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Electric Choices: Deregulation and the Future of Electric Power,

edited by Andrew N. Kleit

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Electric Choices: Deregulation and the Future of Electric Power

edited by Andrew N. Kleit, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., in cooperation with The Independent Institute, Lanham and Oakland, 2007, x + 242 pages, cloth US\$ 80.00 (ISBN 0-7425-4875-9), paper US\$ 29.95 (ISBN 0-7425-4875-7)

Discourse and Silences: Indigenous Peoples, Risks and Resistance,

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Most Canadians, but especially those living in the hydro-based jurisdictions of Québec, Manitoba and British Columbia and who enjoy some of the lowest average prices for residential customers in the world, tend to take an affordable and reliable electricity supply for granted. Despite this, pressures for regulatory reform (i.e., moving from an electricity sector characterized by integrated monopolies to a market structure made up of competing generation, transmission and distribution companies) and more realistic (i.e., higher) tariffs have, nonetheless, been mounting in Canada for years. Such pressure, in some cases, has resulted in action.

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In Alberta, electricity restructuring began in 1996 as a result of anticipated rapid growth in energy consumption and the need to replace an aging power generation infrastructure. In Ontario, a half-hearted attempt at deregulation was launched in 1998 because of the dismal fiscal and operational performance of Ontario Hydro's nuclear strategy. British Columbia, New Brunswick and Québec now allow wholesale access and limited retail access to electricity, while Saskatchewan and Manitoba allow wholesale access. Interestingly, prominent Québec citizens

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(collectively known as 'lucides' or the clear-eyed), led by former Premier Lucien Bouchard, have recently urged a massive hike in electricity rates in order to address the provincial public finance crisis. Despite the increasing role played by the private sector (including investor-owned utilities and non-utility generators) and municipal utilities, however, it is fair to say that the visible hands of provincial Crown Corporations and (most importantly) elected politicians still largely dominate the Canadian electricity picture and that prices paid by residential and industrial consumers rarely reflect true market conditions.

If one, nonetheless, accepts the premise that the current underlying conditions of many Canadian provincial electricity systems are untenable in the long run, then one is left with what are basically two options. The first is to leave provincial systems as they have essentially been and stop whatever liberalization efforts might have been undertaken in recent years. This, of course, either implies significant rate increases or cross-subsidies from other sectors of the economy (or a combination of both), which will in turn negatively affect the economic competitiveness of these jurisdictions. The second is to learn from others' successes and failures in the restructuring and deregulation of their electricity sectors.

Supporters of the latter approach will find much food for thought in *Electric Choices*, a collection of jargon- and 'Greek letter-' free essays edited by Pennsylvania State University economist Andrew Kleit. As can be expected from a book published by the Independent Institute, a free-market Californian think tank, the various authors do not ask *whether* the electricity sector should be deregulated, but rather *how* it should be. In essence, the basic premise of all chapters—one that is shared by electricity market reformers the world over—is that if a century ago electricity generation was a natural monopoly dominated by economies of scale and scope, then in recent decades technological and entrepreneurial innovations, coupled in many places with massive cost overruns on nuclear power plant construction, have paved the way for the removal of barriers to entry and deregulation. In this context, decentralized market mechanisms should be allowed to play a greater role in the electricity sector at the expense of government agencies and vertically integrated firms.

Readers willing to entertain this premise and to learn about various aspects of electricity deregulation policies will gain much from the essays penned by fifteen respected energy analysts (including Nobel economics laureate Vernon Smith). The topics covered range from more applied deregulation case studies and the roles of retail pricing and distributed energy sources in electricity restructuring to more theoretical chapters on the contribution of experimental and transaction cost economics in making electricity deregulation a reality. In short, the authors argue that not all electricity restructuring experiences were the same (if California was a disaster, Pennsylvania proved that it could work); that deregulation can deliver lower prices, a better use of scarce resources and increased consumer choice; that a working price system will send the right signals to both consumers and investors; and that blackouts will be a thing of the past in freer markets. Perhaps of greater interest for Canadians will be Terry Daniel, Joseph Doucet and André Plourde's discussion of the Alberta case.

The fact that most of the essays are written in plain English doesn't mean, however, that the book is easy reading. These are contributions penned by and for serious students of energy markets. As the editor points out, electricity markets are extremely complicated, and the book's content reflects this reality.

