recalled, “and there’d be a lake behind. In front, there would be hardly any water at all.” An island at Little Lake, where the Stellako met the Endako River, proved particularly troublesome. Dahlgren, free of Department of Fisheries interference to this point, used heavy equipment to construct a new channel, destroying up to three hundred metres of spawning grounds. In 1948, however, his efforts caused what local historians term “a few uncomfortable moments” for the company. Fishery officials had new reasons to protect spawning habitat, their concerns relating to a major shift in the Fraser’s history.¹⁶

For millennia, until 1913, the Fraser’s sockeye runs had peaked every four years, with a dominant cycle yielding perhaps thirty times as many fish as intervening years. That pattern was shattered in 1913 and 1914 when Canadian Northern Railway construction operations deposited tons of rock into the river at Hell’s Gate, narrowing the channel and increasing the river’s flow and turbulence. The slides barred salmon from the upriver spawning grounds, and the Stellako runs went into a three-decade decline. Salmon canners responded to the crisis in traditional fashion, calling for more hatcheries and tighter restrictions on the Aboriginal food fishery. The hatchery solution would eventually lose credibility among Canadian fisheries biologists, however, leading to closure of all ten federal facilities on the Pacific Coast in 1937, the same year that the newly established IPSFC initiated studies of the entire Fraser River watershed. Investigation of the Hell’s Gate question led to the construction of fishways in 1945-46, which opened upriver passage to spawners. Ultimately, fishway installation over the 1945-66 period revived the Fraser River runs, at a cost of over \$2 million.¹⁷

¹⁶ Prince George Forest District, Annual Management Report, 1945, British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), GR 110, box 1, Prince George Forest District Records; Richard A. Rajala, “Logging British Columbia” (unpublished report, Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1999), 109-11; Club members, “Fraser Lake Sawmills,” 98-100; Doris Ray with Harvey MacDonald, “Stellako River Log Drives,” in *Deeper Roots and Greener Valleys* (Fraser Lake: Fraser Lake and District Historical Society, 1986), 102.

¹⁷ Matthew Evenden, “Social and Environmental Change at Hell’s Gate, British Columbia,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004): 130-53; Canada Department of Fisheries and the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission in Collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife Branch of the BC Department of Recreation and Conservation, *Effects of Log Driving on the Salmon and Trout Populations in the Stellako River* (Vancouver: International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, 1966), 3 (hereafter cited as IPSFC, *Effects of Log Driving*); “The Decline of the Sockeye,” *Industrial Progress and Commercial Record* 5 (1917): 385-90; Joseph Taylor III, “Making Salmon: The Political Economy of Fishery Science and the Road Not Taken,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 31 (1998): 33-59; “BC Salmon Hatcheries to be Closed,” *Western Fisheries* (hereafter *WF*) 11 (1936): 6; Matthew Evenden, “Remaking Hell’s Gate: Salmon, Science and



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Source: *The Citizen*, 9 April 1962.

The results on the Stellako were evident immediately, as sockeye escapement rose from 3,077 in 1938 to 245,200 in 1946, and an IPSFC estimate put the Stellako's average annual contribution to the Fraser River fishery at a value of \$1,188,500 between 1952 and 1966. The river was also gaining increasing renown as a sport fisher's paradise. Clarence and Enid Plowman opened Poplar Lodge on Francois Lake in 1946, the Glennanon Resort and John Kost's Nithi Lodge offered accommodation for fishers by 1950, and in 1965 Doug and Betty Kelly purchased the Stellako Lodge. These operations, along with Menard's Resort, attracted what Bruce Hutchison called an annual invasion of Americans to Francois Lake.¹⁸

The Fraser's recovery as a system for the production of commercial fish placed Fraser Lake Sawmills' 1948 Stellako River "improvement" in a newly critical light. Fortunately, that log drive was the last for a time. Peeled ties continued to move down the Stellako until 1957 but in much smaller amounts than in prewar years. Road improvements encouraged the proliferation of small bush mills as competition for central interior timber grew more heated. Ray Williston sought to impose order in 1960, introducing a quota system that gave established Public Sustained

the Fraser River, 1938-1948," *BC Studies* 127 (2000): 47-83; Roos, *Restoring Fraser River Salmon*, 90-98; Ray D. Magladry, "The Sockeye Is Back," *Forest and Outdoors* 44 (1948): 10-11.

¹⁸ IPSFC, *Effects of Log Driving*, 3-5; A. Bryan Williams, *Fish and Game in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Sun Directories, 1935), 94-95; W.F. Pochin, *Angling and Hunting in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Sun Directories, 1946), 59; Doris Ray, "Tourism and Outdoor Recreation," in *Deeper Roots and Greener Valleys* (Fraser Lake: Fraser Lake and District Historical Society, 1986), 125. See the Nithi Lodge advertisement in *Cariboo and Northwest Digest* 6 (1950): 37; Lindsay, "Land of the Sunset Trail," 20; Audrey Smedley, "East End of Francois Lake," *Nechako Chronicle*, 26 May 1966; Bruce Hutchison, *The Fraser* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1950), 296.



Trout Fishing on Stellako River, 1950s. *Source:* BC Archives I-20924.

Yield Unit operators preference in timber acquisition. Quotas quickly became commodities, and Fraser Lake Sawmills went on to buy up a large number of portable sawmills to acquire their quotas, including several along the west shore of Francois Lake.¹⁹

By that time more sweeping changes were in store that would bring the bush mill era to an end. Anxious to promote central interior pulp and paper production, Williston adopted forester Ian Mahood's idea for a new tenure designed to make the region's mature timber, considered too small for sawmilling, available for pulping. That innovation proved sufficiently attractive to spark a wave of capital investment in Prince

¹⁹ "Increase in Demand and Price for District Rail Tie Cutters," *Review* (Burns Lake), 25 October 1962; Club members, "Fraser Lake Sawmills," 100; IPSFC, *Effects of Log Driving*, 16-17; "Sawmill Directory, Prince George District," *BCL* 40 (1956): 11; Annual Management Report, Ranger District No. 9, BCA, GR 110, box 1, 1946; Ken Drushka, *Tie Hackers to Timber Harvesters: The History of Logging in British Columbia's Interior* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1998), 147, 164-65; Annual Management Report, Vanderhoof Ranger District, BCA, GR 110, box 1, 1953; Annual Management Report, Ranger District No. 11, BCA, GR 110, box 1, 1959; "Versatility Feature for Random-Length and Studs," *BCL* 50 (1964): 68-70.

George. Canadian Forest Products and the Reed Paper Company signed the first of Williston's new pulpwood harvesting agreements in 1964 and commenced construction of their Prince George Pulp and Paper Company plant. Noranda and the Mead Corporation secured the second, launching Northwood Mills later that year. A third went to the Intercontinental Pulp and Paper Company, a partnership involving Prince George Pulp and the Feldmuhle firm of Germany.²⁰

The prospect of supplying chips to the new Prince George mills prompted further concentration and modernization in the sawmill sector. Dahlgren, after having dismantled the lakeshore plant in favour of two small mills in 1956, now centralized sawing, planing, and chipping operations at the original site and planned to revive the drive from Francois Lake to the new thirty-five-thousand-foot capacity mill. A gravel road ran from the eastern end of Francois to the southern shore of Fraser Lake and Highway 16, but its use would involve lifting from the water logs that contractors had brought to Francois Lake, hauling them by truck to Fraser Lake, and watering them again for booming. With facilities in place to draw its logs from the lake to the mill by means of a conveyor system, the company decided that the river's energy offered a much cheaper means of log transportation than did trucking.²¹

By July 1964, when Fraser Lake Sawmills announced its intention to resume the Stellako drive the following spring, there was abundant evidence of the log-driving's destructive effects. Loggers across North America had "improved" rivers by removing obstructions, straightening bends, and bulldozing new channels – with drastic impacts on stream ecology. A river so modified became "an efficient sluice, but a biological desert," a New Brunswick wildlife biologist observed in 1962. Along with erosion of stream banks and gouging of spawning beds, pulpwood drives had deposited millions of tons of bark in eastern rivers annually, smothering spawning gravel and releasing tannic acid, which depleted the water's oxygen content. "One would find it almost impossible to assess absolutely the damage," a Maritimes Department of Fisheries

²⁰ Drushka, *From Tie Hackers to Timber Harvesters*, 175-79; "Prince George Pulp Licence Granted," *BCL* 46 (1962): 39; "Northwood to Build Chip Storage Area," *Truck Logger* (hereafter *TL*) 20 (1964): 60; "This Is It – Fastest Growing City in the Province," *Prince George Citizen*, Travel Supplement, April 1965; *Prince George Citizen*, 28 April 1965, 6; "Third Pulp Mill," *Prince George Citizen*, 11 May 1965.

²¹ "High Bidding in Pulp Chip Market," *TL* 20 (1964): 52; The *ABC British Columbia Lumber Trade Directory and Year Book, 1963* (Vancouver: Progress Publishing, 1964), 82; Club members, "Fraser Lake Sawmills," 100; IPSFC, *Effects of Log Driving*, 17; *Nechako Chronicle*, 15 April 1965.



Source: *Cariboo and Northern BC Digest*, Spring 1947.

official noted in 1959, "but it has been heavy and the productive capacity of the rivers has suffered."²²

Pacific Coast officials, aware of such grim findings, had good reason to worry about an old practice. Columbia Cellulose, having failed in its effort to drive logs down the Skeena to its Prince Rupert mill, persisted on the Kitsumkalum River and, in 1959, began massive Nass River log drives. Down the Fraser, Western Plywood initiated a Quesnel River drive in the early 1960s. The northern part of the Fraser system had come in for increasing abuse as well, as firms opted to run logs down tributaries rather than trucking their cut to the Fraser for the main river drive. The Fraser and its tributaries offered a way to "beat the bugaboo of rising production costs," a reporter observed: "no road building headaches, no hauling costs, no equipment depreciation."²³

The IPSFC took a tolerant stance towards forest industry expansion at first, declaring in its 1952 annual report that "lumber and sockeye need have no conflict in the years to come." Optimism had turned to alarm by the mid-1960s, however, when the commission ranked logging alongside high dams and pollution as potentially disastrous in their collective impact on the salmon resource. At the same time, the United

²² Bruce S. Wright, "Effect of Stream Driving on Fish, Wildlife and Recreation," *Woodlands Review* (1962): 433-39; Vadim D. Vladykov, "The Effects of Man-Made Changes in Fresh Water in the Province of Quebec," *Canadian Fish Culturalist* 25 (1959): 7-12; "Fewer River Drives, Less Pollution," *Canadian Forest Industries* 85 (1965): 17; Pritchard, "Effects of Man-Made Changes," 3-6.

