

ECOLOGICAL IDEAS IN THE BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CONSERVATION MOVEMENT, 1945–1970

by

ARN MICHAEL KEELING

B.A., Carleton University, 1996

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of History)

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 1998

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Department of History

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date 4 January 1999

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the hitherto neglected conservation movement in British Columbia after the Second World War. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the British Columbia Natural Resources Conference (BCNRC) and Roderick Haig-Brown were the province's most vocal and authoritative proponents of natural resource conservation. The BCNRC (1948-1970) held roughly annual conferences of leading bureaucrats, industry administrators and academics, who promoted scientific research and proposed resource management policies. Haig-Brown (d. 1976) was a well-known fishing writer and vocal conservationist who attended most of the conferences up to 1961 and wrote a popular book on natural resources for the BCNRC. Their activities generated public awareness of and concern for conservation during a period of rapidly expanding resource extraction. Although the common goal of prudent and rational resource use united Haig-Brown and the conference's managerial elite in the immediate postwar period, their conservation philosophies increasingly diverged after 1961. The ideals they articulated were rooted in the changing discourse about nature, which was deeply influenced in this period by the emerging science of ecology. However, ecological concepts led Haig-Brown and the BCNRC to different conclusions about how to deal with increasing resource use and environmental degradation. While the conference used ecology and economics to justify a regime of scientific resource management, Haig-Brown developed a critique of resource development based on humans' ethical responsibility for maintaining the integrity of ecosystems. This rift in conservation thought, and the public debate these conservationists generated, presaged the rise of environmentalism in the late 1960s.

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“What conservation education must build is an ethical underpinning for land economics  
and a universal curiosity to understand the land mechanism.

Conservation may then follow.”

— Aldo Leopold, “The Round River,” 1953

“Only ideas can achieve and only ideas ...  
can produce a radically new approach to conservation.”

— Roderick Haig-Brown, “Some Thoughts on Conservation,” 1965

## Introduction

Following the Second World War, British Columbia experienced a period of explosive growth in resource extraction and development activities. Amidst this growth, however, a movement emerged to conserve and protect the province's vast natural wealth. Although politically weak, conservationists challenged exploitive and wasteful natural-resource extraction practices, promoting instead scientifically managed development. After its inception in 1948, the British Columbia Natural Resources Conference (BCNRC) became the province's most important and dynamic conservation organization until the early 1960s. Well-known fishing author, magistrate and amateur naturalist Roderick Haig-Brown, who participated in the conference's deliberations, was a highly visible public advocate for sportsmen and parks supporters who also arrayed themselves under the banner of conservation.

In exploring this hitherto neglected movement, this study reveals an important shift in conservation thought over this period. Although the common goal of improved resource use united them in the immediate postwar period, the conservation philosophies of Haig-Brown and the conference's managerial elite increasingly diverged in the 1960s. The ideals they articulated were rooted in the changing discourse about nature, which was deeply influenced in this period by the emerging science of ecology. However, ecological concepts led Haig-Brown and the BCNRC to different conclusions about how to deal with increasing resource use and environmental degradation. While the conference used ecology and economics to justify a regime of scientific resource management, Haig-Brown developed a critique of resource development based on humans' ethical responsibility for maintaining the integrity of ecosystems.

Throughout the twentieth century, there has been a close relationship between conservation

and ecological science. But “ecology” not only signals the so-named scientific theory or discipline, but also a recent manifestation of humanity’s age-old attempt to define its relationship to nature. In *Nature’s Economy*, Donald Worster surveys the history of ecology as a cultural, scientific and social concept that evolved under changing historical and intellectual circumstances. This is typical of recent attempts by environmental historians to portray human-environmental interaction as mutually determining and historically and culturally contingent.<sup>1</sup> Ecology’s status both as a scientific theory and as a justification for specific policies has changed over time, as certain conceptual models, or paradigms, were ascendent, then receded.<sup>2</sup> Biologist Michael Barbour further argues that “our vision of reality in nature, our search process, and our very reason for conducting the search in the first place are all personally, culturally and historically driven.”<sup>3</sup>

Developments in ecological science deeply affected the North American conservation movement. By the 1950s, ecology had superceded individualistic, competitive, Darwinian concepts as the dominant theory scientifically describing the natural world. Historian Roderick Nash described ecology’s conceptual impact thus: “In rapid succession a series of breakthroughs revealed

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Other examples of this approach include Worster’s *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), a collection of essays; Elizabeth Ann Bird’s “The Social Construction of Nature: Theoretical Approaches to the History of Environmental Problems” in *Environmental Review* 7:4 (Winter 1987), 255-264; Carolyn Merchant’s “The Theoretical Structure of Ecological Revolutions” in *Environmental Review* 7:4 (Winter 1987), 265-274; William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> The shifting scientific terrain of ecology has an impact not only on scientists and environmentalists, but on historians as well. The problem of nature and ecology as categories of historical analysis forms the core of a scholarly exchange: David Demmeritt, “Ecology, objectivity and critique in writings on nature and human societies,” in *Journal of Historical Geography* 20:1 (1994), 22-37; response by William Cronon, “Comment: Cutting loose or running aground?” *Ibid.*, 38-43.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Barbour, “Ecological Fragmentation in the Fifties” in Cronon, ed., 255. In keeping with Barbour’s contention, I note that my own interest in this topic arises from both personal and academic interests. I grew up in a middle-class professional family in Prince George, the geographic centre of B.C.’s resource hinterland and an area almost entirely dependent on the forest industry. My sympathy for environmental issues is thus tempered by my awareness of Northern communities’ and families’ dependence on resources. Understanding the politics of conservation past and present is of vital importance for the continued viability of these communities.

the way in which land and the life that shared it constituted a complex organism functioning through the interaction of its components.”<sup>4</sup> This vision modified the scientific management approach to nature of Progressive conservationists at the beginning of the century. Progressive conservation emphasized the controlled use and development of individual resources rather than the management of a balanced ecosystem. The failure of Progressive conservation to prevent the Dust Bowl of the 1930s and the rapid destruction of other resources—including forests in B.C.—contributed to the ready acceptance of ecological concepts by later conservationists.<sup>5</sup>

Yet divergent interpretations of ecological ideas sowed the seeds for dissent among conservationists. According to Worster, by mid-century ecological science had grown out of its early “conceptual” stage that described natural interrelationships in interpretive terms such as “webs” or “communities.” Scientists began to apply quantitative, economic measurements to their theories of energy flows and biotic communities. Economics not only allowed scientists to quantify relationships, but provided a new conceptual apparatus to describe natural interaction.<sup>6</sup> This model, solidly established by 1950, supported claims for the expert, bureaucratic management and manipulation of ecosystems, just as experts managed economies. Thus, ecology continued and perhaps deepened humans’ utilitarian claims on the earth’s resources.

However, ecological concepts such as interrelations and holism also resonated among Romantic or Arcadian conservationists. These conservationists interpreted ecology as an affirmation

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<sup>4</sup> Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 195.

