Borderline communities: Canadian single industry towns, staples, and Harold Innis

Introduction

Unlike other contributors to this volume, I am less concerned with international borders, than intra-national ones. In particular, I am interested in communities and regional boundaries within resource-producing economies such as the one in which I live, British Columbia (BC), Canada. Resource economies, and their peculiar geography, are not a central concern of contemporary geography, however. Both are treated as peripheral to more important activities such as manufacturing or high-order service provision, and their associated geographical cores such as Orange County, CA, or world cities such as London. The derogation of resource economies, though, apart from being geographically blinkered is theoretically myopic, closing off the possibility that theories derived from experiences of peripheral places like resource regions have wider purchase. This is the entry point for my chapter. I will argue that a theorist of the spatial resource periphery, the Canadian economic historian Harold Innis (1894-1952), provides a suggestive theory of geographical boundaries and related community life with a resonance beyond the immediate context of its formulation.

Innis's theory is contained within his staples model. That model says that Canada's economic history and geography are fundamentally shaped by the export to metropolitan powers of a series of raw or semi-processed natural resources – staples – such as fur, fish and forest products. Staple commodities not only directly leave their mark on the communities in which they are produced, the single industry resource towns that litter the Canadian landscape, but have a wider national import, demarking internal geographical boundaries, and defining the temporal rhythms and disjunctives of the nation's socio-economic life. The purpose of this paper is to use Innis's staples model to discuss the relationship among single-industry communities, geographical boundaries, and interrupted socio-economic rhythms within Canada, and in particular BC.

To undertake this task I use the term "borderline communities," and which is useful for two reasons. First, it connotes the idea that communities are a bridge, or a link, as in communities on an international border connecting different national spaces. In Innis's staples theory, as I will argue, staples goods have buried with them particular spatialities and temporalities that are realised when they are extracted and sold. Single industry towns that specialize in such staples are thus at the interface of those geographies and histories. They are borderline communities connected to the spatial and temporal relations produced by the staples on which they depend. Second, precisely because of this borderline status, single industry towns are borderline in a second sense. The confluence of these different geographies and histories makes single industry communities notoriously unstable, acutely sensitive to change. They are liminal communities, drawn faintly, and with the continual prospect of permanent erasure (and represented by the hundreds of ghost towns scattered among Canada's resource margins).

The chapter is divided into two main sections. First, I discuss Innis's staples thesis and his argument about the production of space and time, and the consequences for Canada, and its borderline communities. Second, I provide a set of illustrations drawn from the recent history of British Columbia's forest industry, and the single industry towns that are at its core

Innis, staples, space, and time

Innis, colonialism, and staples theory

Perhaps the most important fact about Harold Innis is that he was a colonial intellectual, constantly struggling to overthrow the yoke of European habits of mind in order to present a made-in-Canada interpretation of his country's history and development. Teaching at the University of Toronto from 1920 until his death in 1952, he constantly tried to break out of the rut of colonial thinking, and to think new thoughts relevant to his own time and place. Hence, his cryptic writing style, his neologisms, and extravagant metaphors. They all represented strategies to resist and replace "... the dominant and myopic paradigms in research set by metropolitan institutions and intellectuals" (Watson, 1977, page 45).

From the beginning, Innis was especially keen to resist and replace the colonial economic interpretation of Canada couched in terms of orthodox trade theory. That theory, and known as the theory of comparative advantage, and first proposed by the English economist David Ricardo, said that Canada specialized and traded in staples because it was in such commodities that the country possessed an economic advantage. Under this theory, because Canada could produce resources like fur, fish and forests comparatively more cheaply than manufactured goods, while in Britain's case the comparative cost ratios were reversed, the greatest gains to trade would derive from Canada specialising in staples and Britain in industrial goods. For Innis, though, such reasoning was wrong headed. Innis thought Ricardo's theory not only represented the foisting of a colonial self-justificatory intellectual scheme on its ex-colony – Canadian economists were almost unanimous in espousing it – but the particular international division of labour it prescribed maintained exactly the old asymmetric colonial relation of trade. As Innis wrote, by accepting Ricardian trade theory, "Canadians are obliged ... to fit their analysis of new economic facts into an old background. The handicaps of this process are obvious, ... resulting in a new form of exploitation with dangerous consequences" (Innis 1956, page 3).