²³ J.T. Pennell, "Effects on Fresh Water Fisheries of Forestry Practices," *Canadian Fish Culturalist* 25 (1959): 27-31; "Northern News," *BCL* 36 (1952): 107; "Annual River Drive May Be Abandoned," *BCL* 37 (1953): 19; Arthur G. Downs, "From Trees to Textiles," *Cariboo and Northwest Digest* 6 (1950): 16; Rajala, *Up-Coast*, 147-48; "Modern Tugs Ply Upper Fraser," *Cariboo and Northwest Digest* 7 (1951): 18; "New Role for Fraser," *TL* 112 (1956): 7-8; Annual Management Report, Ranger District No. 1, 1954, and Annual Management Report Ranger District No. 2, 1957 (both in BCA, GR 1110, box 1); "Svenske Hot-Rod Wrangles River Logs," *BCL* 44 (1960): 56; "Productive Season," *BCL* 46 (1962): 38; Hugh Weatherby, "Western Plywood at Quesnel," *Timber of Canada* 20 (1959): 54-58; "Cariboo Loggers Have Rediscovered the Fraser," *BCL* 42 (1958): 16-20.

Fishermen and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU) and local rod and gun clubs (and their provincial organization, the BC Federation of Fish and Game Clubs) were becoming more and more vocal in their criticism of industrial forest practices. A storm had begun to brew, then, as Fraser Lake Sawmills made plans to drive the Stellako.²⁴

It all began quietly enough in the late 1950s, when the small Nicholson mill on Francois Lake began driving logs down the Nadina River, which drained into the west end of the lake. Then, in the summer of 1964, Fraser Lake Sawmills submitted its notice of intent to drive the Stellako the next spring in accordance with a recent amendment to the Department of Fisheries' BC regulations, which gave the minister authority to prohibit or regulate the driving, towing, or booming of logs where such measures might pollute or obstruct spawning streams. This amendment had been prompted by the actions of Columbia Cellulose. Its drives on the Kitsumkalum River had been both inefficient and destructive. Now the firm wished to construct a splash dam to achieve greater control over the Kitsumkalum's flows. Horrified at the prospect of another Adams River catastrophe, officials had taken new authority to regulate the industrialization of rivers.²⁵

Both the Department of Fisheries and the IPSFC registered strong objections to a resumption of the Stellako drives. The sockeye runs had recovered to "a relatively high level of abundance" since 1948, and the Stellako, a shallow river even during spring freshets, was particularly vulnerable. There was also the sports fishery to consider, as increasing numbers of "fishermen tourists" flocked to the resorts and lakeside campsites. "The addresses are representative of almost every state below the border, and all the provinces in Canada," a Burns Lake newspaper noted in the summer of 1964.²⁶

²⁴ IPSFC, *Annual Report of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, 1952* (Vancouver: Wrigley Printing, 1953), 7-8; IPSFC, *Annual Report of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, 1956* (Vancouver: Campbell and Smith, 1957), 5; "Weaver Creek Channel Contract \$200,000," *WF* 69 (1965): 30; "Channels, Hatcheries and Other Fraser Fish Facilities," *WF* 73 (1966): 18-22; IPSFC, *Annual Report of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, 1962* (Vancouver: Wrigley Printing, 1963), 5; Roos, *Restoring Fraser River Salmon*, 219-21; IPSFC, *Annual Report of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, 1965* (Vancouver: Wrigley Printing, 1966), 5; Lyons, *Salmon*, 526-27; Rajala, "Clearcutting," 27-29.

²⁵ "Francois Lake," *Review* (Burns Lake), 26 May 1960; "Francois Lake," *Review* (Burns Lake) 15 June 1961; IPSFC, *Annual Report of the International Pacific Salmon Commission, 1964* (Vancouver: Wrigley Printing, 1965), 31; *Canada Gazette* 98 (27 May 1964): 189; IPSFC, *Effects of Log Driving*, I, 14-15; C.H. Clay, "Report on a Proposal to Drive Logs by Means of a Splash Dam on the Kitsumgallum River," 12 October 1954, BC Marine Resources Branch Records, BCA, box 12.

²⁶ IPSFC, *Effects of Log Driving*, 16; "North Central Zone Rod and Gun Clubs Meet in Prince George," *Review* (Burns Lake), 22 October 1959; "Francois Lake," *Review* (Burns Lake), 19 May 1960; "Francois Lake," *Review* (Burns Lake), 9 June 1960; "Francois Lake - Garden

By 1965, it seemed that fishery officials had made their case successfully, but in early June a federal government order-in-council approved the drive. “Effective lobbying” in Ottawa had persuaded cabinet that running logs down the Stellako was the only practical transportation method available. The company had invested in timber and mill modernization on the basis of cost estimates involving a drive, not the more expensive trucking alternative. Cariboo Social Credit MP and lumberman Bert LeBoe championed the company’s cause in Ottawa, arguing that denying Fraser Lake Sawmills use of the river would constitute an unacceptable subsidy to the fishing and tourism industries. Federal approval for the 1965 drive as an “interim measure” came with strings attached regarding timing and duration, along with a requirement that the impact of the drive be studied. These provisions satisfied a Fisheries Association of BC spokesperson, who considered the Stellako “well looked-after” but worried about the new Prince George pulp mills making widespread use of the cheapest transportation method available.²⁷

The 1965 Stellako drive commenced on 6 June. In short order, there were twenty-six major jams, eleven of them “on or adjacent to major salmon spawning grounds.” John Kost, president of the East End Francois Lake Resort Owners Association, angrily declared that the river was being “poisoned” by the logs. Cyril Shelford, a “rough-hewn logger-farmer,” Social Credit MLA for the Omineca riding since 1952, and chair of the Legislature’s Standing Committee on Forestry, joined LeBoe in downplaying the drive’s negative potential. Such assurances did little to calm conservationist concerns in a province that had seen the Bennett government sacrifice Strathcona and Tweedsmuir parks to hydroelectric development in recent years. While crews cleared the Stellako jams, Roderick Haig-Brown delivered his much-publicized “I hate BC” speech in Victoria on 21 June, expressing his disdain for the “shoddy, uncaring development of our natural resources, the chamber of commerce mentality which favours short-term material gains over

of Eden,” *Review* (Burns Lake), 30 August 1962; “Fishing News,” *Observer* (Burns Lake), 22 August 196, 1.

²⁷ “Log Drive Stalled to Protect Salmon,” *Prince George Citizen*, 25 March 1965; Dick Phillips, “Highway No. 16,” *BCD* 20 (1964): 25-27; Dick Phillips, “Highway No. 16,” *BCD* 21 (1965): 21-22; Salmo, “Fishing the Land of the Totem,” *BCD* 21 (1965): 39; *Canada Gazette* 99 (14 July 1965): 1074; Roos, *Restoring Fraser River Salmon*, 180; “Panel Permits Log Run in River,” *Prince George Citizen*, 1 June 1965; “Wants Probe on Stellako,” *Prince George Citizen*, 14 July 1965; “Stellako Log Drive Safe,” *Prince George Citizen*, 9 June 1965; IPSFC, *Effects of Log Driving*, 1.

all other considerations, [and] the utter contempt for human values of every kind.”²⁸

The Stellako drive seemed a fitting example, condemned even by the *Prince George Citizen*. How, Prince George resident and BC Federation of Fish and Game Clubs director Dick Phillips wondered, could the interests of a “comparatively small logging operation trump those of the sport and commercial fishery, and the river itself?” The only consolation in this “wasteful use of a river,” Phillips concluded, was that the episode had generated sufficient opposition that it would likely not be repeated. Federation secretary-manager Howard Paish, on the other hand, predicted that the spring of 1966 might bring a “test of strength” on the banks of the Stellako. After listening to Paish address the Quesnel Rod and Gun Club, member Geoff Warden worried as well. “Some lunkhead in Ottawa” had approved the 1965 drive; how could one rule out the same result in 1966?²⁹

No doubt hoping to prepare the ground for just such an outcome, Fraser Lake Sawmills manager Joe Leslie described the Phillips article as a “hysterical outburst.” Stellako salmon runs had suffered no damage from earlier drives, nor was the mill the prime beneficiary of the practice’s revival. The company could survive without the Francois Lake logs, but the lake’s forty or fifty small logging operators could not continue if denied use of the river. Their suffering would extend to the province as a whole, as vast amounts of otherwise inaccessible timber would age and die with no financial return. Leslie’s retort tapped into some important currents in British Columbia’s postwar political culture. Conventional forest conservation wisdom called for the removal of trees as they matured, to be replaced by “vigorous young stands.” Second, in shifting the focus to the Francois Lake operators, Leslie crafted a populist argument with broad appeal. A Social Credit stronghold, the

²⁸ IpsFC, *Effects of Log Driving*, 22-34; “Stellako River Resorts Angry,” *Prince George Citizen*, 10 June 1965; “Fuss Not Over Logs,” *Prince George Citizen*, 11 June 1965; “‘Crazy Cyril’ Does It Again,” *Lakes District News* (hereafter *LDN*), 14 February 1967; “Forestry Well Represented,” *Truck Logger* (hereafter *TL*) 21 (1965): 11; “Wants Log Run Facts,” *Prince George Citizen*, 16 June 1965; “Recreation Policy,” *Victoria Daily Times* (hereafter *VDT*), 22 June 1965; Rajala, “Clearcutting,” 46-48; “Writer Detests Everything BC Stands For Now,” *VDT*, 22 June 1965; Keeling and McDonald, “Profligate Province,” 8-9.

²⁹ “Or Will They?” *Prince George Citizen*, 2 July 1965; “Stellako,” *Prince George Citizen*, 14 July 1965; Dick Phillips, “Prince George – Prince Rupert,” *BCD* 21 (1965): 28-29; Geoff Warden, “Cariboo and Chilcotin,” *BCD* 21 (1965): 29-30. For analysis of the BC Wildlife Federation’s shift in focus from hunting and fishing regulations to habitat concerns, see John Gordon Terpenning, “The BC Wildlife Federation and Government: A Comparative Study of Pressure Group and Government Interaction for Two Periods, 1947 to 1957, and 1958 to 1975” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1982).

Lakes District west of Prince George remained committed to what Gordon Hak calls populism's idealized "egalitarian social order made up of independent, small producers." In framing the Stellako dispute in terms of the welfare of those who combined farming, ranching, and seasonal logging, Leslie expressed regional social and economic tensions in a way that meshed nicely with the regional political economy.³⁰

No one could deny the need for better coordination among resource agencies. A federal-provincial BC fisheries committee had been established in 1964, and in October 1965 provincial fisheries managers and Forest Service representatives met with federal Department of Fisheries staff to consider "areas of conflict" between the two industries. When forester W.G. Hughes asked if the Stellako had suffered damage from that spring's drive, federal biologist F.C. Boyd explained that jams had caused major shifts of spawning gravel. Discussion of the financial implications of stopping the drive concluded that the Forest Service required early notice to allow the "adjustment of stumpage rates to compensate for increased log transportation costs." But would the province make the required financial sacrifice? Stumpage payments were calculated on a profit-sharing principle, and an increase in operator costs cut into the province's share of the logs' market value. With its role as an industry regulator compromised by its revenue-generation function, and with no fish habitat obligations under the Forest Act, this made the Forest Service a less than enthusiastic partner.³¹

Fouled streams and the loss of trout and salmon might seem inconsequential or unavoidable in an expanding economy, wrote BC Commercial Fisheries Branch director R.G. McMynn in an early 1966 *British Columbia Digest* article on pollution, but the tendency to write off clean water in the name of progress was "unnecessary and an affront to human decency." McMynn mentioned the damaging effects of log driving but made no direct reference to the Stellako, having considered the subject more fully in an earlier report tabled in the Legislature that described logs in shallow streams as a "constant threat to salmon production." The 1965 Stellako drive only confirmed McMynn's fears.

