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## Sustaining sustained yield: class, politics, and post-war forest regulation in British Columbia

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**Abstract.** In British Columbia, Canada, industrial sustained-yield forest regulation was embraced together with a system of forest tenures governing private access to public forest lands in the mid-1940s. This approach has underpinned forest exploitation and regulation ever since, despite sometimes significant reforms over the years. Yet this approach to forest policy has also come under fire in recent years because of pervasive signs of economic, social, and environmental exhaustion. In this paper I analyze the political circumstances surrounding adoption of this particular approach to governing forest access and forest use in the province of British Columbia. In particular, I draw on historical documentation related to two key provincial Royal Commissions on Forestry conducted in the 1940s and 1950s. These commissions provided an arena for debating alternative approaches to forest regulation in the province, and resulted in a series of recommendations that were key influences on postwar forest policy. Drawing on the debate and particularly on the positions adopted by socialists and trade unionists, I link the politics of forest regulation to the politics of class struggle and class compromise in early postwar British Columbia. This serves the purpose of highlighting important, alternative ideas about forest use values and exchange values that contrast with those that underpin conventional, commodity-oriented forestry in the province, as well as with contemporary alternatives to mainstream forestry. It also serves the purpose of exploring the organization of political consent around industrial, sustained-yield forestry, treating this model of regulation not as something ‘natural’, but rather as something politically contingent and negotiated. And finally, I examine seldom explored links between the politics of producing and regulating nature, and the politics of class struggle under capitalism more generally.

### Introduction

As I was writing this, Brascan Ltd was completing a deal with Weyerhaeuser for its forest-industry holdings in coastal British Columbia (BC), Canada. It is a big deal, for Brascan, for Weyerhaeuser, and for BC. Worth an estimated Can \$1.2 billion, and covering about 250 000 ha of private timberlands, the rights to an additional 3.6 million m<sup>3</sup> of public timber, five sawmills, and two other processing facilities, it makes Brascan a major player on the coast of BC. Central to the transaction is the acquisition of a gift that just keeps on giving: timberlands, much of them publicly owned but privately leased on terms that make the distinction between private and public ownership a fine one indeed. The forests, or I should say the timber, are key financial assets driving the deal, described by a Brascan representative as “a critical addition to the company’s holdings that consolidate its financial position” (Toronto *Globe and Mail*, 18 February 2005, page B1). Bruce Flatt, President and Chief Executive Officer of Brascan Corporation, elaborated:

“This acquisition provides Brascan with a unique opportunity to acquire some of the highest quality timberlands in North America, furthering Brascan’s strategy of investing in high quality assets that generate long term, sustainable cash flows and increase in value over time .... Timber assets have been recognized by institutional investors as a very attractive asset class” (Brascan Corporation, 2005).

Just so, in corporate parlance and financial reports, the discourse(s) of industrial forestry and finance capital that underpin this transaction obscure the extraordinary ecological and sociocultural complexity of BC’s heterogeneous forest landscape.

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This abstraction in turn helps to enable the liquidation of forests in the province and their conversion into commodities including money capital. Fittingly enough, forest liquidation enacts the material erasure presumed by its discursive antecedent in the business pages. And there is, sadly, nothing all that new or different I can identify about this particular transaction.

Yet, I would argue that the deal and the way it is represented in the annals of capital (including in the mainstream business press) are at the same time extraordinary. How is it possible for a landscape so complex, so subject to political struggle and contestation, and so ecologically intricate to be rendered so simple, to be, in fact, bought and sold on the basis of such highly abstracted renderings that the very notion of the commodity fetish is given new meaning? And how, historically and politically, did this kind of abstraction come to seem so utterly ‘normal’? After all, if normalcy surrounds capitalist nature at this historical moment, capitalist nature is far from normal, much less natural. Rather, capitalist nature and its significations are made (not found), enabled, and reproduced by politics and history (Castree, 1995; Smith, 1984).

I am interested in this paper to explore how political consent was organized around a model of forest regulation that has predominated in BC since World War 2. This model combines state-led scientific forest management, capitalist forest extraction, and a highly unionized workforce [a combination constituting the institutional basis of a structured coherence in BC and dubbed the province’s forest ‘exploitation axis’ (see Barnes et al, 2001; Salazar and Alper, 1996)]. And, critically, this regulatory model relies on the (until quite recently) hegemonic representation of BC forests as a set of abstracted exchange values of the sort noted in the *Globe and Mail* account of the Brascan deal above. Yet, what alternatives were offered at the moment when this structured coherence of forest regulation and exploitation in BC was established, and when the domination of abstracted, decontextualized exchange values structuring access to public timberlands was institutionalized? A partial answer comes from exploring the extended political moment (and institutional rupture) comprised by two provincial Royal Commissions on Forestry when the postwar model of forest regulation in BC was ‘born’. In this paper I examine progressive contestations of the regulatory trajectory endorsed by the first two Royal Commissions, contestations that specifically offered a competing set of forest *use* values.

It is my hope in examining this contestation to historicize and contextualize the produced ideologies of nature that underpin contemporary abstractions of the sort that allow forests to circulate as financial capital, and that have sustained the ‘dominant’ or mainstream model of industrial forest regulation in BC—a model which has come into serious question only recently (Barnes and Hayter, 1997; Hayter, 2003; Prudham and Reed, 2001). I seek to explore the politics of ‘doing forestry’ at a very different time, one when ideas of work and nature were very much linked in BC among at least some progressives. And I argue that the defeat of serious progressive alternatives to the model of mainstream forest regulation which were emerging at the time of the Royal Commissions was critical (though never entirely sufficient) to the establishment of political consent for what Roger Hayter (2003) refers to as BC’s ‘Fordist’ model of postwar forest regulation.<sup>(1)</sup> This defeat was, as I hope to demonstrate, linked to much broader developments in geopolitics and to the emerging Fordist regulatory order.

<sup>(1)</sup> I stress ‘never entirely sufficient’ here because, in invoking causation, I am at pains to recognize that this is not about simple cause and effect. Rather, consent for the ‘structured coherence’ of postwar BC forest regulation was and has been established and reproduced by many overdetermined moments. I simply argue that the period surrounding the two Sloan Commissions, representing a time of important institutional and regulatory rupture and uncertainty, was pivotal.

### Producing visions of the Normalbaum

In a paper that has become something of a classic on the cultural politics of nature, Bruce Willems-Braun (1997) argued that discourses of scientific forestry deployed in BC are the bearers of colonial and postcolonial violence (in)directed against First Nations people. He argued that the systematic manner in which forests are rendered as spaces of expert scientific and technical management, and the extent to which forests are discussed and represented as dehumanized landscapes by the scientific discourses of capitalist forestry reproduces the exclusion of First Nations people from forests and elides ongoing claims of First Nations to these lands. Willems-Braun argues that dominant representations are “abstracted and displaced from existing local cultural and political contexts” (1997, page 10), and act to sever apparent ties between the forested landscape and any particular person or group. And though somewhat downplayed by Willems-Braun, one can link the abstraction that he highlights to the commodification of nature. Abstractions such as this substitute a naked exchange calculus and a generic ‘thingness’ for complex social (and ecological) relations, allowing nature to circulate as anonymous capital (Castree, 2001; 2003a; Robertson, 2000) even (ironically) as social control and exclusion are consolidated to postcolonial capitals and the state in exactly the manner Willems-Braun describes.

In a different paper, published in *Society and Space*, David Demeritt (2001) deploys related ideas in critiquing scientific forestry and the idea of the *Normalbaum* (literally ‘normal’ tree or forest). For Demeritt, coming to terms with emerging fears of a timber famine in the United States in the early 20th and mid-20th century—fears highlighted in a 1925 article written by then US Forest Service Chief William B Greeley (1925)—called to the fore a set of statistical renderings of forests that enabled subsequent interventions. Specifically, abstracting from the ecological complexity of forests to the statistical simplicity of timber stands, scientific forestry was able to rationalize industrial forestry (or at least to appear to do so) via sustained-yield regulation. The very abstractions by which forests were measured became the templates for enacting forest simplification, which was prescribed by the (originally) German idea of the *Normalbaum*. And critical to this project, as Demeritt argues, was the imposition of a calculus of ecological and statistical exchange that rendered different forest stands commensurate with one another. This self-same simplification, I would argue, underpins a logic of exchange values by enframing the erasure of key ecological differences, and by leaving issues of use value (that is, what social imperatives guide forest transformation, and whose) very much implicit and thus ‘naturalized’.