Innis's response to that exploitation was to develop staples theory, and which was his made-in-Canada alternative to orthodoxy (Barnes, 1996a, ch. 8). In contrast to orthodox trade theory, Innis argued that there were no advantages, comparative or otherwise, to specializing in staples. Staples production resulted in only halting and incomplete development, ensnaring regions and nations in a "staples trap." The result, to use Innis's terminology, is that staples-producing regions and nations became dependent on more powerful foreign metropoles, and consequently remained on the global economic margin.

At the basis of Innis's alternative staples model is a cyclonic metaphor. Staples producing areas are "storm centres to the modern international economy" as he put it (quoted in Stamps, 1995, fn. 63, page 59). Here, cyclonics is used by him as one of those "extravagant metaphors" to break free of colonial orthodoxy. The Ricardian static, equilibrium model of comparative advantage with its connotation of mutual beneficence could hardly be more different than Innis's cyclonic model based on dynamic change, instability, and the potential for tumult and destruction.[1]

In particular, Innis uses the meteorological metaphor to represent both the whirlwind ferocity of capitalist accumulation at resource sites, and the equally ferocious decline and destruction that

follows. Because the metropoles of capitalism require a continual source of raw materials, there is an incessant search for new and profitable sources of raw materials. Blowing across the economic landscape, global-cyclonic winds touch down at a few sites - single industry towns - to create in a burst of frenetic energy the infrastructure and wherewithal of resource production. But as implied by the central metaphor, stability is always precarious and temporary, and sooner rather than later, "all that is solid melts into air." That is, when times turn bad for staples-producing regions, they are horrid. Because of, say, resource depletion and poor markets, or changes in technology affecting demand and the production process itself, or institutional changes around resource firms as they are taken over and rationalized, or workers who resist changes at the work place and go on strike, single-industry towns begin to waver. Over time, wavering becomes lurching as towns plunge from one crisis to another, sometimes barely surviving, and sometimes not surviving at all. Concomitantly there is massive disruption of peoples' lives and livelihoods. The very worse face of resource dependency is revealed as the cyclone turns destructive: mills and mines are shut down, workers are laid off, businesses go belly up, home mortgages are foreclosed, families break up, and local governance is turned upside down (specific empirical forms and examples of this process are discussed below). Single industry towns become borderline communities in the second sense that I defined it.

Space and time

But to understand how such borderline status occurs, it is necessary to push the inquiry back yet farther, and to examine how staples production generates the spatial and temporal relations that at different times are either so creative or so destructive to communities. Again, the contrast between Innisian cyclonics and Ricardian trade theory could not be starker. In the theory of comparative advantage, space and time disappear. There, trading countries are portrayed as existing both on the head of pin in a "wonderland of no dimensions" (Isard, 1956, pages 25-26), and in equilibrium, and which as even the Nobel-prize winning economist John Hicks (1976, page 140) admits, "signal[s] that time, in some respect, has been put to one side." In contrast, for Innis events are always in space and in time; they are magnitudes intrinsic to the very process of staples production, and the creation of borderline communities.

Innis's most systematic discussions of space and time are found in his later work on communications (Carey, 1967, 1975). Innis argued there that technological media as diverse as papyrus scrolls, printed books, and the telephone and radio, are associated with particular kinds of "space-time biases." That is, such media tend to favour one or the other dimension. The telephone and radio, for example, are biased towards space in that they are designed to break down geographical barriers of distance.

A version of space-time bias, I would argue, is also found in Innis's earlier work on staples. Rather than applying to media technologies, however, it adheres to staples themselves. Innis assumes that each staple embodies a set of spatial and temporal imperatives ("space-time biases") that are then manifest once staples extraction and trade begin. A useful analogy, perhaps, is with Marx's idea of commodity fetishism. For Marx a commodity is not just a material good bought and sold, but contains within it a set of social relations that while hidden are fundamental to its constitution. For Marx, those social relations must be uncovered and recognised if the commodity is to be understood. The same holds for Innis and his analysis of

staples goods. Treating the staple as only a natural resource covers up all the interesting spatial and temporal relations submerged within it, making it what it is. Innis's project is to recoup those relations. Just as Marx pulls away the veil of the commodity to expose its social constituents, Innis carries out the same manoeuvre to uncover the multifarious and twisted threads of its far-reaching geography and history.