³⁰ "From Our Readers," *BCD* 21 (1965): 42; "Foresters Work With Nature," *Forest and Mill* 15 (1961): 8; Gordon Hak, "Populism and the 1952 Social Credit Breakthrough in British Columbia," *Canadian Historical Review* 85 (2004): 282.

³¹ "Notes on a Meeting Held in Victoria, BC, Oct. 19, 1965, between Representatives of the Provincial Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, the Provincial Fish and Game Branch, the British Columbia Forest Service and the Department of Fisheries, to Informally Discuss Areas of Conflict between the Forest Industry and Fisheries," appendix 5, Federal-Provincial BC Fisheries Committee, Nanaimo, BC, 5 November 1965, 2-3. Located in Pacific Biological Station Library.

Almost 6 million feet of logs had been thrown into the river, producing enormous jams, scouring spawning beds, eroding banks, and leaving huge bark deposits on the river bottom. Angered by the drive, and concerned that another might be in the offing, sport and commercial fishers joined resort owners in hoping for more stalwart support from Ottawa should the river be placed at risk again.³²

Seeking clarity on that question in late April, representatives of the IPSFC, the Department of Fisheries, and the BC Fish and Wildlife Branch met with Joe Leslie of Fraser Lake Sawmills. Pacific Region Director of Fisheries W.R. Hourston reminded Leslie that the 1965 drive had received “conditional authorization” only. Unfortunately, the Forest Service had rejected the possibility of lower stumpage rates, eliminating that solution. Given the previous year’s documented damage, his department had no choice but to recommend that Fisheries Minister H.J. Robichaud prohibit further log driving on the Stellako. Leslie countered that the pre-1965 runs had elicited no complaints. An IPSFC official added that the postwar recovery of the river’s salmon populations, coinciding with the cessation of drives and construction of the fishways, made it difficult to establish “reliable cause-and-effect relationships.” A swap of timber involving blocks held by another firm might allow his company to truck some logs to the mill, Leslie said, but the Stellako remained the only outlet for at least 3 to 4 million feet of logs cut along the western portion of Francois Lake.³³

Getting to the heart of things, Hourston asked how the company would react in the event of a prohibition. Fraser Lake “would be forced to fight elimination of the log drive,” Leslie replied, and the imposition of a stop order would “necessitate a very critical examination of the company’s position.” With that threat on the table, Hourston asked about the jams that accompanied the 1965 drive. In response, Leslie conceded that inexperience had resulted in “some operational difficulties.” Could jams be prevented, asked E.H. Vernon of the Fish and Wildlife Branch? Many could be, said Leslie, and the company would install booms to protect key areas if assured of extended driving rights. Trucking from Francois Lake to Fraser Lake was simply uneconomical as steep grades required small loads that brought costs to \$5.25 per thousand board feet

³² R.G. McMyynn, “Man, Water, and Fish,” *BCD* 22 (1966): 36; “Bigger Fisheries Role by Province One of McMyynn Report Proposals,” *Fisherman*, 18 February 1966, 3.

³³ “Notes on a Meeting Held in Vancouver April 18, 1966, between Representatives of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, the Provincial Fish and Wildlife Branch, the Department of Fisheries and Fraser Lake Sawmills Ltd. to Discuss the Subject of Proposed Log Driving on the Stellako River,” I-2. B.C.A., GR 1118, box 12.

(2.36 m³), in contrast to the 75 cents per thousand figure the Stellako offered. Fraser Lake Sawmills could see no alternative to the log drive, given its current holdings.³⁴

When the quota transfer negotiations fell through, the ball was in Hourston's court. He informed Fraser Lake Sawmills of his ruling on 4 May 1966. Enclosing a summary of the forthcoming report on the 1965 drive, Hourston described his department's opposition to another Stellako drive as "unalterable" and the company's proposal to continue the drive as "clearly unacceptable." Hourston concluded that a truck-hauling operation had to be introduced, and this stance was supported by the Commercial Fisheries Branch.³⁵

The Stellako ranked high on the agenda at the annual convention of the BCWF in Prince George that same day. Featured speaker Ray Williston emphasized the need for "multi-use" resource development that gave prime consideration to outdoor recreation. Fortunately, he said, his department and that overseen by Recreation and Conservation Minister Ken Kiernan had a relationship of "complete co-ordination" and enjoyed a "close relationship and liaison" with the Department of Fisheries. Williston chose to celebrate the achievements of multiple-use forest and water administration rather than to discuss its mounting contradictions. Roderick Haig-Brown took that subject on in his wide-ranging address on resource mismanagement, which outdoor columnist "Salmo" considered the highlight of the gathering. Although Haig-Brown did not refer to the Stellako, the river was about to leave the category of "silent" erosion because of what it came to represent during a particularly contentious period of Victoria-Ottawa relations.³⁶

Having muscled his way to victory in negotiations with John Diefenbaker and Lester B. Pearson over the Columbia River Treaty in a way that legitimated Peace River hydroelectric development, BC premier W.A.C. Bennett was bullish on the province's economic prospects. Prince George was the scene of frantic growth, inspired

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

³⁵ W.R. Hourston to Fraser Lake Sawmills, 4 May 1966, R.G. McMynn to W.R. Hourston, 31 May 1966 (both in BCA, GR 118, box 12).

³⁶ For a summary of Williston's comments, see Howard Paish, "Stellako Log Drive: Resource Use or Resource Abuse," *BCD* 22 (1966): 9, 37; Rajala, "Clearcutting," 45; The BC Federation of Fish and Game Clubs became known as the BC Wildlife Federation in 1966 to "reflect the broader thinking of the organization." See Howard Paish, "BC Wildlife Federation Marks 10th Birthday," *BCD* 22 (1966): 12, 32-33; Roderick Haig-Brown, "Fish, Wildlife and Outdoor Recreation in BC Development," Proceedings, Ninth Annual Convention of the BC Wildlife Federation, Prince George, BC, 4-7 May 1966. For the published version of Haig-Brown's address, see Haig-Brown, "Fish and Wildlife," 32-40; Salmo, "Wildlife vs. Industry," *Prince George Citizen*, 13 May 1966.

by Williston's tenure innovations and the BC Hydro Corporation's capacity to generate cheap power for the new mills. At the same time, the premier pushed at the perceived constraints of postwar cooperative federalism, urging Ottawa to relinquish control of income taxes to the provinces, challenging federal authority over banking with his Bank of British Columbia scheme, asserting his right to make trade deals with other countries, and taking the occasion of the 1965 Dominion-Provincial Conference to assert his right to offshore oil reserves. Asserting provincial jurisdiction in colourful terms, Highways Minister Phil Gaglardi warned Ottawa to "keep its cotton-picking fingers off all our resources." The looming Stellako controversy thus took on great significance in the context of Bennett's aggression, sudden pulp and paper industry expansion, and ongoing discussions about a series of power and flood control dams for the Fraser Basin. Precedents might be set with implications for intergovernmental relationships in resource management around the province.³⁷

The BCWF's 1966 Prince George convention reflected these concerns. A Prince George Rod and Gun Club resolution feared that a repeat Stellako drive would "lead to the establishment of another precedent which will be difficult to dispose of." Having learned that studies of the 1965 drive had confirmed original objections, delegates approved the resolution, which sought strict control over smaller spawning streams. Major rivers such as the Skeena and Fraser would be subject to looser regulation. After the convention, interested parties quickly staked out positions. Hourston said the IPSFC study, still over a month from release, showed that drives were "pretty hard on the fish." Reaffirming his support for the company, LeBoe again characterized a drive ban as an unfair subsidy of the commercial fishery by the timber industry. Dick

³⁷ For discussion of the Columbia River Treaty, the Two Rivers Project, and the Peace River development, see Neil Swainson, *Conflict over the Columbia: The Canadian Background to an Historic Treaty* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979); David J. Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987), 296-375; Karl Froeschauer, *White Gold: Hydroelectric Power in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 174-210; Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province, 1934-1972* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1973), 221-49; R.M. Burns, "British Columbia and the Canadian Federation," in *A History of British Columbia: Selected Readings*, ed. Patricia E. Roy (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989) 156-73; Norman J. Ruff, "British Columbia and Canadian Federalism," in *The Reins of Power: Governing British Columbia*, ed. J. Terrence Morley, Norman J. Ruff, Neil A. Swainson, R. Jeremy Wilson, and Walter D. Young (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983) 271-304; "Ottawa Widening Gulf Premier Bennett Says," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 7 May 1965; "Give Up Offshore Mineral Claim, Bennett Urges Ottawa," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 1 June 1965; "Gaglardi Tells Ottawa to 'Behave,'" *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 11 June 1965; Richard Bocking, *Mighty River: A Portrait of the Fraser* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1997), 115-18.

Phillips, now a BCWF vice-president, hoped the Department of Recreation and Conservation would play a role in defending the sport fishery.³⁸

By early June, prospects of federal-provincial cooperation on the Stellako had vanished. Minister of Fisheries H.J. Robichaud gave official notice to Williston, Kiernan, and Fraser Lake Sawmills that he would not issue a permit for another drive. Research had proven beyond doubt that the 1965 run had “immediate and accumulative adverse effects” on the Stellako’s productive capacity. Williston responded that if the drives of past decades were so detrimental, then the river should be empty of fish, and urged further studies. Then, on 9 June 1966, Williston announced that Fraser Lake Sawmills was unable to pay its stumpage bill; his department had seized the logs in Francois Lake and appointed the company as bailiffs to conduct the drive under provincial authority. Once at the mill the logs would be scaled to determine the government’s share of their value, and the remainder would revert to the company. “Rivers are a provincial resource and a provincial responsibility,” Williston told the *Prince George Citizen*. Having not yet received a full copy of the report on the 1965 drive, he knew enough about its findings to deny their validity. So did Bert LeBoe, who described the conclusions as “almost entirely pure nonsense.” Williston’s seizure of the logs, in any event, placed the prospect of a 1966 Stellako drive in an entirely new light. A conflict involving a small company and a federal bureaucracy had become a direct test of will between Victoria and Ottawa. Williston seemed to be spoiling for a fight.³⁹

The Francois Lake resort owners, facing cancellations if the drive went ahead, met on Sunday, 12 June 1966, to discuss a course of action. Enid Plowman expressed the group’s bitterness best, saying, “we don’t even have a government when something like this takes place.” Going the legal route and seeking an injunction appealed to some, but others suggested that members gather in their boats and go fishing at the river’s outlet to disrupt the logs’ release. The Stellako Indian Band also

³⁸ R.H. (Dick) Phillips, “Pollution Committee Report,” proceedings of the Ninth Annual BC Wildlife Federation Convention, Prince George, 4-7 May 1966, 2; “Process Sewage Wastes, Says Wildlife Federation,” *Fisherman*, 3 June 1966; “War on Pollution Urged,” *Prince George Citizen*, 9 May 1966; Salmo, “Wildlife vs. Industry,” 10; “Log Drive Sparks Concern,” *Prince George Citizen*, 13 May 1966; “Stellako Log Drive Still under Question,” *Prince George Citizen*, 1 June 1966.