<sup>5</sup> Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 232; R. Peter Gillis and Thomas R. Roach, *Lost Initiatives: Canada's Forest Industries, Forest Policy and Forest Conservation* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 158.

<sup>6</sup> Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 293-315.

of humanity's place within nature, rather than above it, as in the Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>7</sup> Alienation, a classic feature of Romanticism, was expressed as the spiritual and physical disconnection of society from nature resulting from industrial capitalism; redemption lay in re-establishing a primeval ecological balance. Romantics gleaned scientific arguments from ecology for the preservation of large, undisturbed wilderness areas to protect the fragile ecosystem and to provide space for humans' spirit-regenerating activities. This conclusion put preservationists increasingly at odds with utilitarian conservationists, who assumed they could manage and control ecosystem change. By the 1960s, this split became apparent among leading B.C. conservationists including Haig-Brown and the BCNRC.

This study's emphasis on the role of ecological ideas builds on a strong tradition in conservation and environmental history. Conservation has historically represented more than pragmatic public policy: from the time of writer and naturalist Henry David Thoreau to the present, it has drawn from a wide range of scientific, philosophical and ethical arguments about humans' relationship to nature. As Nash has argued, "conservation history may be studied as something more than politics or economics or the record of resource management. Inextricably involved are ideas about national identity and purpose as well as society's aesthetic, religious, and ethical convictions."<sup>8</sup> Behind debates over forestry, dam-building or wildlife management lurk assumptions about the value of nature to society and how that value ought to be measured.

The political and philosophical battle between utilitarian and Romantic attitudes towards

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<sup>7</sup> Nash, *Wilderness*, 194-199.

<sup>8</sup> Nash dealt explicitly with methodological issues in conservation history in *The American Environment: Readings in the History of Conservation* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1968).

nature formed the template of early American conservation history.<sup>9</sup> Scholars identified the movement's main protagonists and contrasted them as representatives of related but essentially rival ideologies. Members of cultural, scientific and political elites—including Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot in the United States—took roles in articulating and disseminating these conceptions of nature. American conservation history has sought to expose the value assumptions underlying the public policy debates and initiatives these men undertook.

Canada witnessed analogous conservation movements in the first half of this century, which historians have treated in a similar manner. Canadian historians Janet Foster and Michel Girard each draw on American examples in exploring federal turn-of-the-century conservation initiatives.<sup>10</sup> Girard's study reaches further, however, as he attempts to link early ideas about "*écologisme*" with later environmental thought in Canada. Stephen Bocking's inclusion of an Ontario case study in his study of mid-century ecologists in the United States, Great Britain and Canada provides some insight into the relationship between science and the politics of conservation.<sup>11</sup> Overall, however, accounts of single-resource conservation and heavy American historical influence characterize Canadian conservation historiography.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Examples of this approach are Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959); Nash, *The American Environment*, *op. cit.*; Stephen Fox, *John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1981); and Nash, *Wilderness*, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Janet Foster's *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) highlights the role of enlightened Ottawa bureaucrats; Michel F. Girard's *L'écologisme retrouvé: Essor et déclin de la Commission de la conservation du Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994) is a history of the Canadian Conservation Commission (1909-1921).

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Bocking, *Ecologists and Environmental Politics: A History of Contemporary Ecology* (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1997). Bocking uses a sociology of science approach, looking at the development of institutions and disciplinary apparatus among ecologists and other scientists in different national contexts.

<sup>12</sup> Typical of Canadian historians' derivative approach is H.V. Nelles' *The Politics of Development: Forests, Mines and Hydro-electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), which drew heavily from Hays' *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, *op. cit.*

The taxonomical and biographical approaches of conservation history have recently given way to the discursive tack of environmental history. In a sense, it is the ideas themselves, rather than their expositors, that are operative in this new social history.<sup>13</sup> Without completely abandoning the study of rival political factions, environmental historians are more likely to examine ecological ideas as part of a contingent, shifting terrain of "discourse" about the natural world. As seen in the foregoing discussion of ecology, historians such as Donald Worster, William Cronon and Carolyn Merchant, among others, have investigated the discourses underlying human interactions with the environment. Their examples provide the methodological foundation for this analysis of B.C.'s conservation movement and the role of ecological ideas in shaping conservation debates.

For their part, most B.C. historians have largely overlooked the mid-century conservation movement, focussing on the provincial government's overwhelmingly pro-development policies.<sup>14</sup> Yet the province's conservation history has not gone entirely unnoticed. Some master's theses address the early conservation and parks movements, drawing on many of the same American influences as national historians.<sup>15</sup> In his recent book, *Talk and Log*, and a 1987 article, political

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<sup>13</sup> Debate rages over the utility, verifiability and knowledge claims of this type of history. One very useful encapsulation of the methodological shift from empirical to discursive analysis, particularly informative for this study, is the introduction to Anson Rabinbach's *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (USA: Basic Books, 1990). Rabinbach studies the mutually influential relationship between science and society. He sees "competing systems of knowledge as a central feature of society"—but not of "reality" (14). He links reality to discourse by bracketing, or taking at face value, science's (disputable) knowledge claims in order to examine their real-world social and political content and impact. "I have not reduced these claims to mere ideological ruses through which a hegemonic class subtly achieves its ends" (15).

<sup>14</sup> This is true of Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province, 1934-1972* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973); David J. Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983); Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); and Hugh J.M. Johnson, ed., *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Graduate theses documenting non-governmental conservation activity include: Dianne Draper, "Eco-activism: Issues and Strategies of Environmental Groups in B.C." (M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1972); Eric Michael Leonard, "Parks and Resource Policy: The Role of British Columbia's Provincial Parks, 1911-1945" (MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1974); J.G. Terpenning, "The B.C. Wildlife Federation and Government: A Comparative Study of Pressure Group and Government Interaction for Two Periods, 1947 to 1957, and 1958 to 1975" (M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1982); Yasmeen Qureshi, "Environmental Issues in B.C.: An Historical-Geographical Perspective" (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1991).

scientist Jeremy Wilson explores the role of ideas in driving conservation policies and debates in B.C. Wilson analyses the shifting discourse in forest conservation as theories of land management changed over the years.<sup>16</sup> However, he characterizes the 1950s and 1960s as a period of “barren debate” in between two periods of intense policy debate, and concludes that the postwar economic boom was an “era of complacency” in which a “monopoly (of expertise) was unassailable” by potential critics of the resource-extraction regime.<sup>17</sup>

In contradiction, this study contends that the conservation movement was alive and well in mid-century B.C. and provided a dramatic prologue to the rise of environmentalism. Haig-Brown and the BCNRC publicly disseminated ecological concepts and contributed significantly to debates on pollution, resource use and environmental quality. After considering the conservation philosophies advanced in the BCNRC forum and by Haig-Brown, the discussion traces the sharp divergence of these conservationists’ ideas. By focussing away from specific public policy decisions and towards the shifting discourse of nature, this study reveals their roles in fostering public concern about the environment in B.C.