Let me elaborate more precisely the nature of those spatial and temporal biases. For it is here that the other meaning of borderline communities I discussed above is apparent; that is, as a connecting point linking different kinds of geographies and histories. Each staple brings with it its own spatial and temporal biases, and the single industry towns that are associated with its extraction are therefore necessarily connected to, and consequently affected by, those biases and the particular kinds of geographies and histories they imply.

First, there is spatial bias by which I mean the geographical relations enfolded within particular staples, and that are both local and extra-local. By local, I mean the geographical relations adhering within the immediate environment in which the extraction of the staple occurs. For example, the cod fishery of Newfoundland is associated with a set of decentralized resource sites along its west coast – the "outport" fishing villages. While potash mining in Saskatchewan or coal mining in British Columbia are confined to a more limited number of mining locations. These local geographical relationships, in turn, help mark wider geographical boundaries. Jane Brodie (1989, page 144) makes a similar point: "Canadian history can be represented as a series of transparencies, each representing a different matrix of economic growth and political organization, laid on geographical space on top of one another …. Each staple leads to different geographical configurations that [are] unstable across time. Boundaries whether national or regional - are not 'in the land' but rather tied to the pattern of staples exploitation."

The point is that the local spatial bias of each staple defines particular regional boundaries, which in Canada are well known: fishing in the maritime provinces, mining on the Canadian Shield, agriculture in the Prairies, oil and gas in Alberta, and forestry in British Columbia. But as Brodie implies with her transparency metaphor, there are continual shifts propelled by the changing spatial biases of staples goods themselves. Regional boundaries are continually redrawn because of the instability of the staple itself, and concomitant local environmental geography. For example, the exhaustion of cod stocks off the Grand Banks Newfoundland redraws the regional boundary of fishing, making the province's outports very different communities now that "King Cod" is no more. Or again, in British Columbia, as old growth forests are cut to stumps on the Coast, the regional boundaries of forestry are redrawn (see Hayter, 2003), with old forest towns becoming retirement centres or sites of eco-tourism rather than locations for the mill. As staples fail, that is, as implicit local spatial biases are realised, traditional internal regional borders and the communities found within them unravel.

By extra-local I mean the spatial relations inherent in staples goods that bear on both the markets in which they are sold, and the organization of firms that carry out production, and which in both cases are frequently international and far-flung. Single industry towns, then, are not only dependent on a set of immediate local geographical relations around the extraction of the staple itself, but also a set of often-global relations around markets and firm ownership. As these extra-local relations change, just as is the case for local relations, the consequences for single industry

towns can be profound. For example, in May 2002, the United States began levying a 27% import duty on Canadian softwood lumber, and which hitherto represented the largest market for that staple good. British Columbia's sawmilling towns, of which there are over a hundred, were devastated as this extra-local market relation was severely hampered by the trade levy. Or another example, when MacMillan Bloedel, the largest BC-owned forest production corporation was taken over by Weyerhaeuser based in Tacoma, WA, in 1999, the White Pine sawmill plant in Vancouver was shut down within a year as part of a wider scheme of corporate rationalization. Again, the change in extra-local geographical relationships, extra-local spatial biases, brought about by alterations in distant corporate ownership produces fundamental changes at the site of staples production.

Locked within the staples commodity, then, are a set of local and extra-local relations, spatial biases that are realised through extraction and export. But those relations by their very nature are fragile, subject to change, and as they do, single industry communities which are the lynch pin at the centre of those biases take the full brunt of the consequences.