The critiques offered by these two papers point to a kind of violence of abstraction, inherent to what James Scott (1998) calls making nature ‘legible’. Deconstructing these simplifications unpacks the naturalness of the representations of nature, forcing us to unlearn what nature has come to mean. In this paper I draw on these insights, asking not so much what the effects of representation are but, rather, in what ways may we in turn understand the political conditions under which such representations may be sustained and circulated as ‘truths’. What is it that has allowed the abstraction of ecologically and culturally specific forest spaces, in BC and elsewhere, which is sustained by a calculus of exchange values? What makes the Brascan deal and the way it is represented in the business pages (and in wider discourse about ‘working’ forests) seem so utterly unremarkable, even banal?<sup>(2)</sup> The answers to such a question

<sup>(2)</sup>I emphasize ‘working’ forests (a term used by the forest industry in BC to reinforce commercial, commodity-driven forest uses over wilderness preservation) specifically to exclude debates about wilderness. Willems-Braun and others have argued that wilderness narratives complement industrial, scientific forestry discourse in dehumanizing the forested landscapes, and in dehumanizing nature more generally—thereby perpetuating the dualism of nature – culture. I do not take up this debate here.

are obviously myriad and overdetermined. But my focus in this paper is on the particular nexus of capital–state–labour relations during the formative period of industrial forest-management policy in BC (that is, at the time of the first two provincial Royal Commissions on Forestry), when the ideal of the Normalbaum was first institutionalized in the province.

My project here draws on and juxtaposes two additional and somewhat disparate political and intellectual influences. The first is Neil Smith's ideas about the (material and ideological) production of nature in capitalist society. The second is Andy Herod's compelling argument that the agency of labour must be more centrally located within accounts of economic geographies. Drawing on each to inform my analysis and interpretation of forest politics in BC reinforces the basic but general view that all ecologies are political (and vice versa), now a virtual consensus in political-ecology circles (see, for example, Harvey, 1996; McCarthy, 2002; Peet and Watts, 2004; Robbins, 2004). But it more specifically links the politics of nature with class politics in capitalist society by asking how workers and allied social movements contested and shaped the management of natural resources and the environment under capitalist transformation. Remarkably little research has been done along these lines (though, for a notable exception, see Adkin, 1998). Perhaps this is because working-class politics and the politics of environmental and natural-resource management are not seen as having much if anything to do with one another (White, 1995). And this perception is no doubt a result of the ways in which environmental and labour politics have been approached in both theory and practice as separate domains. Indeed, in significant measure environmental nongovernmental organizations are seen as examples of 'new' (that is, non-class-based) social movements on the basis of their departure from traditional unions and the politics of work and labour.<sup>(3)</sup> Although there may be good reasons to recognize distinctions between class-based and environmental politics, to assume this red–green schism is an act of ideology, and overcoming it has become a subject of some practical and theoretical effort.<sup>(4)</sup> Here, both Smith and Herod are useful.

Smith (1984) argues that nature under capitalism is increasingly produced. This seems more and more self-evident every day as a literal, material claim. But Smith also argues that ideologies of nature are increasingly bourgeois constructs. This is true in at least two ways. One way is to see nature as a set of purely external, instrumental, and utilitarian values, distilled and distanced through market circulation into abstract exchange values. Yet it is also somewhat paradoxically true of a second idea of nature, that of the universal, objective, and enduring nature whose reification as, say, 'wilderness' obscures the social processes that make wild spaces more and more rare and which also confer meaning on these spaces as a fetishized response to capitalist urbanization and environmental transformation. Smith's thesis, as is nicely elaborated by Castree (1995), forces upon us the realization that capitalism not only increasingly produces (that is, transforms) biophysical nature, but also increasingly produces (and commodifies) experiences and meanings of nature.<sup>(5)</sup>

What could this idea possibly have to do with sustained-yield forestry? If, as Smith himself (among others) contends, capitalism is historically and geographically uneven, so too should be the production of nature, including experiences, meanings, and ideas of nature. What influence, for instance, might the politics of the emerging Cold War and the so-called class compromise of Fordism have had on the politics of nature?

<sup>(3)</sup> The supposed distinction between class-based and environmental politics underpins Ulrich Beck's theory of the risk society (see, for example, Beck, 1999; Beck and Ritter, 1992).

<sup>(4)</sup> In geography, Noel Castree's work consistently invokes this important problematic (see Castree, 1995; 2002; 2003a, 2003b).

<sup>(5)</sup> To be fair, this strongly echoes Raymond Williams's (1973) analysis of the myth of the pastoral.

This in turn invokes Herod's (1995a; 1995b; 2001) work. His influential argument is that the agency of labour has been downplayed in accounts of the production of economic geographies, even among Marxist scholars. More specifically, the significance of labour processes and labour markets to the function of capitalist geographies was recognized as a (largely) structural 'problem' whose solutions influenced the dynamics of space and place. But attention to actual workers and to workers' movements, and the influence of their intentional actions and strategies on geographical outcomes, came more slowly (Savage and Wills, 2004). This theme has since been taken up by numerous scholars seeking to situate labour in the production of space and place, consistent with a reemphasis on the role of politics in capitalist society (Wills, 2002), and with what Bob Jessop (2004, page 494) terms the 'inevitably political' character of capitalist regulation.<sup>(6)</sup>

Yet, very little work has explored how labour and working-class political movements and organizations have shaped and contested the production of nature, and approaches to environmental regulation (though, again, see Adkin 1998). This is true specifically of forestry and of the adoption of sustained-yield regulation in North America, where research has focused primarily on the articulation of professional forestry with capital–state relations (see, for example, Robbins, 1982).<sup>(7)</sup> It bears noting here that sustained-yield forestry was motivated by more than the attempt to make forest exploitation legible and rational; it was also motivated profoundly by social policy, aimed at moderating the fluctuations of boom-and-bust resource production in forest-dependent communities (Barnes et al, 2001; Prudham, 1998; 2005; Robbins, 1987).

Building from these points of departure, I explore the political circumstances surrounding adoption of the particular model of industrial, sustained-yield forest regulation that prevailed in BC through a postwar period of dramatic industrial expansion, global economic integration, and old-growth-forest liquidation. I focus on the character and role of alternative ways of 'doing' forestry offered by the province's trade-union movement and by the provincial arm of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)—precursor to the contemporary social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP)—before the province's two key Royal Commissions on Forestry in the 1940s and 1950s. These Royal Commissions laid the foundations for postwar forest exploitation and regulation via a combination of private (leased) forest tenures and state-led maximum sustained-yield forest regulation. Yet, the vision of property rights, forest management, and commodity production emerging from the commissions was far from universally shared. Rather, the CCF advocated leaving all provincial forest lands and access rights in the hands of the state, as well as nationalizing logging and silvicultural operations, motivated and legitimated in large measure by a distinct set of use values akin to an agrarian stewardship ethic that would govern the mutual transformation of nature and society.

In no sense can the disappearance of this vision from the political and discursive landscape be viewed as 'natural', nor can CCF ideas about forestry during the 1940s and early 1950s be dismissed as purely idealistic. Indeed, the CCF was BC's official opposition party during the time in question, and enjoyed growing electoral support in the province. I argue that the retreat of this vision from mainstream political discourse in BC is instead tied to political struggle between the principal woodworkers union in the province—the International Woodworkers of America (IWA)—and the CCF.

<sup>(6)</sup> See, for example, the papers on geographies of trade unionism in *Geoforum* [2004, 35 (1)]. For relevant work on labour, agency, and contract logging in Oregon see Prudham (2002).

<sup>(7)</sup> It bears noting that Richard Rajala (1998) does seek to understand the relationship between labour processes in logging and scientific forest management, but little agency is ascribed to labour per se.

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The IWA argued before the Royal Commissions and within the CCF for a more prosaic form of sustained-yield regulation along US lines. At the same time, the CCF was engaged in a lengthy negotiation with the trade-union movement to gain the endorsement of organized labour in the political arena. As this campaign continued in the postwar period, and was influenced by wider geopolitical currents of the early Cold War, the CCF forest-nationalization agenda was dropped. Forests and their management were thereby ceded to capital and to a scientific–technical elite within the state, hived off to the realm of ‘conception’—as opposed to the relegation of labour to the domain of ‘execution’ in Harry Braverman’s (1975) language—consistent with a wider Fordist class compromise.