### **The BC Natural Resources Conference and Technocratic Conservation**

Though virtually ignored by historians, the British Columbia Natural Resources Conference was the province’s leading source of conservation information and activity in the first postwar decades.<sup>18</sup> The first of many similar bodies established during this period in Canada, the BCNRC

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<sup>16</sup> Jeremy Wilson, *Talk and Log: Wilderness Politics in British Columbia, 1965-1996* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 13-16.

<sup>17</sup> Jeremy Wilson, “Forest Conservation in British Columbia, 1935-1985: Reflections on a Barren Political Debate” in *BC Studies* 76 (Winter 1987-88), 3-32. While *Talk and Log* expands greatly on this article, the conservation activities of the immediate postwar period are still treated lightly, and Haig-Brown and the BCNRC merit only brief references.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to Wilson’s references, Terpenning mentions the work of the BCRNC in relation to his study of the B.C. Wildlife Federation’s conservation activity in “The B.C. Wildlife Federation and Government,” *op. cit.*

functioned from 1948 to 1970, promoting conservation through its activities and publications.<sup>19</sup> The conference brought together deputy ministers, cabinet officials, Crown corporation administrators, senior resource-industry administrators and university faculty from various disciplines to discuss the future of the province's resources. Up to three hundred registered delegates, including some from outside the province, attended the (roughly) annual conferences, which stretched to three days in length.<sup>20</sup> Also among the delegates were conservation groups such as the B.C. Natural Resources Conservation League and sportsmen's organizations, as well as educators, labour representatives, journalists and members of the public. After an outline of its genesis, goals and influence, key elements of the conference's technocratic conservation ideas will be explored.

The conference was the brainchild of David B. Turner, a junior officer in the Land Utilization Research and Survey Office of the Ministry of Lands and Forests. In January 1948, Turner recommended to his deputy minister, George P. Melrose, "that a Resources Conference be held annually for the purpose of long-range consideration of research and survey investigations."<sup>21</sup> Turner backed his idea with an account of how "the modern conception of 'land'" had eclipsed pioneer patterns of unplanned, exploitive land use. This ecologically based concept encompassed "holistic"

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<sup>19</sup> The nineteen volumes of annual and biennial conference proceedings form the bulk of the research on the conference, and are readily available in university libraries. The first two volumes were published by the Department of Lands and Forests, but the remaining transactions were published by the BCNRC. I will refer to these proceedings as: BCRNC, *Transactions*, year, page number. Other conference publications will be cited by name. The conference had no permanent secretariat and its membership changed from year to year, making other archival material difficult to recover.

<sup>20</sup> As the first such gathering in Canada, the conference attracted attention from outside the province, especially among civil servants. Guest delegates and speakers included such prominent bureaucrats as Hugh Keenleyside, who attended as the federal Deputy Minister of Resources and Development in 1950 and as chairman of the British Columbia Power Commission in 1959; Dr. C.J. Mackenzie, president of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, in 1953; Arthur Laing, former Member of Parliament and conservation promoter; and Gordon Robinson, federal Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, in 1959. The conference was credited with inspiring similar undertakings in other jurisdictions, including the 1954 national resources conference.

<sup>21</sup> Copy of letter from D.B. Turner to George P. Melrose, 6 January 1948. University of British Columbia, Special Collections Division, Roderick Haig-Brown Papers, box 4, file 2. Hereafter, the Haig-Brown papers will be cited as RHB Papers, box and file number.

statistical and scientific investigation and implied a systematic consideration of utility.<sup>22</sup> The term “conservation” was not expressly used in connection with the conference’s genesis. Rather, planning, research and co-ordination formed the core goals.

Government officials at all levels immediately embraced the idea. In February 1948, about one hundred delegates, representing a “sampling of agencies,” but mostly senior provincial civil servants, gathered in Victoria for a one-day meeting under the aegis of the Department of Lands and Forests. Premier Byron Johnson opened the conference, proclaiming, “The stronger we can link ourselves together, the greater the assurance that we can reach ever-greater peaks of productivity through wise conservation of the products of the soil and the sea.”<sup>23</sup> While early meetings enjoyed government support, patronage and financing, the BCNRC quickly moved to become a semi-independent body. By 1950, the BCNRC published its proceedings under its own imprint and independently hosted its conventions. However, the conference lacked a constitution and bylaws for its first thirteen years of existence<sup>24</sup> and continued to depend on government financial and organizational support, underlining its semi-independent status.<sup>25</sup>

The years from 1948 to 1961 were the conference’s most productive and influential. Yet despite the widespread interest generated by the BCNRC, it is difficult to evaluate its direct impact on government or industry. The conference first proposed the creation of a Pollution Control Board

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Department of Lands and Forests, *Transactions of the First Resources Conference* (Victoria: Dept. of Lands and Forests, 1948), no page number.

<sup>24</sup> An attempt to institute a constitution and bylaws based on those of the Western Forestry and Conservation Association failed in 1949. Department of Lands and Forests, *Transactions of the Second Resources Conference* (Victoria: Dept. of Lands and Forests, 1949), 308-311.

<sup>25</sup> Turner remained the conference secretary and guiding hand until his retirement in 1964, directing its affairs from later offices as Director of Conservation in the Ministry of Lands, Forests and Water Resources and after 1957 as Deputy Minister of Conservation in the new Ministry of Recreation and Conservation.

and a Ministry of Recreation, measures the government enacted in the 1950s.<sup>26</sup> The large numbers of civil servants and industry administrators who attended the gatherings probably both contributed to and absorbed the lessons and ideas of the conference. However, many delegates remained frustrated with government inaction on the repeated recommendation to create a Natural Resources Advisory Board.<sup>27</sup> The government seemed content to exploit the data and research of the conference without embracing its commitment to conservation at a political level.<sup>28</sup>

The conference's major influence stemmed from its educational and promotional work. To this end, conference organizers opened the annual meetings to the public and encouraged news coverage of the event.<sup>29</sup> The conference distributed its proceedings not only to delegates, but also free of charge to schools, universities, newspapers and governments, and sold them for a small charge to private agencies.<sup>30</sup> It created and sold a popular, full-colour B.C. resources wall map. It also published an *Inventory of the Natural Resources of British Columbia* and accompanying resource atlas in 1956 as a "standard reference" for natural resource information. The conference's crowning publication came in 1961, when it released *The Living Land: An account of the natural resources of British Columbia*, an attractive "popular book" written by Roderick Haig-Brown.

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<sup>26</sup> Turner outlined these BCNRC accomplishments in D.B. Turner to Roderick Haig-Brown, 6 March 1964. RHB Papers, box 4, file 2.

<sup>27</sup> A resolution recommending such a board was defeated in 1950, but many delegates continued to advocate "inter-agency co-operation" in resource administration. BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1950, 296.

<sup>28</sup> R.E. Sommers, Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources affirmed the BCNRC's *de facto* advisory role in 1953. BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1953, 232. Its role is also underlined by the fact that it quickly folded after the establishment of a cabinet Land Use Committee by the Social Credit government in 1969.

<sup>29</sup> Each conference attracted coverage from each of Vancouver and Victoria's daily newspapers, as well as CBC radio reporters. Stories covered the co-optation of officers, the passing of resolutions, speeches by well-known "experts" and any controversy aroused by the panel discussions.