Second, by temporal bias I mean the temporal rhythms built into the production and marketing of staples goods. The general nature of that bias should be clear from Innis's central metaphor of the cyclone with its implications of speed, instability, energy, and unpredictability. For Innis staples carry with them the seeds of their own temporal instability and disequilibria, their time bias. In particular, volatility stems from:

- Price fluctuations, and a result of the high demand elasticity for primary goods, and the competitive markets in which they are sold (Barnes, 1996b).
- Physical environmental factors bound to the resource cycle that moves at a variable pace from initial exploitation to exhaustion depending upon the particular staple (Clapp, 1998).
- Changing production technology, because it affects both demand for the staple, as well as its ability to be extracted.
- Frequent unused capacity, a result of large sunk costs of production associated with staples that periodically dampens profits producing cyclical disinvestments (Spry, 1981).
- Varying transportation routes and technology, because staples are typically bulky, often inaccessible, and require transportation from where they are extracted.
- Shifting institutional structures and regulations, because, as Innis made clear, given the large overhead costs usually associated with staples production only particular kinds of institutional and regulatory arrangements are possible.

The argument is that as these factors change, that is, as temporal biases are realised, and which inevitably they must, so the rhythms of production and marketing are punctuated and disturbed producing instability. Existing resource sites close down, and new sites open up. But the transition is not easy. As Innis (1950, pages 5-6) writes: "Each staple in its turn le[aves] its stamp, and the shift to new staples invariably produce[s] periods of crises in which adjustments in the old structure [are] painfully made and a new pattern created in relation to a new staple." The important point is that such "painful" pulses of changes are inherent within the very structure of Canadian staples and the temporal biases that they contain.

In sum, for Innis the cyclonic nature of staples production in Canada is a consequence of the time-space biases that inhere within staples goods. There are certainly periods of stability in

specific places when those biases are constrained, and illustrated in the next section. But it is never permanent. Destruction and bedlam are always waiting in the wings as space and time turn nasty, making borderline communities truly borderline.

Stormy weather in British Columbia: Cyclones, staples, and single industry towns

The history of British Columbia since the first sustained European settlement in the middle of the 19th century is of one economic storm after another that both creates and destroys. Vancouver, for the most part, served as a local metropole, but it too periodically caught the edges of the various economic gales that ripped through the province. BC's single industry towns are at the centre of those storms. Because of the diversity of resources found in the province, the single industry towns have taken various forms each associated with a different staple: around fishing, such as in Prince Rupert on BC's central coast, around mining and smelting such as in Trail in the province's southern interior, around natural oil and gas such as in Fort Nelson in north-east BC, around fruit and market gardening such as in the Mediterranean-like Southern Okanagan Valley around Osoyoos, and most spectacularly around the forest products industry, and found in different forms throughout the whole province (Marchak, 1983; Hayter, 2000). The result is that on a per capita basis BC leads the nation in the number of single-industry towns (Bradbury, 1987; Randall and Ironside).

Specifically, the prominence of forestry-based resource communities in British Columbia represents the historical culmination of a 300-year process that first systematically began in Canada's eastern Maritime Provinces (Lower, 1938). Commercial exploitation of forestry finally arrived in British Columbia in the middle of the nineteenth century. That date is also the beginning of forest-based single industry towns, the principal borderline communities in the province, and on which I will focus in the remainder of this section.

Rise and Climb

The first systematic forest-based activity in British Columbia is associated with the sawmills, and found either on the mainland around Vancouver, or on Vancouver Island at such places as Victoria, Port Alberni, and Chemainus (Map 1). While cyclonic processes were certainly at work in their formation, and subsequent spasmodic development through the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, I want to focus on the period immediately after the Second World War. For it is only then that the full storm of resource development occurs within BC's forest economy, and which includes not only coastal sites but also the entire province. During this post-war period, which I will call Fordist, tremendous amounts of public and private capital reshape British Columbia's landscape of single industry towns that now run the length and breath of the province. It also provides for an expanding and prosperous economy that lasts until about 1980, at which point the forest industry in British Columbia and affiliated communities turn borderline.

In part, the prosperity lasts so long because the resource exploitation is associated with a wider set of institutional changes that help at least temporarily to manage and control spatial and temporal bias. Up until the 1945, the forest economy on the Coast is unstable, with those biases out of control, and consequently producing forest communities that are sporadic, sometimes

transient, and subject to constant vicissitudes. But after this date, a coalition of large institutional interests emerge that collectively at least for a period restrains and controls those biases, and in the process expands resource production geographically. Those institutions are the state, private capital, and organized labour.