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Discourse and Silences: Indigenous Peoples, Risks and Resistance

edited by Garth Cant, Anake Goodall and Justine Inns, Department of Geography, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 2005, 326 pp., paper NZ\$45.00 (ISBN 0-473-1628-0)

The objective of this collection of papers from a conference in Norway is, in the words of the editors, to explore 'the specific experiences of Indigenous peoples as they seek to recover their rights and re-establish their collective identities'. It is the second collected work of this genre that Garth Cant, an articulate champion of indigenous rights, has edited and the contrast with his earlier 'Indigenous Rights in Commonwealth Countries'

(1993) is almost metaphoric for the shift in focus in the struggle to assert First Nation Rights in various parts of the globe over the past twenty years or so. The earlier work largely centred on negotiation of land-claims, while much in the current volume is more concerned with implementation and assertion of rights once there is dialogue with central governments or agreements are in place. While comparison of the two demonstrates that there has been progress in addressing indigenous issues, a sad commonality is that a complex synergy of semantics, ideology, culture, and power-based interests still bedevil attempts to realize First Nation rights.

With twenty-three chapters divided into six sections, the volume includes discussion of antecedents of First Nation alienation and the struggle to protect their interests from the encroachment of other cultures and other values, case examples of attempts to assert indigenous stewardship and management rights in parks and marine environments, and works on rural development in eastern Asia. Along the way the reader learns about the struggle for Sami rights, conservation and Aborigines in Australia, Maori perspectives on national parks and marine resource management, depictions of Aborigines in the Australian education system, the health of Aboriginal men, Korean farmers and rural development, Fujian culture in Japan and environmental management in Vietnam. The balance of papers focuses on first nations, but there is a tendency towards the eclectic, and some contributions, notably those on eastern Asia, do not sit too comfortably together, although they serve to illustrate the complex determinants of marginalization. It is regrettable that there are no submissions from Canada, especially given the paradox between progress in negotiating comprehensive land claims and the persistence of First Nation resource management disputes.

Understandably, given the conference location, the struggle to assert Sami rights in northern Norway constitutes the single largest contribution of regionally focused works in the volume. The first paper in this work by Henry Minde, (*The Alta case; From the Local to the Global and Back Again*), recounts how the battle over proposals to build the Alta dam in northern Norway became the catalyst for recognition of Sami interests. The story is universal and familiar and is very much

the Scandinavian version of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline saga, as governments anxious to facilitate access to resources in peripheral regions enter into negotiation and move towards recognition of First Nation rights. But once agreements are entered, can broad recognition of rights become an effective basis for assertion of First Nation stewardship and perspectives on resource management? Minde's paper is, thus, the critical link between the old and the new, and the more useful papers in the balance of the work largely deal with the difficulty of moving from dialogue and broad agreements with central governments to the effective assertion of rights.

The section on Parks and Conservation includes papers on Australia, Sweden, and New Zealand, and between them ably demonstrate problems confronting First Nations when governments and other institutions, with their narrow culturally imbued views on nature, conservation and sustainability, seek to incorporate First Nations and their lands in conservation strategies. Michael Adams, (*Beyond Yellowstone? Conservation and Indigenous Rights in Australia and Sweden*), validly observes that indigenous lands are often identified for conservation because of their geographic marginality and the fact they had little other value to the dominant culture. National governments are able to meet conservation goals by identifying the lands of others for this purpose, then dictating limitations on land-use practices of traditional users. This is somewhat ironic given that it was largely the consumption excesses of the numerically dominant society that created the contemporary need for conservation in the first place. A number of works focus on coastal zone management in New Zealand and attempts to re-assert Maori interests, illustrating the wisdom of Maori stewardship over coastal resources and the reluctance of powerful central governments to cede management rights.

The problem of asserting rights in the face of cultural dogma and historic government intransigence emerges as an important theme in this text, as does the global commonality of experiences in dealing with central governments. If progress in addressing First Nation grievances is measured in practical things, such as the retention of traditional lands, movement towards effective self-government, and the emergence of co-management regimes, then there has very

definitely been progress in some parts of the world since the 1993 publication of 'Indigenous Rights in Commonwealth Countries'. But it has been very uneven, and given historically entrenched perspectives and inflexible attitudes towards the management of lands and resources by many national governments, there is clearly a long way to go.