<sup>30</sup> The popularity of the proceedings was such that many editions sold out.

Despite these efforts, the BCNRC's direct public influence is also difficult to gauge. The conference claimed success in generating public awareness of conservation and the importance of resources to the B.C. economy. In *The Living Land*, Haig-Brown partly credited the conference with influencing public opinion in favour of conservation in B.C.<sup>31</sup> In the late 1960s, with the meteoric rise of environmental awareness, the conference received praise for its long-standing promotion of conservation. Perhaps ruefully, Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources Ray Williston told the 1968 conference that the BCNRC had created "a public more aware than any you will find in any similar jurisdiction" on resource issues.<sup>32</sup> But while the conference received consistent news coverage, journalists tended to focus on "boosterish" speakers or controversial issues. Conference proceedings, with their highly technical content, may have had little appeal for the general public and limited application in public schools. The *Vancouver Province* reported a challenge by labour delegates to the 1963 conference that the "egghead" papers were too technical for average people to understand.<sup>33</sup> Yet whatever its limitations, the conference remained, until the mid-1960s, the foremost non-governmental body systematically addressing resource conservation issues in B.C.

The BCNRC's educational activities grew out of its strong public interest mandate, which it derived from the public ownership of natural resources. Conference delegates adopted a critical stance towards the history of pioneer rapaciousness, which, in their minds, justified efforts to correct the behaviour of British Columbians. B.C. was called "lucky" to have discovered conservation

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<sup>31</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, *The Living Land: An account of the natural resources of British Columbia* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1961), 19.

<sup>32</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1968, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Pat Carney, "Parley Ponders Egghead Label," *Vancouver Daily Province*, 8 September 1963, 16.

before it faced the devastation of other jurisdictions, such as the United States.<sup>34</sup> This public interest imperative injected a moral and political dimension into technocratic conservation ideas. E.T. Kenney, Minister of Lands and Forests, articulated this mission in 1949, telling BCNRC delegates that the guiding ethical standard of conservation ought to be, "Has the public interest in all its resources been protected?"<sup>35</sup> In its proposed "Policy for Natural Resources," the conference repeated the same precept as its "criterion for use."<sup>36</sup> Delegates used this standard to justify a variety of proposed policies, from the early and expedient use of resources, to their careful husbanding, to the preservation of some areas from development. Conservation, more than simply resource allocation, was described as progressive social policy: "Our job is to utilize, conserve and improve our heritage and hand it down to posterity unimpaired by our stewardship."<sup>37</sup>

However, pressure to remain "non-partisan" and protect its scientific objectivity limited the conference's public-interest advocacy. This is best exemplified by debates at early conferences over the drafting and adoption of resolutions by a general assembly of delegates. By 1951, the resolutions had taken on a partisan flavour, promoting specific resource-use issues or calling for government action in natural resources policy. Debates over these resolutions were occasionally acrimonious; even such seemingly non-controversial resolutions as the call for a provincial Natural Resources Act sparked controversy over the conference's identity. Resolution proponents such as H.L. Purdy of

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<sup>34</sup> This story formed a kind of founding myth for the conference (see notes 21 and 22). It was repeated on many occasions, for example BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1952, 318, and BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1953, 250-1. P.A. Larkin told the 1959 gathering, "I think we can consider that it was a matter of great good fortune that our development was relatively late in relation to the growth and realization of the need for conservation." BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1959, 90. This sentiment is reminiscent of the moralizing of American Progressives documented by Samuel Hays in *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Department of Lands and Forests, *Transactions of the Second Resources Conference*, 1949, 3.

<sup>36</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1953, 231.

<sup>37</sup> Conference summariser, journalist E.S. Woodward, in BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1952, 321.

the B.C. Electric Company argued that the conference's authority to make recommendations stemmed from its objective of promoting high-level co-operation in resource administration.<sup>38</sup> Opponents expressed concern that the conference's civil servant members risked being compromised if the BCNRC became a pro-conservation pressure group. "You are ... bringing this conference to meddle in matters of Government policy. I think this is a very impudent resolution," argued S.R. Weston, chairman of the B.C. Power Commission.<sup>39</sup> The *Vancouver Province* also chided the conference for its pretensions to policy influence, editorializing that "its main usefulness lies in its function as a clearing-house for ideas and new developments in conservation and resource management."<sup>40</sup>

The resolution-making controversy came to a head with a proposed "Policy for Natural Resources" in 1954. This far-sighted document outlined goals, standards and principles for all resource-extraction activities in B.C. During the debate, former pro-advocacy delegates such as Purdy and D.F. Kidd backtracked, reaffirming the conference's educational role and discounting its policy influence. A consensus emerged that policy recommendations were outside the conference's mandate and were likely to be ignored as presumptuous. The proposed policy was shelved, and the conference's identity as a "clearing-house" of conservation information became firmly established.

This decision limited the conference's goals and accomplishments to the exchange of scientific research and the development and promotion of conservation ideals. Nonetheless, the precise definition of "conservation" was hotly contested. Different definitions appeared in technical

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 336-340.

<sup>39</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1952, 328.

<sup>40</sup> "Should it be an idea forum or policy body?" *Vancouver Daily Province*, 3 March 1953, 6.

presentations, panel discussions and debates about the conference's purpose, but most reflected a utilitarian foundation. As Donald Worster suggests, traditional utilitarian views of nature adapted well to the ecological science of the mid-twentieth century. The "New Ecology," while continuing to stress the balance and interrelations of nature, adopted an economic model of energy flows and measurable input and output.<sup>41</sup> Worster notes that ecological vocabulary reflected this economic paradigm, describing nature's "productivity," "efficiency," "yield" and "crops"—all words very much in evidence in BCNRC presentations. This model appealed to the post-Second World War generation of scientists and planners who, armed with quantifiable descriptions of natural relations, sought to harness and improve upon nature's productivity for human benefit.<sup>42</sup> In Canada, historian Stephen Bocking points out, ecological research was strongly associated with the priorities of natural resource management.<sup>43</sup>

The BCNRC's interpretation of ecological science reflected this technocratic ambition. Conference presenters used the term "ecology" sparingly, even as they promoted ecological concepts and theories; this is probably because, as with the term "conservation," they feared it could be misinterpreted to imply preservation rather than development.<sup>44</sup> Yet by the 1960s, a brand of economic ecology had become widely accepted by conference delegates as the universal model for measuring the relative utility, values and benefits of resource development. For most delegates, this

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<sup>41</sup> Worster, *Nature's Economy*, 292-315.

<sup>42</sup> "In theoretical models, ecologists have transformed nature into a reflection of the modern, corporate, industrial system." *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>43</sup> Bocking, 157.

<sup>44</sup> The fear of misinterpretation pervaded all conservation discussions at the conference, and was specifically cited as a problem during the "definition" debate of 1959. See BCNRC *Transactions*, 1959, 166. This may also reflect the relatively late development of the discipline in Canada, where ecologists were few in number and lacked an independent disciplinary identity. Bocking, 155.

was the very heart of the conservation project.