The local state is the most important. First, it systematically organizes the forest resources that are primarily owned (more than 90%) by the state itself. Upholding the principle of "sustainable yield" (no more trees should be cut down over a five year average than are either replanted or regenerated naturally), the province is divided into tree farm license areas on which private companies bid for the right to harvest, and for which they pay the province a resource royalty known as "stumpage." In this way, the state ensures an ordered use of the forest stock, in effect controlling and managing local spatial bias. Through regulation, the resource is preserved rather than "liquefied" as occurred earlier. Second, the state systematically organizes the infrastructure necessary for comprehensive staples development. It provides sufficient power generation for staples operations (from Hydroelectric plants on dams constructed on the Peace and Columbia rivers during the 1950s and 1960s), transportation (road and railway construction), and underwrites new single industry towns themselves (embodied in the 1965 New Towns Act). Finally, it offers inducements both to capital and labour to participate in a controlled form of staple exploitation. To capital, it offers subsidised production both through the provision of physical infrastructure and low resource rents (stumpage rates). And to labour it offers various forms of welfare payments that provide a safety net for workers allowing them to stay in single industry towns even after they are laid off during one of the vicissitudes. By controlling local resource use and the means of its extraction, as well as offsetting some of the malicious effects of instability, the state is able to neutralise some of the space-time biases inherent with staple production, making borderline communities at least for a period less borderline.

Capital is primarily in the form of large multinational corporations, frequently foreign owned, and which become a presence in BC forestry from the late 1940s. Represented by such firms as Weyerhaeuser, Scott Paper, Crown Zellerbach, and BC's own multinational corporation, MacMillan Bloedel, they invest large sums of private capital to transform the hitherto small-scale forest operations scattered along the BC Coast into a systematic, Fordist, capital-intensive, province-wide, forest-products industry. In addition, this particular form of industrial organization is favoured and encouraged by the state through a tree farm license scheme that gives preference to firms with long-time horizons, and proven durability, that is, the multinational corporations. The point here is that this form of industrial organization, at least in theory, is most able to deal with the space-time biases of staples. Size matters. Big, financially secure resource firms, such as those that operated in BC, were less sensitive to cyclonic forces, and with the assistance of the state, they were partly able to control the instability stemming from space-time biases, for example, from long-distance markets or from unused capacity.

Finally, the two largest unions in the forest industry represented organised labour: the International Woodworkers of America and the Canadian Paperworkers Union. They, too, supported a corporate form of industrial organization, with its robustness and financial stability. In particular, the two unions make the same wage bargain with corporate capital that is forged throughout Fordism; that is, sacrificing control over work for guaranteed increasing incomes. Both sawmills and pulp and paper mills throughout the province are run along Taylorist labour

principles in which deskilled workers engage only in execution and not conception as they mass-produce standardised products using capital-intensive, assembly-line techniques. But the financial rewards are high. As Marshall and Tucker (1992, page 8) put it: "workers with no more than an eighth grade education and little in the way of technical skills could end up with pay checks that enabled them to have two cars, a vacation cottage as well as a principal residence and maybe a boat for fishing and water-skiing. The system worked for everyone."

Of course, it didn't really work for everyone. Beneficiaries were overwhelming male unionised workers. Women rarely worked in the mills (for an exception see, Egan and Klausen, 1998), and First Nations Peoples,[2] and whose forested land the Crown expropriated in the 19th century without negotiating land treaties, were mostly excluded. That said, the rewards to those male workers who had unionised jobs in single industry towns were large.

A useful example is Port Alberni, one of the oldest single industry towns in British Columbia, first settled in 1861, and which in that same year established its first sawmill. The history of the mill up to mid 1930s is marked by discontinuities – interrupted production and changes in ownership – and brought about by the realisation of the space-time biases discussed above: fluctuations in markets, shortages of the resource, price volatility, over capacity, inadequate institutional forms to provide finance, and so on. After that date, though, stability emerges as two firms, McMillan Export Co. and Bloedel, Stewart and Welch take over both sawmilling and pulp and paper operations in the town. In 1951, they join to form BC's first corporate giant MacMillan Bloedel that over the next decade massively invests in the town. By 1960, Port Alberni is the largest, most diversified, and lowest-cost sites for wood processing in the province (Hardwick, 1964). By 1975, its per capita income is 3rd highest in Canada for the town's population class. At least some of its population achieve the good life imagined by Marshall and Tucker, and rather than a borderline community, some commentators speak of urban maturity, and coming of age (Lucas, 1971).

