

Review: Up-Coast: Forests and Industry on British Columbia's North Coast, 1870-2005

By Richard A. Rajala

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Richard A. Rajala. *Up-Coast: Forests and Industry on British Columbia's North Coast, 1870-2005*. Victoria, Canada: Royal BC Museum, 2006. 294 pp. Hardbound. ISBN: 0-7726-5460-3. \$US49.95.

[Richard A. Rajala. *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest: Production, Science, and Regulation*. Vancouver: UBC Press, June 1998. 286 pp. Paperback. ISBN 0-7748-0591-9. \$US 24.95]

In *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*, Richard A. Rajala explored the roots of the deforestation crisis in the Douglas fir regions of British Columbia, Washington and Oregon between 1880 and 1965. In *Up-Coast*, the geographical scope is restricted to British Columbia's central and north coast from the Seymour inlet in the south to the Cassiar District in the North, and the Queen Charlotte Islands. The time scope, however, is prolonged from 1870 to early 2005. My original intent was to review only the most recently published of the books, but due to their complementary character, it seemed worthwhile to combine them for the sake of the review.

The back cover of the new work promises that: "*Up-Coast* presents the first comprehensive history of British Columbia's central-and-north-coast forest industry." This would, of course, be impossible for such a long time span (135 years) within less than 300 pages. Wisely, Rajala concentrates on one aspect, in this case wood procurement for the needs of the forest industry, starting from the first commercial sawmill on the north coast in operation by 1874, and ending with the needs of giant pulp-and-paper firms. For example, water pollution gets only a few lines of attention while the effects of forestry practices on salmon spawning grounds gets a bit more.

Even so, every page of the book is fully packed with information, as Rajala takes us through several boom-and-bust cycles in the forest industry. We learn how the World Wars and, especially, how the need for airplane spruces affected the forest; we take a trip along the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and a boat trip with the International Woodworkers of America's "Loggers' Navy." The book also works as a social history of the district, including both First Nations and other forest- or forestry-dependent local communities.

I, and other readers not familiar with North American logging practices, would certainly need to read more about different logging and transporting methods presented in the book. Fortunately many of these are presented in detail in *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest*. Now I know what a steam-donkey is, or how a cable logging system works. (I still, however, do not know how an A-frame works.)

Up-Coast has a clear lesson for all resource-rich but capital-poor countries or regions. Providing cheap resources for companies to attract investments does not automatically generate welfare for the people and communities in the region, at least not in the long run. One of the reasons is that new labor-saving technology constantly eats up the employment benefits of increased production and logging. *Clearcutting the Pacific Rain Forest* concentrates on technology advances in logging operations, and how they transformed logging into an industrial operation. We also learn how flawed research supporting large-scale clear cutting survived as the results were convenient for short time industrial interests.

Neither of the books are easy reads due to their massive amounts of detailed information, but both are well worth the effort. My only real reason for complaint is the use of endnotes instead of footnotes, which creates a lot of flipping back and forth. Luckily, in the endnotes for *Clearcutting*, each page heading clearly showed to which pages in the main text the notes referred, a nice feature which unfortunately was missing from the newer work.

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