Conference delegates almost uniformly viewed nature through the lens of utilitarianism. Use by humans conferred value upon idle trees, fish, minerals and other “raw materials.” As one delegate explained, “We must put them to the best use, making sure that they become and remain ‘resources’ and not just material lying upon the ground.”<sup>45</sup> This principle extended to the “foundational” resources, soil and water, which became resources themselves once they were pressed into productive service or their incidental products, such as trees or fish, were harvested. Using economic phraseology, B.C. Electric Company’s John Davis told the 1958 conference, “If it is not needed for any predictable purpose, it should be left out of our calculations altogether.”<sup>46</sup> Based on this view of nature, conservation was for many defined as the achievement of maximum efficiency in utilization. In his Foreword to the third *Transactions*, Turner noted the BCNRC was “concerned with conservation, from the point of view of full utilization, of all the natural resources of British Columbia.”<sup>47</sup> This principle also formed the basis of the conference’s definition of conservation for its 1959 proposed constitution.<sup>48</sup> Waste was a central concern, whether in the form of unused fibre from discarded logs, unrecovered ore in mine tailings, soil erosion or unregulated predation of game animals.

If utilization was the core goal of conservation, preservation was anathema. An unused

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<sup>45</sup> Conference summariser A.D. Scott, U.B.C. professor of economics and political science in BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1961, 322.

<sup>46</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1958, 192.

<sup>47</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1950, no page number.

<sup>48</sup> The definition that eventually stuck was “the wise use and development of our natural resources in the best public interest.” As was the case with the first constitution, it was not formally adopted as the conference decided not to incorporate. BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1959, 167; BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1961, 208.

resource is like “money in a sock: it draws no interest, does no one any good,” Hugh Keenleyside told the conference in 1959.<sup>49</sup> Mining delegates led the hawkish criticism of preservation, motivated by their position that conservation of a non-renewable resource was a contradiction. “Locking up” resources in parks or forest reserves was seen as profligacy.<sup>50</sup> Most delegates agreed that disuse was abuse; J.R. Meredith, the provincial Department of Education’s assistant director of curriculum, confidently reported “a trend away from placing major emphasis on aesthetic and emotional (learning) outcomes and away from the idea that conservation meant a miserly hoarding of natural resources.”<sup>51</sup> Even pollution was seen as preferable to disuse: “The easiest way of stopping pollution would be to stop using the river,” said University of British Columbia (U.B.C.) planning and design professor Peter Oberlander. “That obviously is impossible. It would be conservation for its own sake.”<sup>52</sup>

The principle of material utility created problems for wildlife and recreational delegates. Faced with the problem of how to quantify “intangible” values such as enjoyment and beauty, outdoor resource representatives strained their scientific measurement capacities to defend their interests against encroachment by other resources. In 1954, P.A. Larkin, then-chief fisheries biologist for the B.C. Game Commission, tackled the measurement of non-material values. Scientific management, he argued, sought to maximize wildlife’s potential recreational value, thus yielding the

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<sup>49</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1959, 135.

<sup>50</sup> Typical of this sentiment was this comment by George J. Smith of the B.C. Law Society: “Sensible and realistic compromise is required and we must make a choice between living in a province with a buoyant economy or a primeval museum of beautiful lakes and old trees.” BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1955, 191.

<sup>51</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1956, 70.

<sup>52</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1953, 191.

best “harvest.”<sup>53</sup> Many recreational delegates highlighted the potential revenue from recreational lands, though they also promoted the non-material benefits of wilderness as a respite from the deleterious social effects of modern civilization.

Utilitarian conservation problems inspired the search for technical solutions. Through ecological science and technological innovation, the conference’s experts envisioned the controlled manipulation and even improvement of nature’s economy. R.E. Sommers, Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources, praised the 1956 *Inventory* for the “ecologic view” it provided of the province’s interrelated resources, and argued it allowed man to alter, divert or control natural processes when nature seemed inappropriate or inefficient.<sup>54</sup> As John J. Deutsch, a U.B.C. political science and economics professor, told the 1957 conference, technology made B.C.’s resources once more seem inexhaustible.<sup>55</sup> Mining delegate J.S. Kendrick recounted the province’s industrial history as one of increasingly intensive resource use facilitated by technological innovation, proclaiming, “I submit there is no evidence that there is any upper limit to our available resources except that of cost.”<sup>56</sup> To some delegates, since technological advance threatened to make some resources obsolete, “conservation may in some cases weigh on the side of early rather than later development.”<sup>57</sup> From the reclamation of “waste” land to the diversion of unproductive rivers to the manipulation of climate, delegates confronted natural conditions as technical challenges to maximum efficiency and full resource utilization.

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<sup>53</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1954, 164.

<sup>54</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1956, 2-3.

<sup>55</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1957, 252.

<sup>56</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1964, 54.

<sup>57</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1958, 96-7.

To manage this technical resource extraction programme, the conference promoted an expert planning elite. W.A. McGillivray, deputy minister of agriculture, crystallized this approach, defining conservation as the technical application of organization and expertise for the maximum beneficial development of resources in concert with other resources.<sup>58</sup> U.B.C. geography and geology professor H.V. Warren used the second conference summary to urge expert training and technical data collection to facilitate wise-use planning.<sup>59</sup> Experts were to guide and inform public decisions about resources, whether they were fish, trees, or people themselves. The conference's public authority relied on the cachet of expertise, promoted in newspaper headlines such as "B.C. Experts Take Stock of Resources."<sup>60</sup> Editorials praised the "specialists" and "experts" of the conference who were scientifically planning the development of the province's resource wealth.<sup>61</sup>

The co-ordination of agencies for efficiency was key to this expert management. The 1954 draft natural resources policy called for inventories and research to facilitate a "master plan" of scientific conservation.<sup>62</sup> The conference's own research activities brought experts together as a *de facto* planning board. This ambition reflected both the experience of wartime production (which saw great strides in technology and efficiency) and the urge to rationalize the wasteful capitalist system, without eliminating it.<sup>63</sup> Governments and scientists alike displayed faith in the combination of

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<sup>58</sup> Department of Lands and Forests, *Transactions of the First Resources Conference*, 84.

<sup>59</sup> Department of Lands and Forests, *Transactions of the Second Resources Conference*, 290-292.

<sup>60</sup> "B.C. Experts Take Stock of Resources," *News Herald*, 26 February 1953, 3.

<sup>61</sup> See for instance, "Developing B.C.'s Wealth," *Victoria Daily Times*, 26 February 1953, 4; "Natural Resources and Conservation," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 24 February 1951, 3; and Eric Ramsden, "Co-ordination—or Conflict," *Vancouver Daily Province Magazine*, 17 February 1951, 9.

<sup>62</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1953, 229.