³⁹ H.J. Robichaud to R.G. Williston, 3 June 1966, H.J. Robichaud to K. Kiernan, 3 June 1966 (both in Canada, Unpublished Sessional Papers, First Session of the 27th Parliament, 18 January 1966-8 May 1967, LAC, RG 14, vol. 1805); “Log Drive Permit Refused,” *Prince George Citizen*, 8 June 1966; Larry Emrick, “Williston Defies Federal Government,” *Prince George Citizen*, 10 June 1966; “BC Will Defy Ottawa With River Log Drive,” *VDT*, 11 June 1966; “LeBoe Backs Mill,” *Prince George Citizen*, 10 June 1966.

had a stake in the outcome. Both the river and the road to Fraser Lake ran through their reserve, and the band had in the past charged fishers a toll as they motored west to Francois Lake. Chief Moose Isadore now hinted that the band would attempt to stop the drive if not compensated for use of the river.⁴⁰

With no response from Ottawa, the lodge operators joined the BCWF in going the legal route, making only a token “picket protest” by piloting their boats around the mouth of the river when the drive began on the morning of 14 June 1966. Neither tactic seemed to worry Williston, who defined the drive as both a principled exercise of the province’s jurisdiction over rivers and a scientific endeavour. Ottawa, seeking control over BC waterways, had presented no convincing evidence to support a ban. The province would pursue definitive answers, however, by engaging the BC Research Council (BCRC) to study this drive, one that would be conducted under strict controls. Evidence of damage would mean an end to the Stellako drives, Williston promised, even though the loss in stumpage revenue might run into the millions. “This whole thing will straighten itself out,” the minister told reporters: “But whatever is decided must remain for all time.”⁴¹

By 14 June the Stellako dispute had achieved more than regional significance. Reporting from Fraser Lake, the *Vancouver Sun* announced: “A new battle between BC and Ottawa about federal-provincial rights began in this interior community today.” According to an unnamed senior Forest Service official, Fraser Lake Sawmills did owe stumpage fees, but the real objective of the decision to proceed with the drive was to challenge Department of Fisheries’ jurisdiction. “The provincial government did not want to see the logging operators bound-up in a contest with Ottawa,” he explained, “so it seized the logs.” Williston, in daring Ottawa to take action under the Fisheries Act, hoped to make the Stellako a jurisdictional test case.⁴²

“How much is a salmon worth?” the *Vancouver Sun* asked in its 14 July 1966 editorial. With a forest industry strike looming, the Bennett government’s sermons about the need for a calm, rational resolution of labour-management conflict seemed “hypocritical,” even “grotesque,” given its handling of the Stellako dispute. Nor, with Strathcona Park

⁴⁰ Larry Emrick, “Battle Looms over Stellako,” *Prince George Citizen*, 13 June 1966; Larry Emrick, “Lodge Operators Lose First Round of Battle,” *Prince George Citizen*, 14 June 1966; Salmo, “Fishing in the Land of the Totem,” 39.

⁴¹ “BC Runs Logs, Defying Ottawa,” *VS*, 14 June 1966; “Ottawa Accused in Log Ban Case,” *VP*, 15 June 1966.

⁴² “BC Runs Logs,” 3.

recently opened to mining development, was the Sacred conservation record one to inspire confidence. Williston's "pooh-poohing of federal objections" in favouring logs over salmon might be expected, but where was Conservation Minister Ken Kiernan? "Would it be too much to suggest that he voice an opinion?" the *Vancouver Sun* asked. While Kiernan avoided comment, and eight thousand logs went down the Stellako on the drive's first day, the resort owners and the BCWF pursued an application for a writ of mandamus that, if granted, would force federal fisheries officer John Tuyttens to enforce his department's stop order. Stymied by Justice J.S. Aiken's ruling that neither Tuyttens nor BC attorney-general Robert Bonner had been served proper notice, the drive opponents would press ahead on the legal front as another 11,780 logs followed on Wednesday, 15 June. Ottawa, meanwhile, did nothing. Deputy Minister Dr. S.V. Ozere said that no decision would be rendered until the receipt of field reports.⁴³

Regional sentiment is difficult to assess, but some indication of the divisive nature of the dispute surfaces in newspaper reports. J. Riderley of Summit Lake asked, given Williston's defiance, how parents could raise their children with a proper respect for the law. But the Prince George Rod and Gun Club, sponsors of the BCWF convention resolution, now withdrew from the Stellako conflict. With Northwood Pulp just weeks away from entering production alongside Prince George Pulp and Paper, and the town in the midst of a boom that had more than doubled its population over the past decade, President Jim Slesinger said the club would take no further action until driving had been proven harmful to fish. "It's people like him who come to the lodges and scream and holler if they can't catch a fish," a furious resorts association president John Kost responded. Slesinger, in turn, accused the resort owners of putting their private interests above those of the general welfare. Then, hinting at discord between the Prince George sport fishers and the BCWF leaders, Slesinger added that the federation's handling of the convention resolution "left much to be desired."⁴⁴

As feelings escalated on the drive's second day, the *Prince George Citizen* offered a sharp perspective on the role of experts, on the larger

⁴³ "How Much Is a Salmon Worth?" *VS*, 14 June 1966; BC Research Council, *Progress Report No. 1: Log Driving – Stellako River, June 1966*, table 1; "Resort Owners Seek to Halt Log Drive in Salmon Haven," *VS*, 15 June 1964; Canada, *House of Commons Debates, First Session, 27th Parliament, vol. 6*, 1966 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), 6,445; Scott Honeyman, "Stellako Log Drive Going Ahead," *Prince George Citizen*, 15 June 1966.

⁴⁴ Honeyman, "Stellako Log Drive Going Ahead"; "\$50,000 Annually at Stake," *VDT*, 16 June 1966; "Letters," *Prince George Citizen*, 16 June 1966; "Mill Makes First Pulp," *VS*, 6 July 1966; "Resorts Hit by Slesinger," *Prince George Citizen*, 17 June 1966.

issues at play, and on those who had been caught up in the Stellako affair. Understanding why the fisheries experts had been ignored demanded a recognition that this was a struggle with implications for the control of hydroelectric power development. It made little sense, then, to cast Fraser Lake Sawmills, mere intermediaries in the larger federal-provincial drama, as the “villain in the piece.” Finally, the *Citizen* referred to the “cavalier treatment” of the Stellako people, whose claim to the waters running through their reserve had been ignored, along with their demand for compensation. They numbered among the pawns in the Stellako game, along with the recreational and commercial fishers, the lumbermen, and the resort owners.⁴⁵

Crews released another 4,553 logs on Thursday, 16 June 1966. As jams formed along the entire length of the river, Robichaud finally informed Williston that the province’s defiance was a “matter of serious concern.” Explaining to the House of Commons that serious legal questions had to be answered before taking action, Robichaud conveyed his willingness to consider submitting the issue to the Supreme Court of Canada once he had received advice from the Department of Justice. Peace River Conservative MP Gerald Baldwin, placing the Stellako in the context of W.A.C. Bennett’s disregard of federal authority in damming the Peace River, a navigable stream that crossed provincial boundaries, asked if the minister would consider launching an injunction and then going to the Supreme Court if unsuccessful? British Columbia must make its position known first, Robichaud replied. The minister’s critics would accuse him of taking a seat on the sidelines while awaiting the outcome of the legal action launched by the resort owners and the bcwf. Acting on their behalf, lawyer Roland Johnson had arranged for Tuytens and Bonner to be served notice of their writ application, but Johnson would not appear before Justice Aikens in Vancouver until the following Monday, the drive’s final day.⁴⁶

On Friday 17 June, when over seventeen thousand logs entered the river, Williston expressed delight at Robichaud’s vague threat to take the Stellako issue to the Supreme Court. “Let’s find out if the Fisheries Act permits the federal government to take unilateral action over a provincial resource that is not harming a federal resource,” he declared,

⁴⁵ “Stellako,” *Prince George Citizen*, 15 June 1966. For a similar view from Burns Lake, see “Stellako,” *LDN*, 22 June 1966.

⁴⁶ Canada, *House of Commons Debates, First Session, 27th Parliament, vol. 6*, 1966, 6476-77; BC Research Council, *Progress Report No. 1*, table 1; H.J. Robichaud to R.G. Williston, 16 June 1966, Canada, Unpublished Sessional Papers, First Session of the 27th Parliament, 18 January 1966-8 May 1967, LAC, RG 14, vol. 1805; Scott Honeyman, “Stellako Dispute in Commons,” *Prince George Citizen*, 16 June 1966; “Log Drive Fought,” *VS*, 16 June 1966.

dismissing drive opponents as “emotional.” The burden of proof lay with Ottawa, and it had not been met. By that time the UFAWU had joined the fray, deciding to launch a protest campaign against the sort of irresponsible management that contributed to the long decline of the salmon resource. The fishers would make their views known to federal and provincial representatives, but they never followed through on the idea of joining the legal effort.⁴⁷

Williston’s efforts to cast himself in the role of principled defender of provincial rights utterly failed to swing the tide of editorial opinion. The *Victoria Daily Times* attributed the debacle to one of the Socreds’ “self-inflicted disabilities.” In eliminating its fisheries department in favour of branch status in the still-silent Kiernan’s ministry, the government had deprived itself of the public servants needed to offer wise counsel regarding that economic sector. Others pointed the finger of blame at Ottawa: “No wonder this country is falling to pieces,” the *Citizen* asserted. Why had federal officials chosen to merely observe, hoping for a private legal action to succeed? In Cold War terms, the Stellako issue was the equivalent of “being invaded by the Russians and sending the Boy Scouts to start fighting before the country declares war.” Columnist Maurice Western held out hopes that Robichaud would commit to meeting Bennett in a “judicial showdown” provoked by the premier’s “Jesse James approach” to federalism. Only Ottawa, it seemed, had any duty to consult during this period of provincial activism.⁴⁸

With the release of over forty-one thousand logs over the weekend, the pressure on Kiernan continued to mount. While Williston had defended the forest industry’s interests, and the Fish and Wildlife Branch sided with “the feds,” its leader had “pulled the rug out from under his own department,” said Howard Paish. The *Vancouver Sun*’s Ian MacAlpine added to Kiernan’s embarrassment with a column that imagined a meeting between him and Williston. Entering the latter’s office with McMynn’s report on fisheries, which had been tabled in the Legislature but not released to the public, Kiernan learns that Williston has the matter well in hand: “Fisheries chaps in Ottawa” are using the Stellako as a “gimmick to get their hands on our rivers.” Just like the offshore oil rights matter, Kiernan agrees, but he suggests that Williston

⁴⁷ BC Research Council, *Progress Report No. 1*, table 1; “Williston Happy at Log Fish Test,” *VS*, 17 June 1966; “Writ Probably Too Late,” *Prince George Citizen*, 17 June 1966; “Stellako Log Drive Threat to Salmon,” *Fisherman*, 17 June 1966.

