

A true valuation

To the editor:

I feel I must write to you to correct some inaccuracies and misconceptions which have appeared in the review of my book *Timber: A History of the Forest Industry in B.C.* in your May issue.

In the first place I am not a journalist but an industrial accountant, having practised my profession for the last 40 years, the last 20 being in public practice. In the course of my career as an accountant I have been privileged to work for several companies connected with the forest industry. Thus I have been able to acquire a very extensive knowledge of its workings. There is no journalist in British Columbia, unless he has been working for a number of years within the industry, who could have acquired the detailed knowledge and expertise which I have displayed in this book. My articles, which have appeared in the trade magazines, have been written for a highly critical audience, people deeply involved and knowledgeable of the industry; if written by an outside journalist, they would have courted certain disaster. This point your reviewer has failed to realize.

To arrive at a true valuation of the worth of this book I would suggest that your editors conduct a survey of the top management of the industry in B.C. and not rely upon somebody that is not familiar with the subject.

It does not seem to suggest, as your reviewer has written, that the book is of little value, when the Society of Professional Foresters of B.C. have put it on their recommended reading list and all major industrial companies within the province such as B.C. Telephone, Canadian Pacific Rail, Cominco, Mac-Millan Bloedel, Crown Zellerbach, etc. have purchased copies to place within their company libraries. Trade associations such as the Society of B.C. Land

Surveyors, the Employer's Council of B.C. and the Vancouver Board of Trade all have copies for the use of their members.

The book has been well received both by the industry and the public and is filling a gap in the history of this province which heretofore neither the historian nor the industry have provided.

G. W. Taylor

Gary Levy replies:

In the light of Mr. Taylor's letter I have just re-read *Timber: A History of the Forest Industry in British Columbia* and come to the conclusion I was perhaps too generous in referring to parts of it as "informative" and "interesting" in the May 1976 issue of *Quill and Quire*. I keep thinking of a friend of mine who, after publishing several virtually unmarketable political science texts, told me that in his next book he was going to work in the name of every political scientist in every university and every college in North America thereby assuring himself a financial if not a scholarly success. Mr. Taylor appears to have applied a similar principle to his book and even to his letter.

Let me admit at once my technical knowledge of forestry is such that for five years I have been trying without success to remove a stump from my backyard. Nevertheless is it unreasonable for a reviewer to expect an author, on whatever subject, to put forth a theme, to develop it with continuity and draw some conclusions? Mr. Taylor has presented many facts and details but he makes little attempt to synthesize them or to raise some important and obvious questions such as the relationship between timber and politics in B.C. or the effect of the industry on the society, institutions and even psychology of that province. The chapter entitled "The Workers" is disgraceful. Have there been no developments in labour-management relations in the industry since December 10, 1937 — the last date referred to in Mr. Taylor's scant seven page treatment of the topic?

I apologize for calling Mr. Taylor a journalist. I was misguided by the ambiguous biographical information on the cover. In the introduction Mr. Taylor does refer to his many magazine articles and how he "began to think about gathering them into a book." In my view *Timber* lacks continuity and reads like a series of individual pieces tenuously tied together. The fact Mr. Taylor is an accountant not a journalist in no way alters this criticism.