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Tourism: Change, Impacts and Opportunities

by Geoffrey Wall and Alister Mathieson, Pearson & Prentice Hall, New York, 2006, xiii + 412 pp., paper \$46.95 (ISBN 0-130-99400-6)

This new book analyzes the positive and negative social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism, addresses their consequences and assesses strategies to plan and prepare for tourism. The book has achieved a balanced perspective, reflecting in part the authors' considerable experience in the field. Over twenty years ago, they produced their first collaborative work (Mathieson and Wall 1982), a well-known and respected text. For their new book, they have reviewed hundreds of articles and assembled over 60 pages of highly relevant references.

Tourism is considered one of the largest industries and stimulators of economic growth in the world, with over 720 million tourists spending \$480 billion (US) annually in places outside their own countries (WTO 2004). Despite this huge importance, as the book notes, tourism as a field of study has made only limited progress. Disappointingly, the field is still in its infancy, models and frameworks that were created over 25 years ago are still used today, and a plethora of research has not resulted in their replacement. Unfortunately although baseline data are still increasing in breadth, there is not enough reflection to build up the depth of the discipline

and to develop a larger body of theory. The key contribution of this text is to update the discipline's state of knowledge, including more recent concepts of sustainable tourism and eco-tourism, while maintaining fundamentals, such as the organizing framework of the three-fold division of impacts.

This new text contains eight chapters, up two from the earlier 1982 version. The first three set the book up with an introduction, a review of key frameworks, and a discussion of factors producing change in tourism. These are then followed by three chapters, speaking respectively to economic, environmental and social consequences, (largely a reiteration of the authors' 1982 rationale). The final chapters discuss sustainable development and offer some conclusions.

Chapter 5, 'Economic Consequences', provides a balanced perspective of the economic impact of tourism on destinations. While in the past it was largely assumed that all tourism was good for an area, detailed analysis of economic multipliers and cost benefit analyses demonstrate that economic gain may be minimal if tourism infrastructure is developed and managed by foreign interests and profits leave the country. Local communities, too, may have to live with negative environmental and social consequences of economic development. However, if there is more local involvement, then opportunities to improve the economy and the standard of living are created.

'Environmental Consequences', chapter 6, includes the familiar framework on Tourism and Environment by Wall and Wright (1977), whereby potential environmental impacts from tourism are represented in a flow chart. However, the natural environment and the synergistic effects of people/environment are still not completely understood and will change depending on a variety of variables. More work is required to bring about a broader understanding of the consequences of tourism on the environment.

Chapter 7, 'Social Consequences', contains relatively new ideas on the potential impact of tourism on local cultures. One of the biggest drawbacks of trying to develop tourism is that it is so difficult to determine the impact on the local inhabitants and their desire, or lack thereof, for tourism development in their area. Strategies for success are to conduct baseline studies of the

local inhabitants prior to development and to ensure that their needs are met.

The final chapters bring together key ideas and outline the importance of the balanced approach, which needs to be brought to the table to ensure that tourism benefits both tourists and their destinations, while at the same time minimizing negative consequences. Sustainable tourism should be the ultimate goal for all involved in the development and perpetuation of tourism.

This text is unbelievably dense with respect to content, probably due to a desire to limit the length of the book. I would have preferred a few more highlighted examples, case studies, etc., to provide some relief to the reader and to reinforce the excellent content of each chapter. Another suggestion would be to use tables instead of lists in the text. However, this is an admirable book for use in the third or fourth year of a tourism program or as an introductory textbook for a graduate tourism course, not least because of the impressive bibliography. It is an excellent resource, articulating issues in ways that could only come about on the basis of considerable knowledge of the discipline.

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Eau Canada: The Future of Canada's Water

edited by Karen Bakker, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2007, xix + 417 pp., paper \$29.95 (ISBN 13 978-0-7748-1340-2)

Over the past decade, water watchers have observed the beginning of a widespread 'paradigm shift' in water management (Gleick 2000). The twentieth century state-led model of continually augmenting water supplies for human use

is being rendered obsolete by growing appreciation for water's ecological functions and increasing recognition of the unavailability of additional supplies. Rather than making more hydrological adjustments to rivers and aquifers in order to suit human *wants*, the new paradigm emphasizes making social adjustments—such as reducing our demands for water—in order to suit hydrological constraints. Few nations have as far to go to make these (social) adjustments as Canada, where the abiding myth of water abundance continues to inform what is, for the most part, a badly outdated regime of water policy and management.

Eau Canada arrives at a time when there is an urgent need to launch a national discussion of *The Future of Canada's Water*. The book's excellent timing is matched by the quality of its contributions: twenty-five of the country's leading water authorities bring their expertise and ideas to bear on the question of how to carry Canadian water policy into the twenty-first century. Especially rare for a collection of this size, the book presents a sustained argument, one that will be of equal interest to students and teachers as it is of importance to decision makers at all levels of government.