<sup>63</sup> See D.B. Turner's exegesis of conservation in BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1953, 224-228.

technology and management to maximize production of natural resources.<sup>64</sup> Though no such central authority was established in B.C. until 1969, conference leaders argued the BCNRC wielded a backroom co-ordinating influence because of the high-profile delegates it attracted and the useful data and research it generated.<sup>65</sup>

The combination of the utility, efficiency and technology doctrines with ecological principles yielded the conference's guiding conservation maxim: multiple use. While the earliest conferences focussed on determining the "optimum" use of a particular resource (for example, damming a river or exploiting its fishery), a vision of co-existing, interrelated resource interests spurred delegates to consider how every resource interest may be accommodated in a given area. The principle of "multiple-use with priorities"<sup>66</sup> promoted the co-ordinated exploitation of resources in response to demand and to technology. This planning principle guided the 1962 conference, where delegates applied it to the issue of river basin development.

Multiple use reflected a utilitarian interpretation of a fundamental ecological tenet: the interrelationship of natural beings and things. Whereas Darwinian theories described the natural world as competitive and wasteful, ecology described nature as a complex, self-regulating economy with producers and consumers distributing the fruits of energy flow through a complex web of relationships. As Haig-Brown wrote in *The Living Land*, conservation ecology sought to promote "that whole set of natural conditions and circumstances that contributes to the successful propagation

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<sup>64</sup> Bocking, 163.

<sup>65</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1954, 182.

<sup>66</sup> Haig-Brown, *The Living Land*, 25. Multiple use first appeared as a conference principle in a speech by Minister of Lands and Forests E.T. Kenney in 1949. See Department of Lands and Forests, *Transactions of the Second Resources Conference*, 3.

and development of a renewable resource.”<sup>67</sup> Describing and quantifying “the interrelationships of the various resources” were conference preoccupations, as precursors to rational economic development planning.

In the 1950s, cost-benefit analysis emerged as the evaluative corollary of the multiple use principle. This economic evaluation method simply measures, in common denominations, the costs and benefits of a proposed course of action; if the benefits outweigh the costs, the project is deemed worthy. Because cost-benefit analysis allowed experts to compare their data on a common scale, decision-making had the appearance of being ideologically value free. BCNRC delegates endorsed cost-benefit analysis as a scientific measurement of a resource’s relative utility. “Raw materials should always be evaluated in terms of their potential usefulness to people,” said Ed MacPhee of the U.B.C. commerce department in 1956.<sup>68</sup> As development increasingly brought resource interests into conflict, this “tolling-up” of costs and benefits was promoted as the solution to determining the “priority” of resources under multiple use. While the calculation of intangible values remained problematic or irrelevant for many delegates, wildlife and recreational advocates increasingly showed confidence in their ability to compete with extractive resource uses for priority under the regime of cost-benefit analysis.<sup>69</sup>

As Worster notes, the managerial discourse of cost-benefit analysis melded neatly with the New Ecology discourse. The BCNRC embodied economic ecology’s “built-in bias toward the management ethos, and even toward a controlled environment serving the best interests of man’s

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<sup>67</sup> Haig-Brown, *Living Land*, 24.

<sup>68</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1956, 8.

<sup>69</sup> For example, Ed Meade of the B.C. Federation of Fish and Game Clubs endorsed cost-benefit analysis in 1961. BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1961, 320.

economy.”<sup>70</sup> Then-current ecological principles of interrelations and holism provided the scientific justification for technocratic conservation, even though the influence was not always acknowledged. While Worster argues that technocracy was not the chief lesson the public took from ecology,<sup>71</sup> it is clear that the industrial and administrative elite in B.C. embraced and promoted this interpretation of ecological science as the foundation of natural-resource conservation.

Of course, even within the BCNRC this technocratic interpretation of ecology was not uniform. Many critics, from pro- and anti-conservation perspectives, spoke at conferences, challenging the dominant themes of efficiency, planning and technology. The repeated demands of many recreational and wildlife delegates for the consideration of non-material values were mainly voices in the wilderness. However, they were not the only delegates to decry the conference’s utilitarian bias. H.H. Stevens, former federal Conservative cabinet minister and Member of Parliament, and founder of the B.C. Natural Resources Conservation League, criticized the conference at a 1953 BCNRC forum on the proposed “Policy for Natural Resources.” “(C)onservation of a natural resource is something more than the efficient and economical administration or development of it,” Stevens argued, saying that conservation must also recognize “human and sentimental values.”<sup>72</sup> Stevens also urged governments selling resource rights to “exact such conditions as will ensure a minimum of destruction and defacement and the protection and conservation of that resource for future generations.”<sup>73</sup> Similarly, longtime conference member P.A.

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<sup>70</sup> Worster, *Nature’s Economy*, 314.

<sup>71</sup> Worster, “The Ecology of Order and Chaos,” in *The Wealth of Nature*, 161.

<sup>72</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1953, 234.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

Larkin, in his 1959 luncheon address, questioned the utilitarian definition of conservation: "In our haste to attain 'full' development, we may find we have failed to conserve what will prove to be essential parts of our way of life...."<sup>74</sup> In a later speech, the biologist Larkin warned against conservationists' increasing emphasis on science and technology, which alienated the public from resource decision-making, and condemned the advent of technocracy, saying, "I prefer to hope that they (technocrats) will be prophets rather than kings."<sup>75</sup>

Over the next few conferences, others echoed Larkin's anxiety, even as the mainstream of the conference solidified economic ecology as the arbiter of resource decisions. The 1964 conference programme typified the increasingly alienated viewpoints. The first day's deliberations on the objectives of resource development elicited critical perspectives on the methods, goals and philosophy of resource extraction. By contrast, the second day was devoted to the development of technology as "the key to the optimum rate of use of our resources and the replacement of our renewable resources." Late in the 1960s, the conference began to reflect some of the heightened public concern about the environment. In 1968, U.B.C. zoology professor C.S. Holling challenged the conference's core values with an explosive paper called "The Ecology of Violence," in which he condemned technological quick-fixes, industry's ignorance of ecology and the paralysis of social institutions in the face of environmental crises.<sup>76</sup> A panel on "Economic Growth and Society" that year also heard criticisms of Judeo-Christian cultural attitudes toward nature and generational resistance to new ideas about nature.

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<sup>74</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1959, 93.

<sup>75</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1963, 70-74.

<sup>76</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1968, 99-117.

Yet even as the conference began to represent some of the new environmental thinking, it failed to incorporate or transmit those ideas effectively. Former delegate Dr. Derek Sewell, upon starting an environmental pressure group at the University of Victoria called ENQUAL, derided the conference as a "back-slapping organization."<sup>77</sup> In this sense, the lament by 1968 conference summariser Howard Paish (from the B.C. Wildlife Federation) that "our institutions are incapable of bridging the gap between social awareness at the grass-roots level and the senior decision-making level at cabinet" may have stood as a criticism of the BCNRC itself.<sup>78</sup> The conference fell out of step with the evolution of environmental concern, and its public influence and authority declined.

### **Roderick Haig-Brown and Ethical Conservation**

Well-known author and conservationist Roderick Haig-Brown was among the conference's harshest critics of technocratic conservation. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Haig-Brown was a prominent member of the resource elite that attended BCNRC gatherings. Both inside and outside the conference, Haig-Brown established himself as an authority on wildlife and recreation, though he lacked formal training in biology or ecology. Throughout the postwar period, he supported and participated in various conservation activities, from government inquiries to public disputes.