⁴⁸ “Logs and Spawning Grounds,” *VDT*, 17 June 1966; “Canada,” *Prince George Citizen*, 17 June 1966; Maurice Western, “Jesse Bennett Rides Again on the Stellako Spawning Grounds,” *VS*, 21 June 1966.

look at the report. "Seen it," he replies, praising the decision to withhold the document with the words: "such things can cause trouble." Kiernan admits it is none of his business and expresses a fervent desire to be left out of the dispute, but he refers to a passage that presents an alarming picture of the hazards that logging and river driving pose to fisheries. "Like what hazards?" Williston asks. "Listen to this," Kiernan responds, reading the report's conclusion that log driving is a practice inconsistent with wise resource use. "That's all very well Ken," retorts Williston, "But where's the proof?" Practicality demanded that a stand be taken on the Stellako: "If we knuckle under to a few guys trying to play nurse maid to a bunch of fish, we're leaving ourselves wide open to the same kind of guff from those who would say power dams are harmful to salmon." Agreeing, Kiernan wishes that the public would leave such matters in their hands. "People just don't understand, Ken," Williston says as Kiernan departs: "They just don't understand."⁴⁹

MacAlpine made all this up, of course, but the story seemed plausible enough with regard to capturing the Sacred cabinet hierarchy, the marginalization of fisheries science, and the Stellako's importance in the larger scheme of things. On the afternoon of Monday, 20 June, the last of the logs – some twenty-five thousand – entered the Stellako "amid a confusing welter of legal technicalities and bitter protest," reaching Fraser Lake at about 10:30 that evening. Over the seven days an estimated 106,728 logs, representing over 18,878 cubic metres (8 million board feet) of timber, had gone down to the mill booming grounds. Their passage had not been the smooth, controlled flow of raw material Williston had promised, however. A total of twenty-nine jams, the largest involving some 2,500 logs at the Highway 16 bridge, had formed over the week.⁵⁰

But if the drive was over, the controversy surrounding it was not. On Monday morning, Roland Johnson finally appeared in a Vancouver court room on behalf of the BCWF and resort owners. The action stalled there, however, and Johnson and Crown lawyers agreed to adjourn to prepare their cases. In the interim, drive supporters and detractors kept the Stellako issue percolating in public discourse. The Northern Interior Lumbermen's Association expressed support for Williston, claiming that the "alleged" ecological impacts of log driving had been greatly over-

⁴⁹ Larry Emrick, "The Stellako Log Drive's a Very Touchy Situation," *Prince George Citizen*, 20 June 1966; Ian MacAlpine, "Logs vs. Fish on the Stellako," *VS*, 21 June 1966.

⁵⁰ BC Research Council, *Progress Report No. 1*, table 1, p. 12; "Stellako Case Winds up Today," *Prince George Citizen*, 20 June 1960; Larry Emrick, "Log Drive Now Over," *Prince George Citizen*, 21 June 1966.



Source: *Nechako Chronicle*, 28 July 1966.

emphasized. BC First Nations had both local and province-wide reasons to offer a dissenting opinion. The Stellako flowed through a reserve, and coastal Natives still played a prominent, if declining, role in the commercial fishery. Guy Williams, president of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, expressed his organization's conviction that the Stellako case represented a threat to the incomes of hundreds of fishers. Natives in particular would be the losers if the province persisted in "making the salmon industry expendable in the financial interests of logging operators."⁵¹

Even though the last log had been run, then, all interests were well aware that the key issues remained unresolved. Would the Stellako be subject to further drives? How many other rivers would be pressed into the service of the forest industry? Could fisheries interests count on Ottawa's support in challenging such threats, including the even more ominous Moran dam proposal for the Fraser? Would Kiernan ever speak out? Additional fuel for the fire arrived on 22 June, with the release of the eighty-five-page IPSFC report on the 1965 drive. First providing data on the commercial and sport fishery resources of the Stellako, the report went on to consider the "long record of unsatisfactory experience" in North American streams with similar characteristics. Still, despite all the evidence from Maine to the Kitsumkalum, which clearly showed that

⁵¹ "NILA Backs Stellako Drive," *Prince George Citizen*, 20 June 1966; Emrick, "Log Drive Now Over," 1; "Log Drive Goes Ahead Despite Ottawa," *TL* 22 (1966): 10; "Salmon Spawning Dangers Voiced by Brotherhood," *Native Voice* 20 (1966): 1-2.

log driving “could only adversely affect” salmon and trout populations, permission had been granted in 1965.⁵²

Focusing on the Stellako’s spawning grounds, identified since the early 1940s, the cooperating agencies devoted considerable attention to the destructive effects of jams. At four critical sites selected for intensive study, scouring eroded almost 20 square metres of “choice spawning grounds,” representing 8.6 percent of the river’s total capacity. Less severe scouring occurred at numerous other sites, along with bank erosion at many points. Cumulatively, the researchers concluded, a significant amount of spawning ground had been lost to the 1965 drive, with effects that would persist for several years, and further driving would only worsen the deterioration. A second component of the study, involving estimates of bark and debris deposits from the drive’s inception into the autumn, showed that amounts present in spawning gravel “increased tremendously” when the drive began, that they remained higher than pre-drive levels in October, and that the rate of decomposition would not eliminate these accumulations within a year. Water quality studies found little chemical contamination through the leaching of tannin from bark and wood, but the study warned that the “potentially dangerous consequences of increased organic decomposition [were] clearly indicated.”⁵³

After a speculative treatment of the drive’s effects on existing sockeye, chinook, and trout eggs and fry, the study team turned to a more damning historical perspective on spawning ground damage. Stellako sockeye spawning counts conducted by area since 1938, and a detailed 1950 survey of the river that mapped distribution by individual gravel bars, had determined that 22.3 percent of the runs spawned in the lower Stellako. But in 1965, only 11.9 percent of the sockeye utilized that portion of the river, a smaller proportion than any previous year, “indicating a reduction in spawning area available.” Comparing 1965 distribution with historical maps (particularly that for 1953) belonging to the same cycle indicated the sharpest decline at the sites of the most severe scouring.

Quantifying their findings, the researchers calculated that the 1953 sockeye run had been able to utilize approximately 34 square metres of spawning area, compared to barely 14 in 1965, a loss of 20.0670 square metres that had “apparently become unusable or at least undesirable to adult sockeye spawners.” Some spawners likely found alternative areas

⁵² IPSFC, *Effects of Log Driving*, 8-15.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 17-43.

upriver, but it was by no means certain that these marginal parts of the river would be as productive as were the former spawning areas. The report had much less to say about the drive's impact on trout spawning, except to note that most rainbow used only two sites and that, therefore, the sort of disruption noted for sockeye might have even more severe consequences for trout.⁵⁴

Moreover, some evidence suggested that the sockeye did not easily adjust to new spawning areas even if they were available. Studies from the Karluk River in Alaska indicated that most utilized the precise stretch of gravel from which they had emerged as fry. If unseeded during a run, such areas might yield no fish in subsequent years. The troubling history of the Nadina River, flowing into Francois Lake, tended to support that conclusion. Log driving and associated rechanneling over the previous ten years had displaced the entire sockeye population from its original spawning grounds. Some had strayed to breed in other areas, but the Nadina runs had been "greatly diminished," and the returning sockeye avoided several kilometres of apparently undisturbed gravel bars within the original spawning grounds.⁵⁵

Concluding the study, the technical staffs of the IPSFC, the Department of Fisheries, and the BC Fish and Wildlife Branch advised "that the Stellako River should not be used for log driving." It escaped no one's notice, of course, that the report's central recommendation appeared the day after the river *had* been subjected to another drive. The report received widespread press coverage. Some regretted the timing: the BCWF's Dick Phillips thought an earlier release might have prevented the 1966 run. Williston had voiced the need for clear evidence of damage. As the *Province's* Norman Hacking observed: "He now has the evidence." Neither Phillips nor Hacking posed the more fundamental question raised by the post-drive release, which hinted at Ottawa's lack of enthusiasm for the fight. The findings were available at least in summary form for earlier distribution to the press, but waiting until the drive's completion had preserved Robichaud's freedom of inaction.⁵⁶

Williston himself asked why the report's release had been delayed for so long. Admitting he had not yet read it on 23 June, he called the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 47-56.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-60.

⁵⁶ "Fishing Areas Harmed by Logs," *VDT*, 22 June 1966; George Dobie, "Log Drives Could Ruin Rich Fishery," *VS*, 22 June 1966; "Log Drive Halt Urged," *Prince George Citizen*, 22 June 1966; "Stellako Log Drives Harm Salmon," *Fisherman*, 15 July 1966; "Stellako Log Drive Shocks Industry," *WF* 72 (1966): 11; Norman Hacking, "Log Run Ruins Spawning, Say Experts," *VP*, 22 June 1966.

study inconclusive and “highly controversial.” He himself had “lived beside the river for 21 years,” and apart from the selfish resort owners, local residents had shown no interest at all in a row that had been “blown up by coast people.” He remained dedicated to the quest for unbiased scientific knowledge, however, and while awaiting his BCRC research he could only bemoan the lack of understanding that gave rise to such controversies. “Everybody,” Williston remarked, “believes in the multiple use of resources except the one they are interested in.”⁵⁷

But, asked the *Victoria Daily Times*, was the 1966 Stellako drive an instance of multiple use in action or a case of the province capitalizing on its financial interest in the logs? Refusing to back down, Williston implied that the feds could not be trusted; the IPSFC report had been withheld not only from him but also from the BCRC. He had finally obtained a copy from Kiernan and turned it over to the BCRC without reading it. Disregarding the collaboration of a provincial agency in the study, and dismissing its findings as distorted by Ottawa’s desire to discredit log driving, he continued to issue assurances that the BCRC would generate reliable conclusions. Conservationists, however, were decidedly sceptical about Williston’s commitment to scientific rigour. While the 1965 study involved six federal biologists, an equal number of IPSFC experts, and several engineers, Howard Paish pointed out that one lone BCRC biologist was investigating the 1966 drive. Dr. Craig Walden, head of the BCRC’s biology section, pointed out that experts from both levels of government were cooperating with biologist I.V.F. Allen’s “independent assessment,” but R.G. McMynn would later characterize the BCRC effort as nothing more than an attempt to “disprove the original fisheries report.”⁵⁸

Through it all, Minister Ken Kiernan remained “conspicuously absent” from the controversy. “Missing: one minister of conservation” read the first line of a *Province* editorial. But if Kiernan came under fire for inactivity during the early summer of 1966, many found his actions equally deplorable. Western Mines had just received his approval to establish a townsite in Strathcona Park. In this context, the “conservation minister who does not conserve,” as the *Victoria Daily Times* called him, earned ridicule for taking a stand against the contribution disposable

⁵⁷ “Minister Suspects Fish Report,” *VDT*, 23 June 1966; “Log Beef ‘Hot Air – Williston,”” *VP*, 24 June 1966.