But of course it couldn't last, and not only in Port Alberni, but right across the single industry towns of the province. From around 1980, the cyclonic forces kept in check during the Fordist period return. The space-time biases that were formerly disciplined and organized slip the net of control, creating tumult as borderline communities emerge once more. As they do so, the institutions and social relations that produced stability among BC resource towns, including in Port Alberni, give way as the cyclone of staples dependency turns first inclement, and then downright mean.

Decline and Fall

As Innis theorized, lying behind these destructive forces were alterations in space-time biases. First, there were those around markets and competition. There was both a geographical shift towards Asian markets and away from American (Hayter and Edgington, 1997), and an alteration in the type of products demanded. In both cases, this required a fundamental restructuring of production technology and work methods (Hayter and Barnes, 1997). Heightened competition came from low-cost producers both in the US and Europe. As a result, there was a need to lower costs of production including for both labour (BC labour costs in forestry were the highest in North America) and management. Second, the move to a leaner,

lower-cost production was complemented by a move to leaner government at both federal and provincial levels, and prompted by political shifts to various forms of neo-liberalism. Given the importance of the state in regulating space-time biases under Fordism, its withdrawal resulted in a quick return to the bad old days with single industry towns especially affected (Barnes and Hayter, 1994). Finally, the control over the forest resource that Fordist institutions formerly exercised came increasingly undone as a consequence of a series of high-profile conflicts with First Nations Peoples and environmentalists. Without that control, one of the Fordist bases of staples stability was undermined. More generally, as the institutions and relations of Fordism no longer coped, neither did single industry towns.

Perhaps the most devastating changes originated with alterations in production technology and labour force requirements in response to changes in markets and the forces of competition. There was a wholesale move to post-Fordist forms of production characterised by computerised production technology, and a concomitant decline in labour force requirements. Chemainus on Vancouver Island was the first sawmill to adopt the new technology, and to suffer its consequence (Map 1). The mill was shut down in 1982 for two years, and when it was re-opened production facilities and work rules were transformed, as were the number of employees who worked there. The workforce declined from 650 to 165. The town was devastated. An attempt was made to re-vivify the community's economic fortunes by promoting arts and crafts tourism centred on a series of large outdoor murals depicting the town's history, but the employment generated was seasonal, temporary, part-time, and paid minimum wage (Barnes and Hayter, 1992). That is, hardly the employment equivalent to the almost 500 unionised positions that were lost. Very similar stories are found elsewhere. At Youbou, the old Fordist plant was closed altogether, while at Powell River and Port Alberni job losses over the last twenty years amounted to about 60% of the workforce (in each case about 3,000 workers). As in Chemainus there were attempts in all three communities to engage in forms of bottom-up entrepreneurialism, but success was limited (Hayter, 2000, ch. 10).

This leads to the second point, and which is around the withdrawal of the state, especially the local state. That process began in BC in 1983 with the so-called "Period of Restraint" initiated by Premier Bill Bennett who ushered in a massive round of government withdrawal, deregulation, privatisation, and market-based solutions (and in marked contrast to his father, W. A. C. Bennett, who as premier between 1957-73 oversaw massive government intervention, regulation, and moves to public ownership). It was precisely in this new environment, one in which the state retreated and withdrew from its former responsibilities to single industry towns, that an entrepreneurial culture arose. But to use Sjoholt's (1987) term, the result has been "unruly," meaning that the geographical consequences are highly variegated in nature, outcome, and social benefit. There is one other issue about the changing nature of the state, and which is that the old implicit coalition with organized labour also collapses. In fact, organized labour within the forest products industry shrinks dramatically, losing its former power to maintain the good life within single industry towns. Not surprisingly, Port Alberni in terms of per capita income now doesn't even rank in the top hundred of cities in its population size category. In fact, the last twenty years has seen Port Alberni bloodied and battered with unemployment rates twice the provincial average, per capita income now below the provincial average, and a grisly history of personal bankruptcies, house repossessions, and various social pathologies including alcoholism, mental illness and spousal abuse (described in detail in Barnes et al., 2001).