By his own admission, Haig-Brown's contribution to conservation in B.C. cannot be measured in battles won and lost: "I have rarely been successful in achieving anything except a reputation, by these activities," he quipped in 1949.<sup>79</sup> Yet his literary endeavours allowed him to

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<sup>77</sup> Minutes of B.C. Resources Discussion Group meeting, 14 November 1966, copies of which were sent to Haig-Brown, who did not attend. RHB Papers, box 79, file 7. In 1967, this group came to call itself ENQUAL, dedicated to "the development of a human environment of optimum quality in British Columbia."

<sup>78</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1968, 145.

<sup>79</sup> Response to Wilson Library Bulletin biographical questionnaire. RHB Papers, box 22, file 4.

promote his conservation philosophy, which shifted away from pragmatic utilitarianism and towards an environmental critique of growth, development and society. Through his research and conservation activities, Haig-Brown became acquainted with the ecological concepts that informed his at times contradictory philosophy of nature. Unlike most BCNRC delegates, he derived from ecology spiritual and moral arguments for living in harmony with the land, rather than justifications for its technocratic subjugation. Thus, the author stands as a transitional figure between the dominance of utilitarian conservation, represented by the BCNRC and in some of his own earlier thinking, and the new "ethical" environmentalism of the late 1960s.

Born in 1908 in England to a family with aristocratic ties, Haig-Brown worked for three years before 1930 as a logger and trapper in Washington State and B.C., where the wilderness stirred his nascent writing ability. In 1934, he homesteaded on the Campbell River near the hamlet of Elkhorn with his wife, Ann Elmore of Seattle. He served as a personnel officer in the Canadian Army in the Second World War, as stipendiary magistrate for the town of Campbell River from 1941 to 1975, and as chancellor of the University of Victoria in the early 1970s. Haig-Brown's main vocation, however, was writing: he wrote twenty-six books (four of which were published posthumously), several series of CBC radio broadcasts and historical dramatizations, contributions to national historical compilations, and regular magazine articles. Haig-Brown's popularity stemmed mostly from his fishing books, published primarily by U.S. and U.K. houses, that made him arguably B.C.'s best-known writer in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>80</sup>

Haig-Brown's status as a fishing authority was equalled by his reputation as an active and

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<sup>80</sup> An example of his international appeal is a *Time* magazine profile of him as "Canada's Best-Known Author and Naturalist," reprinted in the *Victoria Sunday Times Magazine*, 12 July 1952, 4.

vocal conservationist. Haig-Brown served on various sportsmen's councils in the U.S. and Canada, including the Campbell River District Fish and Game Association, Trout Unlimited and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Though he complained they interfered with his writing time, he accepted several speaking engagements annually, delivering speeches on conservation, as well as on legal and literary matters. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Haig-Brown led a bitter (and losing) fight against the government's approval of a river dam at Buttle Lake in Strathcona Park, in what was probably the province's first environmental controversy.<sup>81</sup> Throughout the postwar period, would-be conservationists from around B.C. and elsewhere wrote Haig-Brown for counsel on how to oppose developments in their area or set up conservation organizations.<sup>82</sup>

Historians and biographers have downplayed Haig-Brown's effectiveness as a conservationist because of his failure as an activist. Biographer E. Bennett Metcalfe painted Haig-Brown as being hamstrung by personal diffidence and naivete in his fight to advance conservation.<sup>83</sup> "(I)n the late Fifties and Sixties," Metcalfe argues, "With the fervor (sic) of resource development rising around him like the dance of the dervishes, to the accompaniment of economic controversy and political scandal, he chose to let its centrifugal force spin him back to his vocation as a writer."<sup>84</sup> Metcalfe claims that provincial elites actively co-opted Haig-Brown's vocal conservationism and "might well

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<sup>81</sup> Qureshi, *op. cit.*, amply documents this battle. Her thesis focuses on the history of Strathcona Park as a touchstone of environmental issues in B.C.

<sup>82</sup> Many such letters are found among Haig-Brown's incoming correspondence in the RHB Papers.

<sup>83</sup> E. Bennett Metcalfe, *A Man of Some Importance: The Life of Roderick Langmere Haig-Brown* (Vancouver and Seattle: James W. Wood, 1985), especially chapters 11-13. As the ambivalent title suggests, this biography expresses only qualified admiration for its subject. It treats Haig-Brown's early life, literary aspirations and psychology in great detail, but does not deeply explore his conservation philosophy.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

have regarded him as the perfect ikon (sic) for the troublesome religion of ecology.”<sup>85</sup> This co-optation was symbolized by the award of an honorary doctorate by U.B.C. in 1952, in the midst of the Strathcona Park controversy.

In her master’s thesis entitled “Environmental Issues in British Columbia,” Yasmeen Qureshi also portrays Haig-Brown as politically ineffective, but does not dismiss his conservation as mere belletrism. Rather, she explores Haig-Brown’s philosophy as part of a tradition she calls the English sporting ethic. Haig-Brown inherited this ethic from his father, an amateur outdoors writer and fishing enthusiast, and from the long tradition of sporting culture in England.<sup>86</sup> Sportsmen’s conservation was a mix of pragmatism—the need for adequate fishing and hunting grounds provided the impetus for preservation—and Romanticism emanating from the customs and history of sporting, particularly fishing. Specifically, Haig-Brown identified with and capitalized on the tradition and mystique surrounding fly fishing, exemplified by English writer Izaak Walton’s 1653 book *The Compleat Angler, or The Contemplative Man’s Recreation*.<sup>87</sup> His own early books on fishing, including *Silver* and *The Western Angler*, were more than guide books or nature studies; they explored the moral relationship between man and nature central to the sporting ethic.

Qureshi, analysing Haig-Brown’s early books and his Buttle Lake activism, concludes that the author’s conservation philosophy “emphasized community and co-operation, but did not attack the essentials of the political/economic system, so it was essentially acceptable to the political,

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 182. Mistakenly attributing its commission to the B.C. government, Metcalfe dismissed *The Living Land* as adding only “dated bulk to the Haig-Brown canon” and revealing him as a victim of co-optation. *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>86</sup> Qureshi, 61-76.

<sup>87</sup> Haig-Brown was sometimes referred to by reviewers as a modern-day Izaak Walton—the highest praise a fishing writer can receive.

academic and even industrial elite of B.C.”<sup>88</sup> She contends (citing Metcalfe) that Haig-Brown’s conservatism and gentlemanly values prevented him from supporting the confrontational environmental movement in the late 1960s. Nevertheless, she also argues that through his popular writing and ideas, “he was instrumental in changing people’s attitudes, which is always a first step to changing their behaviour.”<sup>89</sup>

While these authors’ insights are useful, Haig-Brown’s conservation philosophy deserves re-evaluation. Basing their analyses primarily on Haig-Brown’s published works and his unsuccessful activism, they fail to observe the evolution of his philosophy in relation to the dominant ethos of technocratic conservation. Key elements of his philosophy were disseminated in speeches, articles, and letters, as well as publications. The author’s changing relationship with the Natural Resources Conference provides other clues to his complex role in the mid-century conservation movement.