The paper proceeds as follows: I first discuss in greater detail the system of forest tenures, forest commodity production, and forest regulation that has dominated in BC in the postwar period, along with some of the principal failures of this model. This helps to shed light on the stakes involved in discussions concerning how to regulate industrial forestry in BC at the time of the two Royal Commissions on Forestry during the mid-20th century. I then focus on the positions taken by the CCF and the trade-union movement (led by the IWA), and the subsequent retreat of the CCF–NDP from the nationalization agenda, against the wider backdrop of progressive political negotiations in Canada during the early Cold War period.

### **The setting: from laissez-faire to sustained yield forestry**

Prior to the establishment of the first two provincial Royal Commissions on Forestry, private timber companies and sawmill operators in BC enjoyed relatively laissez-faire access to the province’s extensive forests. Access was institutionalized by a series of 21-year transferable leases granted between 1905 and 1907 under the administration of then Premier Richard McBride (Bridge and McManus, 2000), as well as by the establishment of private timberlands through the Esquimalt and Nanaimo land grant on eastern Vancouver Island (Hayter, 2000; Rajala, 1998). By 1940 this regime of minimal state oversight had become subject to growing controversy based primarily on concerns about harvesting rates, boom-and-bust economic fluctuations, and a growing inventory of cutover lands.<sup>(8)</sup> In this context, key issues emerged about how to regulate the industry, and, in particular, what sorts of conditions (including tenure) should prevail over access to timber. These concerns propelled the appointment of Chief Justice Gordon Sloan in 1943 to head the first of the two Royal Commissions (generally known as the Sloan Commissions), which led to Sloan’s first report to the BC legislature on provincial forests and forestry regulation. A second report was issued in 1956, based on ten years of experience with the new regulatory provisions, as stipulated by Sloan in his first report (1945; 1956).

Although there are several key facets of the regulatory model endorsed by and evolving out of the Sloan Commissions, I wish to highlight three here. These are: (1) the role of private forest capital operating on public lands; (2) the role of scientific forestry and sustained-yield management principles; and (3) the set of relations between private firms, workers, communities, and the state that constitutes the institutional and political foundations of a regulatory model.

Faced with what were considered socially and environmentally destructive cutting practices on the Esquimalt and Nanaimo rail-grant lands as well as in adjacent public forests, Sloan became concerned with property rights; would the commission endorse outright privatization of public forests, or turn to more public control and management

<sup>(8)</sup> It was estimated at the time of the first Sloan Commission that already in excess of 20 million acres (8 million ha) of forest land in BC had been cut over and not reforested (Sloan, 1945).

of forest resources (Rajala, 1998)? Opting for a decidedly liberal approach, Sloan (1945, page 143) advocated “a form of tenure permitting the operator to retain possession in perpetuity of the land now held under temporary forms of alienation upon condition that he [sic] maintain these lands continuously productive [sic] and regulate the cut therefrom on a sustained-yield basis.” While ostensibly maintaining forests in public ownership, the commission embraced long-term forest leases called ‘forest management licenses’ (later ‘tree farm licenses’ or TFLs) and ‘forest licenses’ governing access to tree supply areas. These gave exclusive area-based or volume-based tenures respectively, to private firms, covering lands that remained, in name, public. Moreover, the province also came to privilege large, increasingly corporate forest-products companies based on the expectation that these larger companies would be more stable over time. It was hoped these firms would make better bets in providing an economic foundation for the province’s remote, forest-dependent communities. Favouring such firms in granting TFLs is one of the reasons that BC’s forest industry has become so heavily dominated by large, publicly traded corporations, about fifteen of which controlled most of the cutting rights in the province by the late 1990s (Hayter, 2000; Marchak et al, 1999; Prudham and Reed, 2001).

Also considered a key achievement of the first inquiry and report was the formal embrace of sustained-yield forest management, in parallel and contemporaneous with developments in the United States (Bridge and McManus, 2000; Rajala, 1998; Robbins, 1982; Wilson, 1988). Originating in the European tradition of scientific forestry (Clawson and Sedjo, 1983; Demeritt, 2001; Scott, 1998), the central idea of sustained yield is to convert natural forests (that is, forests not yet managed by Western science, and not yet transformed by capital) into the normal forest—that is, Normalbaum, defined as “*an ideally constituted forest with such volumes of trees of various ages so distributed and growing in such a way that they produce equal annual volumes of produce which can be removed continually without detrimental impacts to future production*” (Brasnett, 1953, page 16, emphasis added).

Ostensibly both simple and elegant, the principle involves organizing a given forest into even-aged blocks of commercially significant tree species, each to be harvested at a prescribed age—the rotation age—such that the total annual harvest remains constant over time (Fernow, 1902; Society of American Foresters, 1944). Reflecting the widespread influence of this idea in scientific forestry of the day, Sloan (1945, page 24) wrote in his first report that:

“The vast extent of our productive Coast acreage now occupied by mature and overmature timber illustrates the unbalance of our forest resources. These virgin forests are static and making no net growth and must be replaced by growing trees if we are to progress to within any reasonable distance of the ideal or normal forest cover.”

Sloan’s language points to the negative connotation ascribed to old growth in the professional forestry community. With many trees at an advanced age (thus adding little if any net wood volume), and with many trees either dead or dying, old growth was seen as being in particular need of ‘improvement’ by scientific management to make the forest more efficient and productive. The Normalbaum prescription entailed replacing the ‘unruliness’ and ‘decadence’ of such ecologically complex forests with even-aged monocultures.

As anachronistic as the notion that old growth is decadent might now seem, the idea that wild and particularly old-growth forests needed to be tamed and improved was highly prevalent if not truly hegemonic in Western forestry at the time of the Sloan Commissions. Yet, critical to considering the political and economic rationale for embrace of the Normalbaum is that sustained yield promised to deliver not only

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the highest wood volumes in constant increments over time, but also a measure of economic and administrative stability and predictability to an industry plagued by boom-and-bust cycles and by cut-and-run forestry (Demeritt, 2001; Prudham, 1998; Scott, 1998). Referring to these very imperatives in relation to sustained-yield regulation, Sloan (1945, page 127) thus wrote in his first commission report:

“A sustained yield policy has, as one objective, the maintenance of forest cover and growth, thus ensuring a perpetual supply of raw material for forest industries *with consequent stability of industrial communities and assurance of permanent payrolls*” (emphasis added).

In fact, this was in large measure the extent to which concrete use values associated with converting BC's forests were actually articulated under industrial sustained-yield regulation. More generally, a logic of ecological exchange (old, complex forests for young monocultures) and of economic exchange values (generic, low value-added commodity production primarily for export) dominated.

The institutionalization of sustained yield in BC came subsequent to the first Sloan Commission via legislated annual allowable cut or AAC restrictions on harvest levels, specified by forest regions in the province. BC's aggressive embrace of sustained yield included an accelerated liquidation of old-growth forests through the use of inflated annual harvest rates that could not be sustained in the longer term, justified by progressive sounding rhetoric about making forests more 'productive'. This resulted in a planned but forestalled 'fall down' in annual harvest volumes coincident with the exhaustion of the old-growth inventory. And although it allowed the province to cut more, and faster, the onset of lower harvest volumes in recent years has factored into the malaise of BC's forest economy (Marchak et al, 1999).

Since the days of the Sloan Commissions, and of BC's formal embrace of sustained yield regulation, forest appropriation and regulation in the province have been perpetuated by a form of what David Harvey (1985) calls a 'structured coherence'—a series of institutions and political relations linking production, regulation, and everyday life (Barnes et al, 2001) in ways that stabilize the inherently (economically and ecologically) crisis-prone tendencies of forest-based capital accumulation. Here, too, the genesis of this structured coherence dates in significant measure to Sloan via recommendations that helped to consolidate what is recognized as BC's distinctive system of top-down, closed, and expert-dominated (Barnes et al, 2001; Salazar and Alper, 1996; Wilson, 1998) forest regulation and administration.<sup>(9)</sup> Private capital was granted the key right of access to forests via long-term forest tenures, as noted above. At the same time, Sloan advocated in his first report the creation of a provincial Forest Commission to regulate and administer the exploitation of BC's vast 'green gold' (Marchak, 1983). Giving explicit consideration to the issue of personnel for this commission, Sloan rejected formal representation for labour, communities, or any group for that matter, in favour of the *appointment* of “those of proven ability, of personal integrity, sound judgment, and with general business experience” (Sloan, 1945, page 151).

