
Gordon Hak, *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry, 1934-74*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2007. 258pp.

The cover features a black and white photo of several men working around a partially squared piece of timber and a very large rotary saw blade. The image nicely captures much of what this book is about: some of the men are in work clothes and caps: typical workers in the mid-twentieth century. The image captures them in the middle of a task. The timber identifies their work in a primary industry, closely tied to the natural environment. One man, partially obscured by the saw blade, wears a fedora and a vest. Is he management's presence on the shop floor? Beneath the photo in large, all-cap text, are the first three words of the title: "Capital and Labour," the rest of the title follows below in a much smaller font. If the image clearly places the subject matter in a particular industry, at a particular time, and with a particular workforce, the text asserts, correctly, a more general appeal. This is a book that should appeal to many of the readers of *Labour, Capital and Society* regardless of its spatial and temporal focus.

Gordon Hak sets out to write about the development of a Fordist political economy in British Columbia in the middle of the twentieth century while critiquing the narrowness of Fordist/Post-Fordist theory and models. Thus, he seeks to capture both large *and* small businesses, business *and* radical unionism,

technology and the labour process and the effect of social movements. By introducing the complexities he does, Hak points to how Fordism can be better understood in economies and industries on the peripheries of the 20th Century industrial economy. He is also able to point to continuities and new fractures between the Fordist and Post-Fordist eras.

The book is broken into seven chapters: three pairs on capital, labour, and process and a final chapter on social movements. In dealing with capital he presents first a history of the development and consolidation of the largest timber processing firms. This began on Vancouver Island and along the southern coast of the B.C. mainland and was followed in the 1950s and 1960s by the consolidation of smaller operators in the interior. His second chapter on capital deals with small tree-felling operations. When he turns to labour he looks first at the making of unions through unionisation and strikes. He then turns to conflicts between craft and industrial unions and the conflicts within unions, particularly between communists and anti-communists. The third pair of chapters begins with a chapter on labour process generally; the second deals with the development and introduction of new technologies into the process and workers' responses and resistance. The final chapter traces the rise of the environmental movement and the conflicts between it and both forestry companies and unions.

Running through all, or most, of the chapters is a discussion of the state in two guises. Hak devotes some time to state forest and labour policy and its implications for all of the actors. But the state is not simply a bureaucratic actor: it is directed by an elected government. So Hak also draws out the links between government officials and the senior men in the company and union and shows how the vagaries of electoral politics helped shape policy for the state, business and unions.

This is an empirically rich study written within the historical monograph tradition. Hak's take on Fordism is sketched theoretically in the introduction and the first pages of each chapter. Like much history-writing, it is developed in the choices he makes as to what to include in his empirically rich chapters.

It is important to note then some of the details he does not develop in this book. There is no significant discussion of life off the job for either boss or worker. The workforce appears to be overwhelmingly male, but Hak seldom studies the discourses of

around masculinity in making sense of forestry work, of the conflicts between labour and capital, or the impact of the environmental movement. He does, however, pay some attention to race and gender in the workforce at particular times. In his discussion of the workforce and union-making in the 1930s and 1940s he does draw attention to the place of Asian workers (Japanese, Chinese, and Sikh primarily) and women workers (during the Second World War). To leave leisure and the family, or to limit, in this way, the discussion of masculinity or whiteness in experience and discourse effectively leaves culture out of the Fordist political economy.

Hak's *Capital and Labour* is an excellent example of history written within the political economy tradition. It is a theoretically challenging and finely detailed historical analysis of a resource industry in its heyday and on the verge of the economic downturn of the 1970s. While its primary appeal might rest with historians of Canadian business and labour or British Columbia, it deserves to be read by others interested in the complexity of the industrial economy, be they historians, sociologists, anthropologists or others.

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