Karen Bakker is a geographer at the University of British Columbia and an authority on post-Fordist commercialization in the water supply sector (Bakker 2004). She has focused *Eau Canada* around the distinction between 'water governance' and 'water management'. 'Governance', she notes in the introduction, 'refers to how we make decisions and who gets to decide; management refers to the models, principles, and information we use to make those [decisions]'. Making progress towards a new water paradigm requires that we attend as much to the social (governance) as to the technical (management). The central idea conveyed—through most of the book's 18 chapters—is that water management in Canada is unthinkable without embedding it within a framework of improved water governance.

The question of what constitutes improvements in water governance provides the book's main ground for discussion and contention. When considering successful examples of local involvement in water management, geographers Rob de Loe and Reid Kreutzwiser advocate devolving responsibilities from central government agencies

to non-governmental agencies, including markets and community groups. 'Distributed governance' they argue, 'represents a challenge to the *status quo* of state-centric governance because success will depend on a true letting go of authority by the state'. Environmental lawyers Owen Saunders and Michael Wenig, on the other hand, criticize the federal government's failure to utilize its constitutional powers to protect aquatic ecosystem health, help settle inter-provincial water issues, and more energetically protect Canada's interests in bilateral water disputes with the United States. Ralph Pentland and Adèle Hurley echo these concerns in their discussion of the prospects of future water exports to our 'apparently thirsty and aggressive' southern neighbour. Given the 'remarkably passive role' played by the federal government in bilateral water issues, they wonder 'whether we have the national resolve to play [a] progressive role in the inevitable regional tug-of-war that will take place in North America over regional water scarcity'. Environmental lawyers Paul Muldoon and Theresa McClenaghan, stress that at a time when we need 'robust water leadership', the federal government is 'floundering'. They argue the 'pressing need for a Canada-wide water governance strategy' and suggest some principles and means for bringing this about.

The questions of developing transferable water rights (water markets) and of privatizing water services are among the most contentious aspects of water governance. Theodore Horbulyk provides the economic rationale for instituting a wide range of market mechanisms to allocate water, suggesting this in itself would constitute an improvement in governance. Economist Steven Renzetti suggests modes of reforming water pricing at municipal and provincial levels so as to promote economic efficiency, cost recovery, environmental protection and social equity. Randy Christensen and Anastasia Lintner stress that in order to function in the best interests of society and the environment, water markets must be *preceded* by improvements in water governance that prioritize the public interest, environmental protection, and citizen participation. Echoing other articles in this collection, they point out 'none of these conditions is currently being met in Canada'. In her chapter on private sector involvement in water supply, Karen Bakker suggests

the debate over public/private distracts from the more important question of 'ensuring long-term sustainability of water supply' through improvements in water utility governance—the answer to which might involve appropriate combinations of public, private, and cooperative approaches as suits particular needs.

Several contributions remind us that improvements in water governance and management require an appreciation for the various meanings that Canadians attach to water. Ardith Walkem notes the fundamental difference in attitudes between 'newcomer society' and indigenous peoples respecting water, and points out that the former has much to learn from the latter. Andrew Biro provides water for thought in his exploration of the complexities and contradictions of 'Canada's hydrological culture'. Cushla Matthews, Robert Gibson and Bruce Mitchell develop several 'imperatives for a new water ethic' that they consider a necessary prerequisite for successful water governance.

Nor does *Eau Canada* ignore the basic questions of how much water Canada has and what we are doing with it. John Sprague establishes the hydrological context for discussion by powerfully dispelling any notion that Canada has a surfeit of water. Dan Shrubsole and Dianne Draper point out the pathetic improvements we have made in water use efficiency over the past few decades (we remain the second-highest-per-capita water users on Earth—just behind the United States). Frédéric Lasserre describes the enormity of the domestic water transfers that have already been constructed in Canada (mainly for hydro-electrical generation). The disparity between the immense importance of groundwater to Canadians and our 'pitiful' knowledge of groundwater resources and use patterns is the subject of a justifiably alarming article by Linda Nowlan, while several contributors highlight the equally alarming failure of governments to provide data on Canada's water resources in general. The potential for much greater efficiency in water use is explored in Oliver Brandes, David Brooks and Michael M'Gonigle's discussion of 'water soft paths': these go beyond demand management in recognizing water as a service rather than an end or product in itself, and thus presenting a wider range of possibilities for satisfying the social need for water.