This essentially top-down approach to regulation was entrenched by state-centred management of community economic development, formally linked through forest exploitation. This was a key rationale for adopting sustained-yield policy in both the Canadian and US Pacific North West (Prudham, 1998; Robbins, 1987; 1988; Schallau

<sup>(9)</sup>To be fair the NDP made some attempt to change this corporatist and closed administrative system, not least through the Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE) process of the mid-1990s. However, the CORE process was beset with problems (McManus, 2002) and failed to overcome the essentially consultative nature of public input to forest administration in the province (Salazar and Alper, 1996).

and Alston, 1987) but the BC model included more formal appurtenance clauses inserted into timber leases, requiring companies to direct specified volumes of logs to mills in particular communities. Organized labour<sup>(10)</sup> pressured for state oversight of the industry in the name of forest-dependent communities, but assumed no direct role in overseeing forest appropriation and regulation. Instead, labour's consent and the support of working families and their communities were tied to lucrative wage and benefit agreements forged with large, ostensibly stable, and (initially) profitable companies in collective bargaining agreements; these agreements contributed (for a time) some measure of economic predictability and labour peace to an otherwise volatile industry.

This structured coherence of industry–state–labour relations in BC has been called the province's wood 'exploitation axis' (Burda and Gale, 1998; Burda et al, 1998; Salazar and Alper, 1996). And it was, by certain measures, a highly successful model of capitalist regulation. Constituting what Trevor Barnes et al and Roger Hayter refer to as an example of 'permeable' Fordism (Barnes et al, 2001; Hayter, 2000), BC became Canada's leading forest-products producing province, relying heavily on the mass production and mass export (primarily to the United States and Japan) of relatively low-value-added, standardized commodities—primarily lumber, pulp, paper, and newsprint. Drawing on roughly 60 million ha of rich forest lands (Council of Forest Industries, 2000)—95% of it held (nominally) in public hands—the system of exploitation established subsequent to the Sloan Commissions allowed BC to become more fully integrated into the global forest economy. It also provided (for a time) a basis of prosperity in forest-dependent communities (Hayter, 2000; 2003). As Barnes et al (2001) note, for example, the community of Port Alberni, tucked away in west central Vancouver Island, boomed on the basis of Fordist forestry, and by 1976 boasted the third-highest per capita income in all of Canada. And, though exceptional, Port Alberni was hardly alone. The forest sector became the province's leading source of revenue, income, and exports. Despite an ongoing dispute with the United States over stumpage rates, and increasing opposition from environmental and Aboriginal groups, BC's export orientation actually deepened in the 1990s, and the province continued to account for about one third of Canada's annual timber harvest, averaging over 72 million m<sup>3</sup> between 1993 and 1997.

#### **Sustained-yield regulation in question**

Despite the evident 'success' of this Fordist model of forestry, signs of trouble have been brewing for some time. Addicted to low-value-added exports, BC has been competing in generic commodity grades in an increasingly competitive global forest economy. As Cheri Burda and Fred Gale (1998) note, 91% of the province's annual allowable cut was exported in 1995 to one of three markets: the United States, Japan, and Europe. Most of this wood volume was leaving the province as lumber, pulp, paper, or newsprint, which collectively accounted for three quarters of the provincial AAC that year; the next highest amount, 15%, went to shavings and sawdust. Thus, despite forays into so-called post-Fordist forest commodity production (see Hayter, 2000; Hayter and Barnes, 1997a), a shift from low-value to high-value commodities has been limited. Faced with stagnant and even declining forest commodity prices and with volatile international economic conditions, the BC forest industry has been wracked by fluctuating levels of performance and profitability since the early 1970s (Hayter, 2000; 2003; Hayter and Barnes, 1997b; Marchak, 1983). Many firms have responded by attempting to shed costs, typically with automation and employment

<sup>(10)</sup> Primarily under the auspices of the IWA, the International Union of Pulp, Sulphite, and Papermill Workers, and the United Papermakers.

reductions, undermining the link between the forest industry and rural communities in the province, and reducing levels of employment per unit volume of wood harvest (Marchak et al, 1999). One after another, rural communities have experienced the painful adjustment with layoffs and outright mill closures (Barnes and Hayter, 1992; Barnes et al, 2001; Halseth, 1999a; 1999b; Hayter, 1997; 2003; Ostry, 1999; Reed, 1999).

These problems have been exacerbated by the onset of fall down. Available old growth has become increasingly scarce, the legacy of elevated cutting rates during the high-Fordist period (Dellert, 1998; Green, 2000; Marchak et al, 1999). Industry-induced scarcity has been compounded by political constraints on fibre supply, with highly publicized contestations over remaining old growth on both sides of the international border (Braun, 2002; McManus, 2002; Satterfield, 2002; Wilson, 1998), drawing in an increasingly conflicted scientific community (see, for example, Dietrich, 1992; Franklin, 1989; Prudham, 2005; Swanson and Franklin, 1992). And, in BC, forest access has been contested via land claims filed by resurgent First Nations (Hayter, 2000; 2003; Magnusson and Shaw, 2003).

In this context, reform has been in the air. New arrangements have been offered to communities and First Nations. This includes widely noted partnership agreements between MacMillan Bloedel and the Nuu-cha-Nulth First Nation in the highly contested and closely watched Clayoquot Sound area of Vancouver Island (Hayter, 2000; 2003). And it includes provincial embrace of the idea of community national resource management (Kellert et al, 2000), institutionalized under the BC Community Forestry Pilot Project by the provincial NDP government administration in 1998. This programme was recently (2004) renewed and expanded by the now Liberal administration, with more invitations extended to potential communities and with longer term (25–99 year) leases.<sup>(11)</sup>

Strangely, organized labour in BC has been rather quiet on these fronts. This is particularly true of the province's largest woodworkers union, the IWA (now the Industrial Wood and Allied Workers of Canada). The IWA has, for example, led (understandably) vehement counter protests against preservationist environmentalism (Hayter, 2003; Reed, 1999; Salazar and Alper, 1996; Wilson, 1998). And although always a participant in negotiations over new tenure arrangements and forest-practice regulations in the province, the IWA has largely taken a conservative stand on forest regulation in the province (see, for example, IWA, 2001). The IWA has specifically opted against seeking a cooperative tenure for its members, and has consistently opposed community forestry tenures as a Trojan horse for nonunion labour. As one organizer told me bluntly, "we tried co-ops, and we have tried socialism; they don't work."<sup>(12)</sup>

In fact, contemporary IWA conservatism vis-à-vis forest policy reflects one of the most widely cited challenges to reform efforts conducted under the provincial NDP government through the 1990s. Specifically, NDP efforts were hampered by the so-called red–green split between labour and environmental constituencies, the two largest bases of support for the party (Bridge and McManus, 2000; McManus, 2002; Salazar and Alper, 1996; Wilson, 1998). Although the significance of this split has been noted, its history has hardly been tapped. Yet, even a cursory historical examination indicates that the politics of work and nature have not always been so opposed in BC forestry.

<sup>(11)</sup> Generally, see the BC Ministry of Forests community forestry home page, <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hth/community/index.htm>.

<sup>(12)</sup> Interview conducted 12 August 2002 in Vancouver, BC, with a former IWA organizer.

### Politics of the Sloan Commissions

The recommendations of Justice Sloan after the first Royal Commission were decidedly liberal, but by no means was this vision a reflection of consensus at the time. Rather, in the course of its proceedings, the commission heard from numerous individuals and groups advocating a variety of perspectives on the causes of and prescriptions for BC's forest-regulation dilemma. Significant among the submissions to and testimony before the first Sloan Commission was input from Colin Cameron, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Comox and official opposition forestry critic for the British Columbia CCF. Cameron, on behalf of the CCF, argued for the expropriation of existing private tenures and for the establishment of a provincial Crown corporation to undertake all forest management as well as all harvesting and sale of logs. Specifically, in his written statement, Cameron listed a series of problems with the forestry situation in BC at the time, including overcutting, a lack of adequate regeneration, a lack of so-called 'artificial' reforestation or planting programmes where natural techniques had failed, and the damaging effects of slash burning. He then argued "The only way out of this impasse would appear to be the development of a provincially owned and operated industry".<sup>(13)</sup> Cameron then elaborated, endorsing the expansion of the provincial Forest Service "into an operating as well as policing organization" in order to obtain "a properly integrated industry in which *to some degree loggers are foresters and foresters loggers*" (emphasis added).<sup>(14)</sup>

Cameron's position was further elaborated under questioning:

**Question:** "Mr Cameron, as I understand your brief, you would recommend that the Forest Branch should take over the logging on present Crown granted land?"