Finally, the third assault on BC's Fordist institutions and attendant single industry, derives from both local and global sources, and affects the very resource base, the forest stock, on which staples production depends. Locally there are the increasingly vigorous claims made by First Nations Peoples. From the late 1970s, First Nations Peoples have been engaged in a series of blockades, protests, demonstrations, and legal battles to force the province to turn over forested land to them. A decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1999, the Delgamuukw decision, and the signing of a land treaty with Nisga'a in 1999, gave further impetus and justification to their claims. The global assault comes from worldwide environmental organizations protesting especially the logging of old growth forests in the province. That protest has come in various forms: from mass civil disobedience at old growth logging sites, such as Clayquot Sound, BC, in 1993 (Braun, 2002, ch. 3), through to pressuring lumber retail chains such as Home Depot, and newspapers and magazine owners, such as the New York Times, to boycott BC wood. Again, such tactics appear to be working. A enormous new provincial park, the Great Bear Rainforest, was established in the centre of the province, and which will permit no logging, and just before the firm was taken over by Weyerhaeuser in 1999 the CEO of MacMillan Blodel, Tom Stevens, committed the corporation to no more clear-cutting (and upheld later by the new owners). The broader consequence of action by both First Nations and environmental protest groups is to destabilize the resource itself, making cyclonic forces ever more present, and which was also the effect, as I've argued here, of moves to post-Fordism and the withdrawal of state support (Hayter, 2003).

In sum, since around 1980 space-time biases that formerly were held in check in the post-war period have been increasingly let loose: because of changes in markets and production technology, because of the withdrawal of the state, because of conflicts over control of staple resources themselves. The result is a complex geographical re-jigging in which the liminality of the provinces single industry communities is only too apparent.

Conclusion

Innis in reflecting on the history of Canada, and its relationship with especially Britain and later the United States, said it moved from colony to nation to colony again. In reflecting on the history of British Columbia since it was established as a province in 1871, it appears to have moved from cyclonics to stability to cyclonics again. The period before the Second World War was characterised by "stormy weather," with single industry towns quickly emerging and equally quickly disappearing as accessible resources were depleted, money ran out, prices tanked, and markets failed. Towns during this period were borderline communities in both senses that I discussed earlier: barely surviving, and sometimes not surviving at all, and at the boundary between shifting geographies and histories. After 1945, the regulatory and disciplinary apparatus of a Fordist regime is imposed on BC's forest economy, and the stormy weather turns calm. It is during this period that one commentator, Richard Lucas (1971), devises a progressive typology of single industry towns arguing that they have reached their final stage, "the mature phase," with its connotation of stability, prosperity, and permanence. But like so many teleological schemes, Lucas's was proven wrong almost as soon as it was enunciated. Storm clouds were brewing during the 1970s, and cyclonic forces were again unleashed in British Columbia from

1980 onwards. Single industry towns were back to borderline communities again, and have stayed that way into the new millennium. It is, as Yogi Berra said, "Déjà vu all over again."

But can anything be done? Yogi Berra also said, "If there is a fork in the road, take it." That is, if there is an opportunity to do something different, to experiment, to engage in alternatives, we should. This was also Innis's line. His staples theory was an attempt to think differently, to escape the groove of European thought. He tried to make Canadians of all stripes conceive of themselves and their economy in a different way in order to leave behind old fixed habits of mind that ran along the rut of conventional thinking about staples. Innis provided a new vocabulary that he also thought provided social hope for those on the margin. He recognised, though, as have others more recently who are engaged in similar projects of social hope (e.g., Rorty, 1999), that using a new vocabulary, and making it work, is difficult, taking a long time to succeed if it ever does. Certainly, time has run out for some people living in BC's borderline communities. But this doesn't mean abandoning Innis's project. Rather, it only becomes ever more urgent and pressing.

Footnotes

1. While the meteorological metaphor is based upon a naturally occurring phenomenon, an atmospheric disturbance, Innis is not claiming that economic cyclones are somehow natural, and asocial. Just as Doreen Massey's (1984) use of a geological metaphor to represent the spatial of division of labour is set in the social relations that mark British industrial capitalism, Innis's metaphor of the cyclone is thoroughly integrated into the social relations of Canadian resource capitalism.