⁵⁸ “Logs in the Millpond,” *VDT*, 24 June 1966; “Williston Stays Firm on Stellako Decision,” *Prince George Citizen*, 24 June 1966; Ian MacAlpine, “Painted Pebbles Tell Stellako Story,” *VS*, 24 June 1966; “Gov’t Probe of Log Drive Superficial, Experts Say,” *VS*, 29 June 1966; “Independent Study of River Just Begun, Biologist Says,” *VS*, 7 July 1966; R.G. McMynn to W.R. Hourston, 11 April 1967, BCA, GR 1118, box 3.

bottles made to the litter problem. Commercial fisheries interests agreed that Kiernan had been proven “completely ineffectual.” Calling the recent drive a “crime against nature and against a large industry,” columnist Gerry Kidd implored Robichaud to make good on his threat of a Supreme Court case. The UFAWU, however, placed little faith in the federal minister who had authorized a 1966 log-towing operation on the Wannock River, had failed to take action against Japanese and American fishing fleets, and had done nothing to stop the Stellako drive. A massive campaign in defence of the resource’s existence “as a vital economic, recreational, and aesthetic part of British Columbia’s heritage” was needed.⁵⁹

That campaign would not involve a local legal battle, however. At the end of June, the BCWF and resort owners called off their costly quest for a court order. That did not free Williston from Howard Paish’s relentless attack. When the former accused sports fishers of using “scare techniques,” the conservationist fired back that it was Williston who sought to confuse the public by denying the validity of the IPSFC report. W.A. James of Victoria, expressing outrage at Williston’s “snow job,” agreed. Knowing that the province’s fisheries experts opposed Stellako log driving, Williston had gone to the BCRC for a supportive opinion. Victoria fly fisher P.B. Wrixon, who knew the Stellako well, shared James’s contempt for Williston’s actions. “I wonder who he is trying to fool?” Wrixon asked. Reporting on all this, Norman Hacking concluded that the fight between Williston and the conservationists was “just warming up.”⁶⁰

Just what sort of ally federal fisheries minister Robichaud would make in the struggle remained unclear. On the west coast in early July, he gave assurances that the Stellako dispute had not been forgotten. That statement, and a discussion with Paish, left the conservationists somewhat cheered but considerably short of confident. The Wildlife Federation’s expensive legal effort had been motivated in part by the minister’s failure to enforce his own order, he explained, and the organi-

⁵⁹ “Where Was Mr. Kiernan?” *VP*, 23 June 1966; “Mining Firm Gets Townsite in Park,” *VS*, 7 June 1966; “In the Wilderness,” *VDT*, 25 June 1966; Ian MacAlpine, “Disposable Bottle Ban Foreseen,” *VS*, 9 June 1966; Gerry Kidd, “The Fishy Eye,” *WF* 72 (1966): 58; “Robichaud Criticized for Failing Industry,” *Fisherman*, 1 July 1966; “Secure Salmon First,” *Fisherman*, 8 July 1966.

⁶⁰ “Log Drive Completed so Protest Withdrawn,” *VDT*, 30 June 1966; “Wildlife Group Keeps Up Fight,” *Prince George Citizen*, 30 June 1966; Jim Fairley, “Stellako Skirmish to Shift,” *VP*, 30 June 1966; “Williston Charges ‘Scare Techniques,’” *VDT*, 25 June 1966; Norman Hacking, “Stellako Battle Just Beginning,” *VP*, 30 June 1966; “Log Drive,” *Daily Colonist*, 30 June 1966; “Acted Foolishly,” *VDT*, 30 June 1966.

zation had no intention of allowing the issue to be forgotten, “only to erupt once again at a later date, or on some other river.” Paish, seeking assurances that doubts about Robichaud’s capacity to show some spine in protecting the province’s fisheries resources were unfounded, would continue to wait, and, in Victoria, the *Province’s* Ian Street sensed a federal bluff. “No one here seems to expect a showdown this time,” he reported in late June.⁶¹

While hopes for a Robichaud counterpunch faded, the Stellako affair continued to cause divisions within the conservationist camp and to pit people against each other within Lakes District communities. At the end of June, BCWF directors expressed their disappointment at the statements made earlier that month by Prince George Rod and Gun Club president Jim Slesinger, but the local membership backed Slesinger in awaiting the outcome of Williston’s study. Tensions manifested themselves at Burns Lake as well, when over forty members of the Lakes District Sawmill Association attended a special July meeting to discuss the Stellako drive. Expressing their support for Williston’s defence of the multiple use of BC streams, the lumbermen appointed MLA Cyril Shelford, Joe Leslie, and Secretary Alan Blackwell to draw up a letter of approval. Members of the Tweedsmuir Park Rod and Gun Club had their own lively gathering, unanimously denouncing Williston. Quesnel’s Rod and Gun Club also scorned Williston – “that eminent authority on fish and fisheries” – for dismissing the IPSFC findings. That the minister had done so without first reading them seemed, oddly enough, quite logical. “We believe him,” the Quesnel group observed, “No man in his right mind who had read the report could with a clear conscience declare that it was inconclusive and should be ignored.” From Quesnel the Stellako “fiasco” revealed a “crippling” absence of planning, the power of Williston’s ministry, and a fine example of “the way we rape a resource in good ol’ Dynamic BC.”⁶²

Log drive supporters responded with a renewed effort to highlight the plight of the Francois Lake farmer-loggers. Fraser Lake Sawmills would purchase no more of their logs until the Stellako question was settled, Williston and Shelford reported in late July 1966. Alan Blackwell warned that loss of the log market would cripple the economy in a large

⁶¹ “River Log Row Action Studied,” *VS*, 4 July 1966; “Ottawa Accepts BC Challenge,” *VDT*, 2 July 1966; H. Paish to H.J. Robichaud, 11 July 1966, BCA, GR 118, box 3; Paish, “Stellako Log Drive,” 42; Ian Street, “Fish Forgotten,” *VP*, 28 June 1966; “Stellako Issue to Court?” *Fisberman*, 8 July 1966.

⁶² “Wildlife Federation Raps Jim Slesinger,” *Prince George Citizen*, 28 June 1966; “Club Backs Slesinger,” *Prince George Citizen*, 30 June 1966; “Discuss Stellako Log Run,” *LDN*, 20 July 1966; “Rod and Gun Club,” *LDN*, 20 July 1966; “The Stellako Fiasco,” *LDN*, 20 July 1966.

area north of Francois Lake. Having borrowed to acquire equipment, operators who trucked their logs up to forty-eight kilometres before dumping them in Francois Lake could not afford to lift them out for a second stage of trucking to the sawmill. Blackwell's point was not entirely invalid. The road running west along the north side of Francois Lake from the Highway 16 junction came to an end after several kilometres. Blackwell did not mention the south shore road, and why, Cicely Lyons asked in her 1969 history of the salmon industry, had the province not simply extended the northern road westward to the logging area and made it suitable for trucks?⁶³

On other fronts, September brought signs of intergovernmental cooperation. Kiernan announced that truck hauling would displace log driving on the Homathko River, which drained into Bute Inlet about 225 kilometres north of Vancouver. Towing operations on the Wannock River would not be repeated in 1967 either, thanks to a new \$280,000 Forest Service road connecting Owikeno Lake and Rivers Inlet. The Stellako drive remained a stark violation of the "rules of conservation and good sense," Norman Hacking remarked in welcoming the Wannock development. But if logs threatened spawning on the Homathko, how could the same not be said for the Stellako, asked both the *Prince George Citizen* and the *Lakes District News*.⁶⁴

If conservationists held out any faint hope that the BCRC study would contribute grounds for the Stellako's protection, preliminary findings only strengthened Williston's hand. A 29 September progress report presented a carefully worded, though generally supportive, analysis of the 1966 drive. Tagging 2 percent of the logs driven, and recovering 714 of them in Fraser Lake for inspection, I.V.F. Allen determined that over half lost no bark at all. Losses from most of the rest varied from 10 to 30 percent. Only a small fraction lost 40 to 80 percent, and none lost all of their bark covering. Laboratory tests confirmed that the deposits represented a potential source of pollution to salmon eggs, but the threat to water quality was not significant. Superficial consideration of the drive's hydraulic aspects produced few negative observations. Some localized spawning bed scouring may have occurred, but Allen had difficulty distinguishing the natural processes of bed movement

⁶³ "Stellako Farmers Join Log Dispute," *VS*, 22 July 1966; "Immediate Action Asked on Log Driving Dispute," *VS*, 28 July 1966; "Log Dispute Hurting Farmers," *VP*, 22 July 1966; Lyons, *Salmon*, 625.

⁶⁴ "Stellako Question Recalled by Log Drive 'Phase-Out,'" *LDN*, 14 September 1966; "Log Drive End Seen on Homathko, Wannock," *Fisherman*, 9 September 1966; Norman Hacking, "Safeguards for Salmon," *VP*, 19 July 1966; "Look Again," *LDN*, 14 September 1966.

and erosion from those caused by the logs. "From visual observations only," he concluded, "any detrimental effect of the 1966 log drive on the river regime appeared to be minimal." Scouring of the stream bed, "if it occurred," was confined to small areas, jams left no serious sediment deposits, and any wearing away of stream banks was "consistent with natural erosion."⁶⁵

The confidential report must have pleased Williston. Robichaud was heading west to attend "Salute to the Salmon" ceremonies on the Adams River, and a 24 October meeting had been scheduled with Williston and Kiernan in Victoria. Even before leaving Ottawa, Robichaud hinted that a deal was in the works. Indeed, the threesome emerged from their discussions to report that the intergovernmental squabble over the Stellako had been cleared up. Instead of a jurisdictional showdown, steps would be taken to improve communication between Victoria and Ottawa. Williston and Kiernan termed it a "worthwhile gathering" that laid the foundation for better cooperation. Robichaud joined the chorus: meetings like the one just concluded would "probably prevent such incidents in the future."⁶⁶

After all the fuss, the new administrative arrangements failed to generate much enthusiasm. The "poor communication" explanation also lacked real credibility as Williston's words and actions had left little room for confusion. It did not bode well for conservation, Gerry Kidd observed, that the province's "flagrant act of senseless destruction" on the Stellako could be passed off with a "what's past is past, we're looking to the future" explanation. The BCWF, looking to the future as well, submitted a brief to the provincial cabinet the day after the ministers' meeting. Avoiding mention of the Stellako, the document developed broad themes in a plea for more systematic planning in balancing resource development and environmental quality. The term "multiple use" had become virtually meaningless, the federation asserted, embodying both "unplanned simultaneous use" and the execution of single-use policies with the accommodation of other resource users as an afterthought.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ BC Research Council, *Progress Report No. 1*, 2-7.