**Answer:** "Yes, on a progressively expanded basis."

Subsequently:

**Question:** "Well, let us assume the Legislature decides to give effect to your recommendation: In the first place that all forest lands belonging to the Crown are retained by Crown ownership?"

**Answer:** "Yes, I have mentioned these special circumstances."

**Question:** "Now there is going to be an increase of land under Government ownership and a decreasing amount in private industry, is there not?"

**Answer:** "Yes."

**Question:** "Until we reach the point in 25 or 30 years when there is no timber grants of the Crown under private ownership and then the Government is going to be faced with the necessity of maintaining those forests in productive condition, is it not?"

**Answer:** "Yes."

**Question:** "And it is virtually going to be in the timber and logging business?"

**Answer:** "Yes."<sup>(15)</sup>

Cameron was recalled to testify before the commission again on 26 January 1945 in Vancouver, at which time he was asked to clarify further his previous statements and the policies of the CCF. During this session he offered his clearest and most unambiguous comments that the CCF would not only cease granting private leases for operating on public lands, but would also take back existing leases, as well as

<sup>(13)</sup> "Brief submitted to the Royal Commission on Forestry" by Cameron, CCF MLA for Comox, 7 September 1944. Read into the record by Cameron, and quoted from Royal Commission on Forestry, GR 520, box 5, volume 14 (pages 5336–5351), British Columbia Archives, Victoria, (this quote is on page 5348).

<sup>(14)</sup> Same reference as footnote 13 (page 5349).

<sup>(15)</sup> Same reference as footnote 13 (pages 5365–5366).

lands granted to support the construction of railroads, including the Esquimalt and Nanaimo line. Upon being asked if his previous references to the extension of the Forest Branch into the logging business on Crown land referred only to Crown-owned land (that is, not grant lands), Cameron responded:

“Well, the principle of course, that is implicit ... as our goal is the establishment of *a distinct forestry system in British Columbia which would eventually absorb all the timber lands of the Province*” (emphasis added).<sup>(16)</sup>

In expressing these views, Cameron’s comments reflected the reform forestry platform developed by BC CCF, one that involved the nationalization of logging and silviculture operations, and one that also embraced significant state involvement in forest-products manufacture.<sup>(17)</sup> The CCF’s dissident vision of both forest appropriation and forest regulation is perhaps best and most compellingly witnessed in a series of colourful pamphlets published by the BC CCF’s Economic Planning Commission. These pamphlets, hand drawn and hand coloured, depict scenes of forest overexploitation by corrupt government officials and by ‘lumber magnates’. They play up fears that private interest would destroy the province’s forest resource and contrast this with the supposed merits of nationalized logging and silviculture, and boast titles such as “Why forest exploitation is a government matter”.<sup>(18)</sup> Reproductions of examples of two of these pamphlets are included as figures 1 and 2.

These renderings are clearly idealistic, and are more suggestive than substantive. They were, after all, sketches, self-conscious propaganda. But what I find intriguing in them, particularly in figure 2, is not simply that they envision a socialized forestry and forest-management framework under state administration. Rather, they also portray and begin to describe a different set of concrete use values associated with forest appropriation, which contrast with the predominantly exchange-dominated discourses of industrial sustained-yield regulation, and with capitalist commodity production. Thus, in figure 2, a very different ethic of nature–society relations is imagined at the interface between forests, people, and the state, one that invokes not only localism, and small-scale production, but also a hands-on, agrarian ethic of conjoined labour and environmental stewardship. Thus, the pamphlet promises “year-round work in each forest district” and “A home farm for every married worker in a forest settlement” (see figure 2). In figure 1, an ethic of strong stewardship and greater resource efficiency is conveyed, one critical of forest waste and the now familiar problem of low-value-added production, complementing the use-value orientation of figure 2.

These pamphlets (particularly figure 2) reflect the political roots of the CCF, born out of agrarian populism in the Canadian prairies. And they present provincial forests as sites for collective appropriation, transformation, and regulation (though First Nations are still nowhere to be found here). This is to be the use value of forests: they are not simply to be used as exchange for money capital and wages in distant markets. Also jarring from a contemporary standpoint, and consistent with the use-value orientation of these renderings, is the fusion under socialized forestry of conception and

<sup>(16)</sup> Same reference as footnote 13 (page 8485).

<sup>(17)</sup> This is reflected, for example, in the “Forestry Digest and CCF Legislative Submission to the Royal Commission on Forestry” dated 26 September 1944. The document states, among other things, that the only way out of the situation BC then found itself in “would appear to be the development of a provincially owned and operated industry” (page 7). Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 47-7, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(18)</sup> Pamphlet published by the CCF Economic Planning Commission under the chairmanship of Matthew M Glenday, Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 47, folder 11, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver. The pamphlets are undated, but were probably produced c 1935, according to a handwritten note by Angus MacInnis in the file.



**Figure 1.** "Logging waste in BC", pamphlet published by the British Columbia Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Economic Planning Commission (Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 47, file 11, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver).

execution in the realms of forest appropriation and regulation, all under the auspices of state-administered 'felling and utilization'. Such a fusion is antagonistic to long-term leasing of timberlands to large, export-oriented capital as practised subsequent to the Sloan Commission; but it also contrasts with the technocratic, corporatist administration epitomised by the BC Ministry of Forests in the postwar period (Wilson, 1998). There are also prescient elements of these pamphlets and of the CCF rhetoric that prefigure contemporary emphasis on community tenure and stewardship, but these are imagined at a far broader geographic scale.

# How our Forest Workers & Small Loggers will Benefit by **SOCIALIZED FORESTRY!**

## • STATE • CONTROLLED LOGGING OFFERS

1. All-year-round work in each forest district.
2. A home-farm for every married worker in a forest settlement.
3. The comforts of modern life in every settlement: community-hall, church, store, theatre, administration offices, etc.
4. Community owned farm machinery available for each settler
5. From 2 to 5 acres of land ready for cultivation.
6. Free fuel and construction timber, free pasture, free hay for the settler.
7. A milch cow, fruit trees and seed.
8. Free medical service.
9. Insurance against old age, accident, etc.



**Figure 2.** "How our forest workers and small loggers will benefit by socialized forestry!", pamphlet published by the British Columbia Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Economic Planning Commission (Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 47, file 11, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver).

The significance of these CCF visions must not be underestimated. The CCF, it is true, did not win an election in BC until 1972 (by then it was renamed the NDP), by which time the idea of nationalizing the forest industry had disappeared from the party's platform never (yet!) to return. However, at the time of Cameron's testimony, not only was the CCF the official opposition in the provincial legislature, but also the party enjoyed considerable momentum in BC with genuine prospects of winning election to office. The CCF had grown steadily in popularity following its founding National Convention in Regina, Saskatchewan in July 1933. Drawing on a coalition of support from the farming community and organized labour, the CCF's anticapitalist leanings—reflected in its original party mantra “CCF: Farmer, Labour, Socialist” (see Young, 1971)—resonated strongly in Depression-era Canada. By 1940 the party was able to capture 8% of the popular vote in the federal election, and to win eight seats in parliament. Five years later, in the election of 1945, the CCF captured 16% of the vote, and sent twenty-eight MPs to Ottawa. At the provincial level the party was even stronger. Thus, in the BC election of 1941 the CCF actually won the popular vote, but lost the election to the Liberals. In 1945, contemporaneous with the first Sloan Commission, the provincial CCF actually increased its share of the vote over 1941 to 38%, but this time lost the election to a coalition between the provincial Liberal and Progressive Conservative Parties which was formed largely to keep the socialists out of office.