2. The term First Nations Peoples is the standard one used in Canada to refer to aboriginal peoples.

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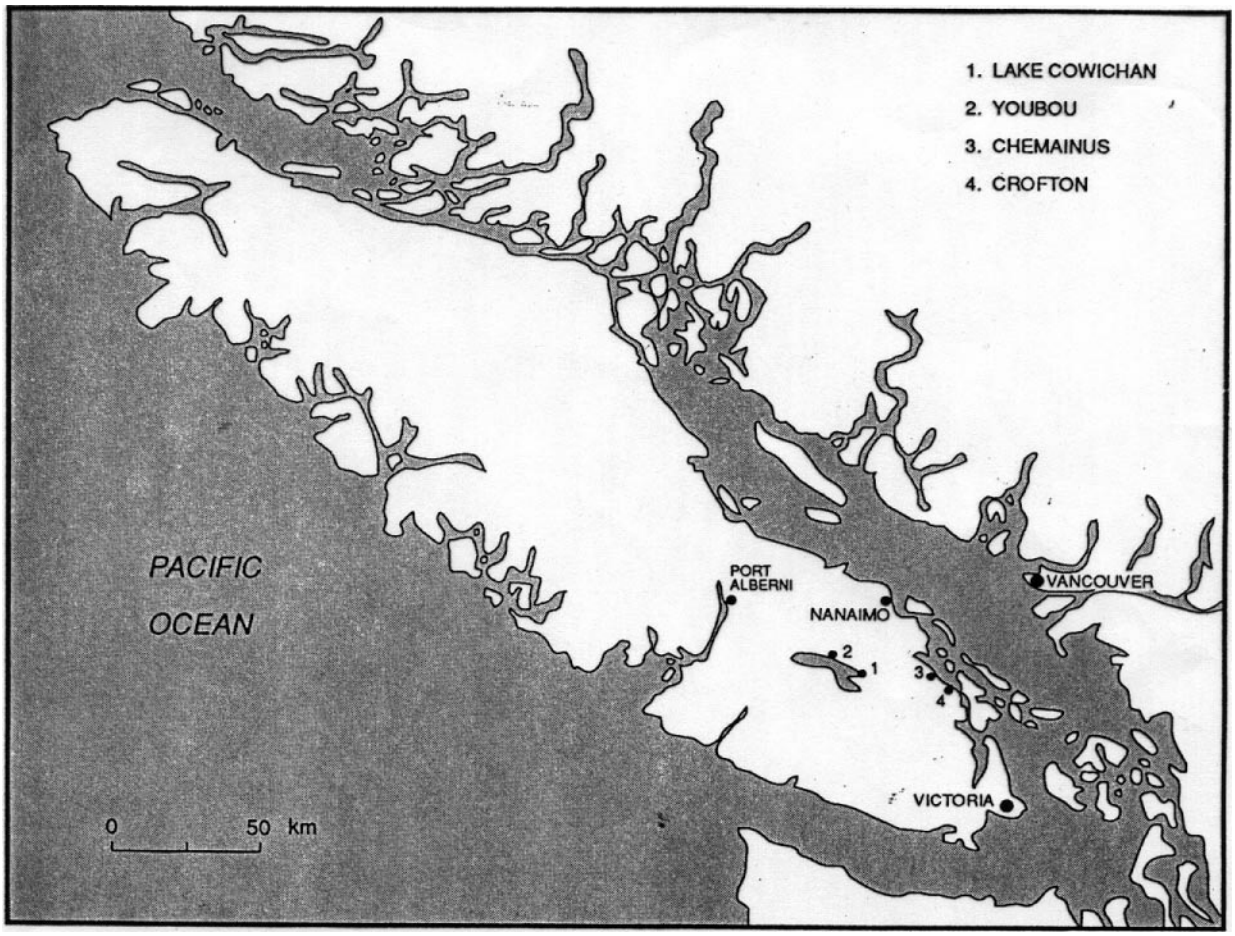

Map 1 The Lower Mainland and Southern Vancouver Island