⁶⁶ Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons, First Session, 27th Parliament, Vol. 9*, 1966 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), 8,967; "Ministers' River Probe: Logs or Fish?" *VP*, 21 October 1966; Jack Fry, "High-Level Talks Tighten Links," *Daily Colonist*, 25 October 1966; "BC-Ottawa Fisheries Accord Sparked by Stellako Dispute," *VP*, 25 October 1966; "Stellako Uproar Results in BC-Ottawa Pact," *WF* 73 (1966): 44.

⁶⁷ Kidd, "Fishy Eye," 38; BC Wildlife Federation, "Submission to a Committee of the Cabinet of the Province of British Columbia," 25 October 1966, BC Legislative Library.

Howard Paish analyzed the Stellako's recent history in sharper terms that summer. Multiple use served only as a "political platitude" that enabled the users of one resource to trample the legitimate rights of others. The problem lay not in a lack of knowledge, Paish maintained, but in "the application of 19th Century administrative machinery ... under 19th Century resource development attitudes" to the modern dilemma of balancing the demands of production and consumption. While agencies continued to "wander along single-track courses," and the politicians and their senior civil servants squabbled over turf, public resources suffered. Provincial fisheries managers expressed similar conclusions in more bland language. "The concept of conservation as wise use has proved to be extremely difficult to apply simultaneously to more than one resource," a 1966 BC Fish and Wildlife Branch report conceded. No single incident made that point more clearly than the 1966 Stellako River log drive, and few were optimistic that the Robichaud-Williston-Kiernan get-together had produced anything more than a hastily conceived band-aid solution to a problem that would continue to fester.⁶⁸

And fester it did. Over the winter of 1966-67 Cyril Shelford urged disaster area status for the communities around Francois Lake, along with federal public works spending should uncertainty over future drives curtail Fraser Lake Sawmills' log purchases. The Tweedsmuir Rod and Gun Club ridiculed the idea, arguing that the company could easily bear the costs of trucking such a short distance. In March, a grateful Williston received the final BCRC report, which concluded that within the time constraints and terms of reference "no detrimental effect" of the 1966 drive could be determined. The document offered no conclusions on the long-term consequences for salmon reproduction, and a response by the agencies that had authored the study of the 1965 drive criticized numerous errors and omissions. The report pleased the forest industry, but the New Democratic Party, conservationists, and editorialists scorned the study as inconclusive and as a document crafted both to justify the recent run and to legitimize a 1967 drive.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Paish, "Stellako Log Drive," 42; British Columbia, *Field Manual of Sport Fish Habitat Protection* (Victoria: Fisheries Management Division, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Department of Recreation and Conservation, 1966), 2.

⁶⁹ "Shelford Goes to Bat for South Country," *LDN*, 21 December 1966; "Uncertainty Plaguing Loggers," *VDT*, 28 January 1967; "Stellako Logging Needs Phazeout," *Daily Colonist*, 28 January 1967; "Tweedsmuir R. and G.C. Writes Minister of Fisheries," *LDN*, 22 February 1967; BC Research Council, *Final Report on the Effect of Log Driving on the Stellako River on Salmon, June 1966, Prepared for the Honorable Ray Williston, Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources* (1967); Bob McConnell, "Question Marks Stud Report," *VP*, 15 March 1967;

Ignoring the criticism, Williston used the BCRC report in precisely that way, authorizing a 1967 log run on the Stellako under stricter controls. That instalment came with Robichaud's blessing, as the minister placed his officials in the uncomfortable position of taking part in a practice they had condemned. The event inspired another round of vigorous debate but no organized protest. The BCWF, its coffers drained by the previous year's legal fees, confined itself to harsh commentary, as did the UFAWU. Controversy there was, however, as reports of gunfire directed in the general area of a tug-boat crew drawing a boom of logs to the Stellako's mouth captured public attention. So, too, did Stellako Lodge owner Doug Kelly's one-man crusade to disrupt the drive, which saw him pilot his small boat into the face of the first release of logs. Kelly's civil disobedience drew headlines but no followers. Isolated locally, and unable to attract outside support, in 1967 he was a potential catalyst without a movement.

That would come, but for the moment Williston could still depict the central interior as a space where getting things done trumped environmental concerns. "The people of BC are dedicated to opening up this province," he told a Prince George gathering of Social Creditors at a June 1968 dinner. Cyril Shelford spoke that evening as well, but the Stellako was spared from another run of logs that spring. Altering its log procurement policies, Fraser Lake Sawmills installed a dry-land log storage system and began trucking all of its logs to the mill. Both Williston and Shelford went on to win their seats for the final time in the 1969 provincial election.⁷⁰

Public opinion was shifting, however, and the Stellako drives played a part. In the aftermath of the 1967 drive a BCWF *BC Outdoors* editorial called for greater militancy from conservationists to save other streams from becoming industrial log chutes. Outdoor writer Dave Stewart, after visiting with Kelly, agreed that the time had come for British Columbians to "stand up and be counted." Penticton's Eric Sismey saw a solution to the Stellako problem in the more aggressive attitude the Sierra Club in the United States had taken under David Brower's leadership. Not until public opinion was mobilized in a way that produced election results would "the ravishment, under the multiple use alibi, of our natural heritage end." Within a year or so Sismey's

"A Report without Answers," *VP*, 20 March 1967; "Up the Lazy River," *VS*, 3 April 1967; Dale Ethier, "The Babbling Brook," *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, 4 May 1967; "Stellako Log Drive Not That Bad," *TL* 23 (1967): 36; "General Comments: Stellako River Log Driving," March 1967, copy filed with the 1966 BCRC Report, BC Ministry of Forests Library.

⁷⁰ George Inglis, "BC Brass Backs Bert," *Prince George Citizen*, 17 June 1968.

wish for new structures to energize debate over wilderness, rivers, and pollution was granted with the establishment of the Society for Pollution and Environmental Control (SPEC) and the Sierra Club of British Columbia; Greenpeace followed in 1971. Why, SPEC asked in a 1968 brief to a public hearing on water pollution, had the Department of Fisheries permitted clear violations of its own legislation on the Stellako? The new environmental group interpreted the log drives as “tantamount to a criminal act,” one that had left British Columbians “incensed at the selfish and irresponsible approach by an industry and the stupidity of the Provincial Government’s Minister of Lands and Forests.”⁷¹

Why, indeed, *had* Robichaud allowed Williston to have his way on the Stellako? From Ottawa’s perspective, the affair appeared only to reinforce a lesson already learned in conflicts over early twentieth-century immigration policy that inspired federal head taxes and other restrictions on the entry of Asians. On issues of fundamental importance to the Pacific province, Ottawa tended to let the “Spoilt Child of Confederation” have its way if the cost of accommodation did not run too high; and, in the mid-1960s, Stellako River spawning habitat was an acceptable price to pay for political peace. A fuller answer to SPEC’s question demands reference to the forest industry’s power relative to that of the commercial fishery both in Victoria and Ottawa, the Department of Fisheries’ low ministerial status, and a degree of scientific and jurisdictional uncertainty. Further, western issues seem not to have ranked highly among Robichaud’s priorities. That, certainly, was the impression in British Columbia, where the industry cheered his 1968 retirement and the appointment of Jack Davis.

Williston’s ability to play his trump card of scientific uncertainty likely contributed to Ottawa’s waffling on the Stellako. Fisheries biologists had no doubt that the drives were harmful: but harmful to what extent and for what duration? Would their conclusions have held up in court? The cumulative effects of log driving could only be assessed through years of systematic study. Not until the fifteen-year Carnation Creek project, initiated in 1970 on the west coast of Vancouver Island, did forestry-fisheries interactions benefit from that sort of analysis. In the mid-1960s, Williston could, and did, argue with some legitimacy that no one knew with certainty how severely log driving affected the Stellako’s salmon and trout. The problem played a part in another federal

⁷¹ “Editorial,” *BC Outdoors* 23 (1967): 2; Dave Stewart, “This Is the Stellako,” *Western Fish and Game* 3 (1968): 22-25; “Letters,” *Western Fish and Game* 3 (1968): 6; “Submission by the Society for Pollution and Environmental Control (SPEC) to Public Hearing on Fisheries,” 1969, 3, University of Victoria Archives, Derrick Mallard Papers, box 5.

retreat just over a decade later on the Queen Charlotte Islands. In the Riley Creek episode, which replayed many features of the Stellako controversy, charges against a logging company were dropped after the industry challenged the Fisheries Act. British Columbia's aggression and Ottawa's willingness to yield resolved the Riley Creek conflict to the satisfaction of the province and the forest industry, a Department of Justice opinion that the findings of experts fell short of the proof required to achieve a conviction influencing the outcome.⁷²

If scientific uncertainty helped define Ottawa's lack of resolve, doubts about the constitutionality of the Fisheries Act likely reinforced caution. Williston, certainly, seemed eager to have the jurisdictional question referred to the courts. Robichaud, by contrast, opted to leave the matter in limbo. There it remained until 1975, when logging contractor Dan Fowler was charged with depositing debris in a salmon-bearing stream. Fowler's lawyer argued that Section 33(3) of the Fisheries Act interfered with the province's jurisdiction over forestry and was, therefore, *ultra vires*, winning an acquittal in provincial court. The Crown appealed, gaining a reversal in Vancouver County Court. Ultimately, the Council of Forest Industries financed a Supreme Court of Canada appeal in an effort to free industry from the restrictions of a recently strengthened Fisheries Act. The Court's initial 1980 judgement found Section 33(3) an unconstitutional invasion of provincial rights, but a second ruling on a related case upheld another section of the act, which prohibited the dumping of deleterious substances in fish-bearing waters. A full account is beyond the scope of this article, but, reading backwards to the mid-1960s, it is worth noting that, when put to the test, federal jurisdiction was by no means certain in its application to aspects of forest industry activities.⁷³

After 1969, the Stellako faded from public attention but not entirely from memory. The study of the 1967 drive, released in May 1969, gave the river a relatively clean bill of health. Log driving continued on the Nass and Quesnel rivers, leading Richard Wright, in 1969, to describe the latter as a "sluice box" in the process of ruin. By that time, Columbia Cellulose's Nass drives had inspired Nisga'a Tribal Council and UFAWU protests, and many suspected that the river's decline as a salmon producer

⁷² Kidd, "Fishy Eye," 50; "Fisheries Drops Logging Charges," *Fisherman*, 24 August 1979. For a fuller discussion of the Riley Creek conflict, see Rajala, *Up-Coast*, 204-5; Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 162-3, 170, 190; Phillips, "Jurisdictional Conflicts," 103-8.