Based on these electoral gains the CCF held first twelve and then ten of the total forty-eight seats in the BC legislature at the time of Cameron's respective appearances before the first Royal Commission.<sup>(19)</sup> Clearly, by no means was the idea of nationalizing logging and silvicultural operations in BC a fringe notion, if the prospects for this policy are to be judged on the basis of the electoral support of the BC CCF. Yet, within two years of the Second Sloan Commission, the CCF had essentially abandoned this vision, and in the contemporary discourse of forestry in BC, even in reform circles, the idea of nationalized forestry had for all intents and purposes evaporated. How did it disappear from the political landscape, and why?

### **Connecting Cold War ideological struggles to visions of social forestry in BC**

This is a complex question, and my answer is necessarily partial. But clearly one important factor was discord between CCF and organized labour in BC at the time of the Sloan Commissions. In specific contrast with the CCF, the IWA (having recently emerged as the most important representative of provincial woodworkers) was willing to cede control over forest commodity production to capital, and forest regulation to a technocratic state apparatus—one in which the union sought no participation or direct representation. And, with the CCF lobbying hard to gain endorsement from the trade-union movement, pressure mounted on the party to adopt a stance more in line with labour and with the IWA. Eventually, the provincial CCF did so, thereby helping to consolidate political consent for the model of sustained-yield forest regulation prescribed by Sloan. Without the kind of dissent once offered by the BC CCF this model would go essentially unchallenged until the 1980s. Yet it is important to consider the circumstances for this convergence, and to see it as a contingent conjuncture of political factors. In particular the CCF was motivated to reconcile disparities with the IWA and the rest of the provincial trade unions in the interest of more unified lobbying from the left. Yet, the rather prosaic contours of what emerged as the unified CCF and IWA forest-policy platforms reflected and reinforced a more widespread collapse

<sup>(19)</sup> Report of the Ninth National Convention, “Co-operative Commonwealth Federation”, 7, 8, and 9 August, 1946. McMaster University, Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Collection, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections.

of radical socialism in North America under the influences of widespread anti-Stalinist red baiting. It was in this context that North American class struggle was institution-alized *within* rather than *against* capitalist society (Burawoy, 2003; Davis, 1986), a critical political facet of North American Fordism (Aglietta, 1979; Amin, 1994; Boyer, 1990; Jessop, 1995). These trajectories are very much reflected and reinforced by the compromise worked out in the arena of BC CCF forest policy. Faced with seemingly no politically viable alternative, provincial trade unionists and the BC CCF thus adopted a postwar platform of forest policy consistent with the ascendance of reform socialism in Canada.

Tension between the IWA and the CCF on forest policy was readily apparent at the time of the first Sloan Commission. This is reflected in the brief submitted to the commission in January of 1945 by Harold Pritchett, founding President of the IWA (Meyers, 1988) and then President of District Council Number 1 (the BC arm of the international union).<sup>(20)</sup> In the brief, Pritchett endorsed sustained-yield forestry, and expressed some degree of concern for the environmental implications of logging, including its implications for salmon streams. The brief also called for expanded provincial oversight in forestry, and, somewhat presciently, predicted that employment losses from technological change would undermine the stability of the industry even under sustained yield. The union called for more efficient production to reduce wood waste, an inventory of provincial timberlands, more fire protection, and cooperative working circles involving pooled public and private forest resources (echoing the approach to sustained-yield regulation adopted in the United States subsequent to the Sustained Yield Forest Management Act of 1944, and supported by the IWA south of the border).<sup>(21)</sup> Pritchett asserted that “[the IWA] would be very short-sighted indeed if we did not consider as an integral part of our objectives the maintenance and extension of the natural resources and raw materials without which there would be no ... jobs.”<sup>(22)</sup> Yet, this statement aside, the IWA proposed no direct role in forest ownership or in forest regulation—that is, no formal role in activities that one might consider as ‘conception’ (again using Braverman’s language). Thus, the essentially paternalistic structure of postwar forest regulation in BC is hardly contested in the IWA’s brief to the first Sloan Commission.

The IWA position (contrasting with that of the CCF) was confirmed by Pritchett’s testimony before the commission on 23 January 1945. Pritchett was asked explicitly to address the issue of state control:

**Question:** “do you recommend that private industry be allowed to undertake the actual extraction and manufacture of the logs and timber; in other words, shall private industry continue to do the logging?”

**Answer:** “Yes.”

**Question:** “As opposed to the state?”

**Answer:** “Yes.”<sup>(23)</sup>

<sup>(20)</sup> At the time of the first Sloan Commission in 1944–45, the IWA Number 1 represented approximately 20 000 workers at over 150 logging, sawmilling, plywood, and shingling operations through nine BC local unions. BC was organized within the IWA as District Council Number 1. “Statement of the International Woodworkers of American (CIO), District No.1”, prepared for the Royal Commission on Forestry, Chairman Chief Justice Sloan, Provincial Government of British Columbia, January 1945, Royal Commission on Forestry, GR 520, box 17, file 436, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC.

<sup>(21)</sup> The brief reflected forest-policy principles adopted at the Eighth IWA District Council Number 1 Convention, held 6 and 7 January 1945 in Port Alberni (see reference in footnote 20, pages 18–19).

<sup>(22)</sup> See reference in footnote 20 (page 2).

<sup>(23)</sup> Royal Commission on Forestry, GR 520, box 6, volume 19 (page 7955), British Columbia Archives, Victoria.

This contrast between BC CCF forest policies and the IWA forest policies in turn reflected a wider schism between the trade-union movement and the CCF over matters of political strategy. Efforts to bring the CCF and organized labour together gathered steam across the country, including in BC, during the late 1930s under the leadership of National Secretary David Lewis, but were met with varying degrees of enthusiasm by established trade unions (Young, 1971).<sup>(24)</sup> In BC the IWA was one of the holdouts. Thus, for example, in 1944 the IWA had explicitly rejected CCF overtures to act as the voice of labour. A resolution adopted at the IWA–CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) District Council Number 1 meeting, 2 April 1944, specifically reads:

“Whereas: The IWA District Council No.1 in Convention assembled went on record unanimously for the establishment of Political Action Committees in every local, camp, and mill to launch an aggressive campaign on behalf of labor, not only as a measure for protecting labor but as a necessary minimum guarantee that we would come out of this war victoriously and with a democracy saved and able to work effectively for the people;

And Whereas: Negotiations with the CCF BC Section for unification and eventual affiliation of all trade union and progressive labor-farmer organizations have failed to produce a democratic equitable basis satisfactory to any of the larger trade unions of this Province; ... That we go on record against affiliating with any Political party at this time” (emphasis added).<sup>(25)</sup>

Two solitudes of IWA and CCF political organizing—including positions on forest-policy reform—persisted through the first Sloan Commission. For its part the CCF held on to some notion of nationalization well into the 1950s, which was affirmed on the occasion of the second Royal Commission on Forestry.<sup>(26)</sup> With Cameron by this time elected to Ottawa as a CCF MP, it fell to provincial CCF MLA R M Strachan to

<sup>(24)</sup> The first union to affiliate formally with the CCF was District 26 of the United Mineworkers of America, which in 1938 approved a measure to contribute funds to the CCF for election purposes as well as for the publication of a pro-CCF newspaper. Nevertheless, many trade unions continued to rebuff the CCF. The reasons varied. Some unions were of the nonpartisan ‘Gompers’ tradition of trade unionism, and were sceptical of contributing precious resources to political campaigning for a single party. Still, others found the CCF not radical enough. During the Second World War, differences within the labour movement, and between trade unions and the CCF, on Canada’s participation in the war also hindered efforts at cooperation (Young, 1971). These issues were clearly at the forefront of trade-union and CCF relations in BC during the 1940s. This is made plain, for example, in a statement on behalf of the CCF Provincial Executive to the Vancouver Labour Council on 26 June 1945, in which the basic issues surrounding CCF–trade union relations are laid out, and references to this as a contentious issue are numerous. Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 40, file 8, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(25)</sup> Minutes of the First Quarterly District Council Meeting IWA–CIO District Council Number 1, held in Eagle’s Hall, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Sunday 2 April 1944 (pages 5–6), Harold Pritchett and IWA District Council Number 1 papers, folder 4–24, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(26)</sup> See, for example, the undated document (through clearly published after the creation of management licences in 1947) “Study of the forest products industry of British Columbia, with a consideration of the problems confronting a socialist administration in connection therewith”, written by the Cameron-McNeil Public Research Bureau and commissioned to help the BC CCF prepare for the second Sloan Commission, makes strong statements about nationalizing large parts of the province’s forest industry. Referring to the policies brought in after the first Sloan Commission, the report reads: “The conflict between public and private interest referred to by F.D.Mulholland on Page 53 of ‘The Forest Resources of British Columbia’, make it imperative that a socialist administration move as quickly as possible towards a goal of complete public ownership in forest lands and timber production. The newly inaugurated system of ‘Management Licenses’ is patently inadequate. Its end result can only be the concentration into the hands of a few large corporations of the entire forest resources of the province”, Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 47-8, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

articulate the policy of nationalization in 1955. In his brief, Strachan refers critically to the recommendations of the first Sloan Commission and to the system of private tenures granted over public timberlands in the wake of the 1947 Forest Act:

“Forest Management Licenses are but the last of many attempts since the days of absolute *laissez-faire* logging to control and protect our forests by regulatory measures. Trying to control our forest industry by agreement with, and regulation of, the forest operators has led us, floundering bravely along, to the edge of a pit of our own digging.”<sup>(27)</sup>

He went on to argue for the cancellation of existing forest-management licenses and for the socialization of provincial forests under the auspices of what would essentially be a public utility set up to undertake forest management and harvesting:

“The fundamental principle of forest administration in this province was from the earliest times Crown ownership of the forests. That principle has been abandoned step by step as the usefulness of our forests has grown ... My party believes that all the requirements of sound forest policy—social, economic, technological—can be satisfied only through establishment of a public agency, charged with the *planting, nurture, harvest, and sale of our raw forest crop*. Under that proposal all forest lands and rights would be transferred step by step, from the Crown and private owners to a Crown-owned corporation, to be known as the B.C. Forest Commission” (emphasis added).<sup>(28)</sup>

Even so, the BC CCF’s position on nationalization had become the subject of more intense political conflict coinciding with redoubled efforts to unify the left and to gain for the CCF the formal endorsement of the trade-union movement in both BC and Canada more generally. Although the provincial CCF affirmed nationalisation at its 1953 annual convention, endorsing termination of forest-management licenses and placing forest “control management, and operation under provincial authority”,<sup>(29)</sup> the policy already differed in significant ways from ideas advocated by Cameron before the first Sloan Commission. These differences include openness to the idea of working circles in timber management (as embraced by the IWA, see above), where the “small logging operator will find his place”.<sup>(30)</sup>

By 1955 the party’s position on forestry as laid out in its “CCF program for British Columbia” had been considerably watered down, and was in direct conflict with the statement submitted by Strachan to the second Royal Commission that same year. Embrace of outright socialization was replaced by vague notions regarding state administration “of re-forestation and conservation of forests on a perpetual yield basis”.<sup>(31)</sup> References to the continued operation of a private forest sector, including logging operations, had become replete.

<sup>(27)</sup> “Brief submitted to the Royal Commission on Forestry, British Columbia, by R.M.Strachan, M.L.A.”, 1955 (page 7), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 47, folder 6, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(28)</sup> See reference in footnote 27 (pages 9–10).

<sup>(29)</sup> Minutes from the BC–Yukon Section of the CCF Annual Convention, 1953 (page 76), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection box 67-1, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(30)</sup> See reference in footnote 29. A document entitled “CCF forest policy” and dated 21 May 1953 is even more tepid about nationalization, promising only a “review [of] the present policy of forest management licenses and the present policy of disposing of crown timber to [sic] private operators working independent of one another, with a view to replacing them with scientifically determined working circles”, and going on to state that the working-circle idea would entail sale of public timber “to private operators in quantities that would assure continuous harvest” (page 1), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 47–12, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(31)</sup> “CCF policy for British Columbia”, 15 July 1955 (page 7), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 34-12, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

The conflicting direction of party policy came to a head at the 1956 BC CCF convention. Leading into the convention, the party's Provincial Executive Board attempted to develop a modified policy on forest tenure, drawing on a report by the party's Research Committee. While the report recommended termination of forest-management licenses and all other forms of alienating provincial lands (to be replaced by one-time sales of cutting rights only), it backed off from the position of state-operated logging and silvicultural operations, and instead simply endorsed "maintenance of the forest on a sustained yield basis."<sup>(32)</sup> Sent to the convention for ratification, the new policy became the subject of a complex series of amendments and counteramendments. The Vancouver Centre CCF Constituency Association, for example, wanted to "bring the forests and the forest industry under government ownership and control."<sup>(33)</sup> But, in the end, as Jeremy Wilson (1988, pages 20–21) notes, "A moderate faction aligned with the IWA managed to defeat both a proposal that all forest land should be controlled by a tree-farming Crown corporation, and a mild amendment dictating that a CCF government would explore the viability of a cutting, milling, and marketing Crown corporation."<sup>(34)</sup> Instead of revoking forest-management licenses, CCF policy now entailed little more than a review of existing tenures.<sup>(35)</sup>

<sup>(32)</sup> "CCF (British Columbia–Yukon Section) Provincial Executive Report On Forestry" (prepared by the Research Committee for submission to the 1956 Provincial Convention) (page 12), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 65-1, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver. It seems to some extent that the moderation of CCF forest policy was pushed by the Provincial Executive. In the minutes of the BC CCF executive meeting, 4 February 1956, a draft of the Research Committee's report on forestry was considered for recommendation to the convention. The executive stated that "We agree that forest management licenses should be revoked, but we think the proposal of a crown corporation owning the forests, cutting the trees, and selling the logs, would weaken, rather than strengthen, public control over the forest industry. We think the Legislature should revoke forest management licenses and take responsibility for sustained yield, assuring the raw material supply of major wood manufacturing industries." The executive goes on to endorse the idea of a publicly administered timber marketing board. Note that the argument about a crown corporation may have some validity if the vision was of a bureaucratic elite removed from public participation and oversight; but in the shift away from this idea, the executive also backed off from the idea of state-operated logging. BC CCF Provincial Executive minutes 4 February 1956 (page 3), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 65-1, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(33)</sup> Minutes of the Twenty-third Provincial Convention CCF British Columbia Section, 1956, Vancouver, 6, 7, 8 April (page 18), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 65-1, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver. More-ambitious approaches were also embraced by the North Burnaby CCF Club and by the Sooke CCF Club. Aspects of the debate back and forth on the various amendments are detailed on page 52 of the minutes.

<sup>(34)</sup> The adopted policy included the following language: "a public authority should administer reforestation and conservation of forests on a perpetual yield basis. The cost of such maintenance of our forests would be a first charge on the profits of the private industry. Agreements might be entered into with existing or new operations which guarantee them adequate supplies of timber for their purposes." Minutes of the Twenty-third Provincial Convention CCF British Columbia Section, 1956, Vancouver, 6, 7, 8 April (page 5), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 65-1, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(35)</sup> Scepticism toward forest-management licenses remained in CCF policy thereafter, but the party continued to waiver on the expropriation question, and also continued to solidify its stand against state operations in logging and wood commodity production. Thus, by 1959, the CCF forest-policy statement stipulated the following: "A CCF government would take bold action to divide the province into a number of Forest Management Areas in which administration and control would be by the Forest Service, with due consideration for the requirements of established industries in each area. *A CCF government in British Columbia would not anticipate taking over the existing logging operations, plants, or mills*" (emphasis added). "Forest policy" (page 3), Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, box 34-12, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

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### Labour and the CCF in the early Cold War

It is important to understand changes in provincial CCF forest policy, and the split between the CCF and the IWA at the time of the Sloan Commissions, in the context of contemporaneous changes taking place within the CCF and the trade-union movement in Canada as part of an emerging Cold War geopolitical order. In this context the demise of the CCF's nationalization agenda and, indeed, the IWA's prosaic stance on the politics of forest production and regulation reflected and reinforced a shift from radical to reform socialism under the influences of widespread anticommunism and red baiting, and the consolidation of a North American class compromise and labour peace that would help to define Fordism (Aglietta, 1979; Brenner and Glick, 1991; Jessop, 1995; Webber and Rigby, 1996). As the trade-union movement drifted toward bread-and-butter 'Gompers' style unionism', the CCF moved in parallel toward reform socialism, propelled by the conjoined objectives of aligning itself with the trade-union movement in Canada (Young, 1971) and of retaining political relevance in provincial and federal legislatures.