The quality of prose throughout this book makes it accessible to a wide range of interested readers. Many examples and case studies are presented in boxed text, the chapters are interspersed with funny and appropriate cartoons, appendices include a survey of water governance legislation in Canada and suggestions for further reading—and there is a useful index.

One might quibble about the omission of some things. *Eau Canada*, for example, might have given more attention to Québec, a society of distinct hydrological, political and cultural importance, in any discussion of ‘the future of Canada’s water’. Readers might find some tension between promoting the localization of water discourse and governance while upholding ‘Canada’s Water’ as the overarching framework for discussion. But, as the book makes so abundantly clear, the need for this discussion is imperative given the disparity between the seriousness of our water problems and our legal, political and cultural capacity to respond. In his foreword, Canada’s foremost water scientist, David Schindler, expresses the hope that *Eau Canada* ‘will be the start of a new dialogue between academics, the public, and politicians—a dialogue directed at ensuring that strong and sustainable policies underpin our future treatments of water and other natural resources’. The book itself amply warrants such hope.

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Canada and Arctic North America: An Environmental History

by Graeme Wynn, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, CA, 2007, xxiii +503 pp., cloth \$113.50 (ISBN 1-85109-437-0)

This book, part of the publisher’s series on ‘Nature and Human Societies’, presents an environmental history of northern North America, i.e., Canada and Alaska. The emphasis is on how ‘human actions have shaped and reshaped northern North American Environments’ (p. xii), as well as ‘to understand times and places contextually’, including their origins, changes and resilience. The author’s preface provides a useful, short introduction to conceptual and methodological debates around environmental history, and to the (inevitable) areas of scholarship left out.

The book is organized roughly chronologically, with a few short chapters on ‘Deep Time’ (post-glacial environmental and cultural history to 1,000 years ago), a slightly longer section on ‘Contact and Its Consequences’, followed by several much longer sections on ‘Settlers in a Wooden World’, ‘Nature Subdued’, and ‘Nature Transformed’. A final short section, ‘Reflections on the Remaking of Northern North America’, concludes the book with two chapters reflecting on trade, technology and environmental transformation, and on the future interpreted from knowledge of the past.

There is something in this book for everyone, even something new. From early eastern settlement, the fur trade, environmental transformation, the history of Canada’s major urban areas, to the settling of the prairies, and industrial forestry, mining and fishing, the great transformations of Canada’s natural environment and indigenous cultures are all here. This book’s scope is wide, geographically and substantively, and southern Canada certainly gets the bulk of the attention (Northern Canada and Alaska get about 60 pages or 15% of the main text). Sometimes I couldn’t help wishing for an environmental history of Canada, or of northern North America without southern Canada, or both, separately, in an ideal world!

There are several special sections at the end, of relevance especially for use of the book as a textbook. The timeline is detailed and useful, although I sometimes wondered why some events had full dates, others only the year, and others the year and month. The ‘Important People, Events, and Concepts’ section is eclectic (e.g., Alpine Areas, Canoeing, National Parks, James Bay Project, Harold Innis, SPEC), and many readers might have their own preferences for what

should have been included. But the strengths of this book are considerable. It is the first environmental history of Canada, and as such could be valuable in many courses and contexts. The author treats contentious issues very well, (e.g., the peopling of North America and the Pleistocene extinctions, uranium mining). Wynn does indeed offer a new and much needed perspective on the history of northern North America, as he hopes in the Preface. The book is very well illustrated with historical and contemporary photographs, figures and maps—many of the latter revised from *The Historical Atlas of Canada*. The references and their short introductory essay are excellent. And the book is very well, but not perfectly, edited.

The text of this book provides fertile ground for addressing the complex questions of how Canada has become what it is today: environmentally, economically and culturally. The penultimate chapter offers reflections on the role of trade and technology in fostering environmental

change—and more recently in distancing us from the natural environments we ultimately depend on. In his final chapter Wynn is ultimately optimistic about the future, and, I think, wary of projecting past catastrophes forward, or of underestimating human adaptability. But he is also keenly aware of our need to understand ‘how we got to where we are’ (p. 389) in order to address ‘intricate, contested, local, particular, politico-economic and socio-cultural circumstances...in and against larger regional and global political, ideological, and technological contexts’ (p. 391). The more and better the discussion we can foster here, the greater will be our chances of avoiding further environmental catastrophes. This book should provide a fine start for those informed discussions.

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