⁷³ "Regina v. Dan Fowler," *Canadian Environmental Law News* 5 (1976): 155-59; Jean Sorensen, "Fish and Forests," *BCL* 64 (1980): 30-31; Bob Lee, "Top Court Cuts Power of Federal Fisheries Act," *TL* 3 (1980): 10-12; John Clarke, "New Court Ruling Consistent with First," *BCL* 64 (1980): 48, 69.

fulfilled warnings first heard on the Stellako. Log driving may have become a disagreeable fact of life on those rivers, but British Columbians were fast losing patience with a host of forest industry practices. The use of herbicides near rivers, yarding logs across streams, and clear-cutting to the edge of all waters became increasingly controversial even as the Stellako lost prominence.⁷⁴

The desire for a more careful, balanced relationship to nature contributed to the 1972 election of Dave Barrett's New Democratic Party government, ending two decades of W.A.C. Bennett's Social Credit administration. "The support given to the NDP reflects a profound change in public attitude," Hal Griffin observed in the *Fisherman*: "No longer are people prepared to accept environmental destruction as the price of industrial development." The Stellako affair and related postwar controversies had forced British Columbians to confront that very question. What were the acceptable costs of what John Reiger, writing about the conservationist impulse in the nineteenth-century United States, calls the "myth of progress"? Why could the flooded valleys behind dams not be logged first, both to reap the economic benefits and to realize the recreational potential of the reservoirs? Were parks appropriate spaces for such developments, along with mining and logging operations, in such a resource-rich province? Finally, given the existence of a road link, did it make sense to run logs down a vulnerable stretch of river, even if the use of that road would have doubled the company's transportation costs? Ray Williston, for reasons that surely went beyond a concern for the financial health of Fraser Lake Sawmills, concluded that it did.⁷⁵

Williston and the forest industry had their way on the Stellako, but in one of the 1972 election's shocking results, the NDP's Doug Kelly edged out Cyril Shelford to claim a seat in the Legislature. Williston lost his Fort George race too, as pulp and paper workers cast ballots for his NDP opponent. Well known in the region for his stand on the Stellako, Kelly

⁷⁴ "Minutes, Seventh Meeting, Federal-Provincial BC Fisheries Committee," Nanaimo, BC, 28-29 May 1969, p. 6, app. 4, pp. 1-7, Pacific Biological Station Library; Robert Gordon and Dennis Martens, "Sockeye Eggs Killed by Bark on Spawning Gravel," *WF* 78 (1969): 41; Richard Wright, "Death of the Rivers," *Western Fish and Game* 4 (1969): 20-23; "Nass Log Drive Research Inadequate, Says Calder," *Fisherman*, 24 January 1969; "End Log Drives, Fishermen Urge," *VS*, 26 April 1969; Richard Morgan, "'Credibility Gap' Widens over Nass Log Drives," *WF* 77 (1969): 44-46; "Act to Save Salmon," *Native Voice* (1971): 4; Richard A. Rajala, "Forests and Fish: The 1972 Coast Logging Guidelines and British Columbia's First NDP Government," *BC Studies* 159 (2008): 81-120.

⁷⁵ Hal Griffin, "Protection of the Environment?" *Fisherman*, 2 February 1973; John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 27.

had come to be seen as the lone crusader who had brought sufficient public attention to bear on the river to put an end to the drives. The evidence provides no support for this interpretation, even though others portrayed the resolution of the dispute in similar terms. "We stopped log drives on the Stellako River," declared a 1973 BCWF *Newsletter*. In much the same vein, a fine local history of Fraser Lake attributes the discontinuation of the drives to concern for sockeye spawning beds. In fact, changes in log procurement strategy by Fraser Lake Sawmills put an end to the practice, but the minor myths highlighting one man's defiance, the Wildlife Federation's stalwart stance, or the application of wise policy made more palatable sense of this piece of BC history than did the more prosaic explanation.⁷⁶

Perhaps the Stellako's resiliency helped forge a conception of its salvation from log driving. Fly fisher Maurice Wrixon, after vowing never to return to his favourite river, continued to make annual trips and, in 1977, enjoyed the best fishing in his memory. The sockeye continued to return as well, with up to 350,000 arriving to spawn in peak years. Today, fly fishers continue to rank the Stellako a prime trout stream, and its four resorts draw over nine thousand visitors annually. Clearly, over time the river withstood the gouging of spawning beds and the bark deposits.⁷⁷

That should not be taken as a vindication of those who supported the drives; nor should they be vilified. Everyone who took a position on the Stellako log drives had reasons for doing so, though in retrospect some positions seem more reasonable than others. Ray Williston took the perfectly reasonable stance that the forest industry's needs came first and that proof of damage to the fisheries was lacking. Whether *any* proof would have satisfied Williston is a matter worth pondering for he had one eye on Ottawa the entire time. This was a BC river, to be put to

⁷⁶ "Letters: Reader Writes on Recent NDP Party Meet," *LDN*, 28 June 1972; "New Democratic Party," *LDN*, 23 August 1972; "Douglas T. Kelly Credits Workers for Victory," *LDN*, 6 September 1972; Williston and Keller, *Forests, Power and Policy*, 247; "Kelly, NDP Candidate," *LDN*, 9 August 1972; "BC Wildlife Federation Newsletter," *BC Outdoors* 29 (1973): 58; Club members, "Fraser Lake Sawmills," 100-1.

⁷⁷ Maurice Wrixon, "The Stellako ... Fly Fisherman's Paradise," *Daily Colonist*, 23 October 1973, BCA, vertical files; Lewis Johnson, "Autumn on the Stellako," available at <http://www.thechronicflyfisher.com/STELLAKO.html> (viewed 10 September 2008); Phillips, "Jurisdictional Conflicts," 101; "Reserve Established on the Stellako," *Nechako Chronicle*, 7 August 1980; "Vanderhoof Land and Resource Management Plan," available at http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/slrp/rmp/princegeorge/vanderhf/plan/vanderhoof_Irmp/section2.26.html (viewed 15 August 2008); Club members, "Fraser Lake Sawmills," 101; Afshin Shams, "Fishing the Prince to Prince Corridor," available at http://www.fishingwithrod.com/articles/2002/0802_01.html (viewed 25 October 2008).

use in a manner that best suited the economy and that demonstrated the federal government's irrelevance. As far as the forest industry was concerned, the operative word in multiple use was "use," and a few federal fish were well worth sacrificing in the process of asserting British Columbia's control over the flows of rivers.

For Fisheries Minister H.J. Robichaud, the Stellako, a small river in a thinly-populated region of a distant province, was not worth fighting for. Despite the unqualified findings of his own department – that the 1965 drive had sacrificed a good deal of spawning habitat – Robichaud chose the path of least resistance. This, too, was a reasonable choice, given the scientific and constitutional questions and the relative stakes in the federal-provincial game. If going along to get along with the fractious Pacific province meant some loss of respect for his department, there were million-dollar investments in new spawning channels to boost Ottawa's legitimacy as a resource manager. Indeed, the successes of that technological fix made it all the easier to define salmon conservation in terms of rehabilitation rather than in terms of protection. By the early 1970s, a sockeye spawning channel was under construction on the Nadina River in an effort to boost Francois Lake's productive capacity, several others were on the drawing board, and the IPSFC hoped that a planned Upper Adams River facility would revive that run.⁷⁸

The Stellako's symbolic significance did not reach to Ottawa, but the river took on contested meanings for British Columbians. Such constructions were shaped by complex forces. The forest industry saw rivers like the Stellako as natural conveyor belts of sorts – raw material chutes that eliminated the expense of building and maintaining roads in a difficult climate. For the farmer-loggers of Francois Lake, the Stellako was an economic lifeline, a link in connecting timber to sawmill, to pulp mill, and to the world market beyond. Regional tensions came into play as well, linked to the Bennett government's reputation as a defender of the hinterland against the power of the metropolitan centres of the south coast. No benefits from the commercial fishery found their way to the Lakes District; the balance sheets of Vancouver-based BC Packers and the earnings of coastal fishers were of little concern.

No simple sorting can capture the perceptions of the sporting interests. Howard Paish and the BCWF seized on the Stellako drives, as did Wiliston, for their broader implications. Massive expansion of the pulp and paper sector and the "recurrent threat" of a huge Moran Canyon

⁷⁸ Roderick Haig-Brown, "The Fraser Watershed and the Moran Proposal," *Nature Canada* 1 (1972): 8.

dam above Lillooet placed the province's waters at risk on a scale that demanded opposition, and the Stellako represented the ideal opportunity on so many different levels.⁷⁹ Kiernan's silence, Robichaud's indifference, Williston's perceived arrogance, and the illegitimacy of government-industry multiple-use promises formed a potent brew of discontents. Added to the mix was the seemingly illogical and reckless disregard for law, science, even rational economic calculus. But the response of the Prince George sporting community complicates this tidy picture of conservationist outrage. There the Rod and Gun Club withdrew after putting forth its original convention resolution condemning the drive.

There is, finally, the Stellako Band's place in the controversy to consider, and here further research is in order. Apart from a couple of *Prince George Citizen* stories and another in the *Native Voice*, First Nations concerns played little part in the published record of the drama. That, sadly, should come as no surprise, but evidence from the region depicts this period as one of mounting resistance to the forest industry's destruction of fisheries and wildlife habitat. Aboriginal trappers along the Skeena and Fraser systems protested, demanding compensation for lost traplines. Trapping was a frontier industry, Williston responded, its difficulties "one of the penalties of progress."⁸⁰

It was, in the end, that notion of progress that inspired the Stellako confrontation and others of the postwar era. In the years after 1970, British Columbians grew increasingly sceptical about the ease with which political and industrial elites exchanged unspoiled landscapes for development and wage labour in the service of large corporations. The Stellako issue is both complicated and important because it focused so many of these tensions so sharply, just at the time when nature was coming to mean more than a storehouse of resources. As a symbol the Stellako was a river that led, in its meandering way, from a traditional British Columbia of unbridled resource-based materialism to the one we inhabit today. And, as debates over offshore oil development, fish farming, and proposed hydroelectric projects suggest, it is a province that continues to confront the dilemmas raised on the Stellako River four decades ago.

⁷⁹ Haig-Brown, "Fraser Watershed," 9.

⁸⁰ "Northern Interior Forests Denuded," *Native Voice* 10 (1956): 6; "Skeena Committee under Fire, Some Closure Changes Rumored," *WF* 67 (1964): 11; "Trappers Will Seek Damage Compensation," *Prince George Citizen*, 14 June 1966; "Howard Fights for Trapline Compensation," *Native Voice* 10 (1956): 2; Rajala, *Up-Coast*, 154-55.