At the time of the Sloan Commissions, labour in Canada was enjoying rising wages buoyed by wartime and postwar expansion, successful organizing, and the institutionalization of collective bargaining. It would be a mistake to downplay the political and symbolic importance of the wage as an arena of class and class-relevant struggle (Mann, 2005). Nevertheless, the increasing focus on industry-specific and workplace-specific issues, and the rise of so-called Gompers' style or nonpartisan unionism, came somewhat as a *quid pro quo*, characterized by Braverman (1975) as an ideological and material division of labour (and power) between conception (for the bourgeoisie) and execution (for workers) (see also Burawoy, 1979). This 'deal', and Gompers' style unionism, has been roundly criticized in the US (Davis, 1986) and Canadian contexts (Zakuta, 1964). It was a major tension within the postwar CCF, and one reinforced by the contrast between the BC CCF's forest-nationalization agenda and the more prosaic position taken by Pritchett on behalf of the IWA before the Sloan Commissions.

Yet, it is easy to forget the geopolitical circumstances under which these strategic decisions on the left were made. Organized labour and the CCF alike were being forced to confront an emerging Cold War political order, one that made it increasingly difficult to retain a radical socialist agenda and still maintain political distance from Stalinism. In the context of widespread anticommunist sentiment, progressive organizations across North America internalized aspects of the anticommunist struggle. In the case of the IWA, for instance, it bears noting that, although Pritchett embraced a decidedly reformist forestry agenda before the Sloan Commission on behalf of the IWA, he had emerged from the radical Lumber Workers Industrial Union to become associated with the Workers' Unity League, organized largely by the Communist Party of Canada (Meyers, 1988). Pritchett was a key player in the formation of the IWA in its organizing breakthroughs of the 1930s, and became the union's first international president in 1937. With his ties to the Communist Party of Canada and to a more radical brand of socialism, Pritchett was also among the leaders who drew the IWA toward affiliation with the CIO in the United States (Marchak, 1988; Meyers, 1988).

Yet, Pritchett's affiliation with the CPC and his ties to the CIO made him a controversial figure and saw him targeted by anticommunist sentiment both within and from outside the union. His leadership became the source of tension within the IWA in 1937 in the midst of a fight for jurisdiction between the American Federation of

<sup>(36)</sup> See also "A brief history of trade unionism in British Columbia's lumber industry" by Al Parkin, dated 1946–47, Simon Fraser University Special Collections, Burnaby. Pritchett was denounced repeatedly based on his communist ties by AFL figures such as Abe Muir of the rival United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

Labor (AFL) and the CIO (Jensen, 1945; Lembcke, 1978).<sup>(36)</sup> Three years later Pritchett was actually excluded, along with other 'known communists', from participating in the intense debates over the role of communism in the trade-union movement at the 1940 CIO annual convention (Jensen, 1945; Marchak, 1988). By 1944 the role of communists in the union was being debated by the IWA at its 8th Annual Convention, held in Vancouver.<sup>(37)</sup> And in 1947 Pritchett (still president of IWA District Council number 1) was refused entry to the United States by the Immigration and Naturalization Service on the grounds of his supposed communist ties. One year later, Pritchett and the rest of the original IWA leadership were displaced from the BC District Council Executive and replaced with moderates (Bernard, 1977). Pritchett's testimony to Sloan takes on an entirely different connotation in light of these struggles both within the IWA to maintain international solidarity and in the midst of growing anticommunist sentiment in the trade-union movement more generally.

In similar fashion, early Cold War politics and the rise of Gompers' style unionism were having major impacts on the CCF as it continued to struggle for the endorsement of labour, and to retain electoral relevance. As Leo Zakuta (1964, page 19) argues in his analysis of the history of the CCF, more-conservative forces within the party increasingly sought to deemphasize socialism because "the public's conception of socialism had become distorted beyond redemption by the many bitter attacks in which it had been lumped together with communism and Hitler's National Socialism." In 1933 the CCF's founding charter stated: "No CCF Government will rest content until it has *eradicated capitalism* and put into operation the full programme of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Co-operative Commonwealth" (CCF, 1933, emphasis added). Yet, seventeen years later, on the occasion of the CCF National Convention in Vancouver, National Chairman F R Scott outlined a new vision of democratic socialism under the CCF:

"We do not oppose the making of profit in all its forms; on the contrary, the profit motive, under proper control, is now and will be for a long time a most valuable stimulus to production. *Not a single democratic socialist party anywhere* plans to nationalise all forms of production, and in the privately owned sector the profit motive must continue" (emphasis added).<sup>(38)</sup>

Reinvention of the CCF as a reform socialist party was consummated at the 1956 National Convention in Winnipeg, the same year that internal divisions within the BC CCF over radical versus reform forest policy came to a head. Ratification of the Winnipeg Declaration, viewed by traditional leftists within the party as a betrayal, offered explicit acceptance of capitalism, downplaying the role of state control in CCF political platforms.<sup>(39)</sup> Walter Young (1971, pages 87–88) wrote in his essential history of the CCF's first thirty years:

<sup>(37)</sup> Two delegates were actually expelled from the union at this time for being communists. Proceedings of the Eighth Constitutional Convention of the IWA, Harold Pritchett and IWA District Council Number 1 papers, University of British Columbia Special Collections, Vancouver.

<sup>(38)</sup> Report, Eleventh National Convention, CCF, 26, 27, and 28 July 1950, Vancouver (page 7). McMaster University Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Collection, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario.

<sup>(39)</sup> Zakuta (1964, page 93) notes that "The most vital part of the document dealt with social ownership as follows: 'In the co-operative commonwealth there will be an important role for public, private and co-operative enterprise working together in the people's interest. The CCF has always recognized public ownership as the most effective means of breaking the stranglehold of private monopolies on the life of the nation and of facilitating the social planning necessary for economic security and advance ... At the same time, the CCF also recognizes that in many fields there will be need for private enterprise which can make a useful contribution to the development of our economy. The co-operative commonwealth will, therefore, provide appropriate opportunities for private business as well as publicly-owned industry.'"

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“Of necessity the party became less a socialist movement and more a socialist labour party as it came to work more closely with unions, few of whose members were socialist and whose aims were not socialistic. The old socialist zeal remained and found expression often enough in speeches and propaganda. To it were added the hard bargaining and careful political arrangements so necessary in establishing a party.”

### Conclusion

I have attempted in this paper to explore the historical and political conditions under which a specific institutionalization of sustained-yield forestry took hold in British Columbia, one that, despite persistent protests and contestations in recent years, remains essentially intact. This model was established during the 1940s and 1950s, in large part as the result of twin Royal Commissions that embraced scientific, state-regulated management of forests according to the ideal of the Normalbaum and sustained-yield harvesting, but that leased forest land to private capital and left the harvesting and processing of wood fibre to the private sector. As ‘natural’ as this model now seems, it was anything but natural at the time of its adoption, and was highly contested, not least by the provincial socialist party—the CCF (now the NDP). The defeat of this vision, and its political circumstances, helps to explain how the relative hegemony of technocratic and exchange-value-dominated representations of forests was consolidated. At the same time, the story links the politics of sustained yield, and competing ideologies of nature, to the class compromise of early Fordism and to Cold War geopolitics. I do not argue that this context was determinative of sustained-yield policy as embraced in BC, or that these politics are the ‘real’ basis of contending contemporary discourses of forests and forest practices in the province. I argue only that this story is relevant to the always overdetermined present condition.

At the same time, I hope the paper will serve to historicize a political schism that, in North America at least, is too often taken for granted—that separating working-class and environmental social movements and their politics. Seldom is the labour movement linked to environmental issues except around issues such as occupational health and safety. From wilderness preservation to global climate change, from toxic-waste disposal to food safety, environmental issues are understood and often defined as the terrain of so-called new (and presumably non-class-based) social movements. Yet, to the extent that they are real, such schisms must be understood as historical artefacts rather than as ‘natural’ divisions of political labour. The alternative, and again to appropriate Braverman’s (1975) terminology, is to reify and make ideological the notion that ‘conception’ (scientific representations, management, etc) in the production and regulation of nature is reserved exclusively for capital and for an aligned, technobureaucratic elite. Herod (1995a; 1995b; 2001) has rightly cautioned against this sort of reification in economic geographies, lest the role of class struggle and of the agency of labour in geographies of capitalism be downplayed or overlooked. And although natural resource management and environmental policy are seldom examined for such agency, I suggest that the forest visions once articulated by the BC CCF are but one demonstration that this is an oversight.

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