Though Haig-Brown rarely used the word “ecology” in his early work, ecological concepts permeated his writing. He displayed an early awareness of the interrelation of habitat, game and people. “The natural order of things is simply an infinite number of separate existences, all infinitely interwoven, all balancing, controlling or influencing each other to a greater or lesser degree,” he wrote in “Conservation and Balance.”<sup>90</sup> When human incursions upset that balance, he believed that it must be restored, even if that meant killing excess predators. “That seems to be a story of

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<sup>88</sup> Qureshi, 89.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 103. This analysis also underlies Anthony Robertson’s *Above Tide: Reflections on Roderick Haig-Brown* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour, 1984), a collection of essays amounting to a short literary biography. Robertson touches on Haig-Brown’s conservation philosophy in a short section, though he also discusses the author’s spiritual connection to nature. Robertson’s analysis, however, remains confined to Haig-Brown’s literary output, and rarely ventures into speeches or activities.

<sup>90</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “Conservation and Balance,” pen draft, ND (1930s?), RHB Papers, box 56, file 4.

destruction, but really it is a statement of the essence of conservation.”<sup>91</sup> Haig-Brown participated in predator control as a cougar hunter while researching his book *Ki-yu* about Vancouver Island cougars. In the 1950s, he rescinded his support for predator control, as did many biologists and ecologists, following American game manager and ecologist Aldo Leopold. Haig-Brown’s early research on salmon life cycles, published in *Silver, Return to the River* and *The Western Angler*, expanded his knowledge of scientific ecology and disseminated it among his widening readership.

Ecological concepts also resonated in Haig-Brown’s non-scientific observations about nature. In *Pool and Rapid*, his second novel, Haig-Brown traces the mythical creation of a river much like the Campbell near his home, emphasizing the harmonious interrelation of creatures and people before the arrival of industrial development.<sup>92</sup> He further developed this idea in *Measure of the Year*, a book chronicling a year in the life of his young family as an experiment in country life. In the concluding essay, Haig-Brown described the rhythms and patterns of life supported by the river, exulting, “Except for the river we should not be here, living and growing a family on this particular soil....”<sup>93</sup>

In the 1950s, Haig-Brown brought his ecological ideas and conservationist reputation to the BCNRC, with the goal of promoting recreation and wildlife issues. He began attending conferences in 1951, sat on the BCNRC executive in 1952 and 1953, and consulted with wildlife and recreation or pollution panels for most of the conferences in the 1950s (even when he did not attend the

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, *Pool and Rapid* (London: A.&C. Black, 1932). The novel ends in a compromise rationalizing the damming of the river; Haig-Brown’s dissatisfaction with this ending contributed to his keeping it out of print after 1936.

<sup>93</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, *Measure of the Year* (New York: William Morrow, 1950), 259.

gathering). He delivered two conference papers and wrote *The Living Land* under contract to the BCNRC. In addition to developing scientific and bureaucratic contacts, he counted many delegates among his friends and sometime fishing companions. Overall, Haig-Brown appeared to see the organization as a useful way of promoting awareness and information about the province's resources, as well as a potential vehicle for political change. "The idea and pattern of these conferences is a real contribution to more intelligent management of resources," he wrote in 1964.<sup>94</sup>

During this period, Haig-Brown's attitudes towards conservation, science and development often seemed contradictory. He often used the language of utilitarianism to promote his aims, particularly in presentations to the BCNRC and other conservation bodies. In a 1942 conservation tract published in the *Vancouver Province*, Haig-Brown declared, "The conservationist's object is not to conserve for the sake of conserving, but to conserve for use."<sup>95</sup> While promoting outdoor issues, he sometimes abandoned the rhetoric of conservation altogether: "We who are called 'conservationists' are stuck with a bad title. ... The word has a passive, static implication, not an aggressive one," he told the Canadian Tourism Association in 1955. Rather, he argued, "we are resource users—users and developers."<sup>96</sup> In a definition reflecting the influence of both ecology and utilitarianism, Haig-Brown described the "outdoor recreational resource" as "the whole intricate pattern of a country that permits life and natural beauty to grow and increase."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, "Resource Management in Canada," draft article for *Atlantic* magazine, 15 August 1964. RHB Papers, box 54, file 8. Published as "Man Tames the Wilderness" in *Atlantic* magazine 214:5, November 1964, 149-157.

<sup>95</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, "The Last Quarter Century," *Vancouver Province Magazine*, 17 October 1942, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, Notes for speech to Canadian Tourism Association, 1955. RHB Papers, box 59, file 5.

<sup>97</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, "Crying in the Wilderness" draft for CBC Radio talk series *Variations on the Canadian Air*, July 1953, page 3. RHB Papers, box 51, file 1. The transcripts of Haig-Brown radio talks broadcast between 1951 and 1953 were compiled for release as a book, but never published. See also RHB Paper, box 59, files 1-3.

Haig-Brown was equivocal about the need for resource development to promote economic and social growth in B.C. In a parable repeated in several different writings, Haig-Brown traced the history of resource development in B.C. which, though occasionally abusive and destructive, was “necessary and even productive.”<sup>98</sup> As late as 1967, in a chapter he contributed to a national centennial history compilation, Haig-Brown wrote, “Advance will certainly be rapid over the next 30 or 40 years, and if the developed resources can be brought under sound management as new resources are coming into use, the position should be a strong one.”<sup>99</sup> But just as often, Haig-Brown scored B.C.’s boosters and developers for disregarding the limits of resources and the permanent destruction of natural landscapes. The monopoly of material considerations over land-use decisions meant that industrial development nearly always trumped preservation and recreation, which elicited almost petulant rebukes from Haig-Brown. He told CBC radio listeners in 1953 that “(t)his determination to deny all values except commercial ones is a fashionable form of insanity in all new countries.”<sup>100</sup> British Columbians “are obsessed with the idea of industrial development,” at the expense of recreational and wilderness lands, he told the 1955 BCNRC gathering.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately for Haig-Brown, most of those attending the conference shared this pro-development opinion.

Haig-Brown’s attitude towards science was equally contradictory. On the one hand, he admired the work of biologists towards effective game management and hailed scientific efforts to

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<sup>98</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “The Proper Use of Natural Resources,” notes for speech, ND (1950s). RHB Papers, box 136, file 1.

<sup>99</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “The Canadians 1867-1967 Natural Resources,” pen draft, ND. RHB Papers, box 55, file 1. Published with few revisions in J.M.S. Careless, ed., *The Canadians 1867-1967* (Ottawa: Centennial Commission, 1967), 411-448.

<sup>100</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “Something About Parks,” transcript of CBC Radio talk series *Variations on the Canadian Air*, July 1953. RHB Papers, box 59, file 3.

<sup>101</sup> BCNRC, *Transactions*, 1955, 42.

improve outdoor recreation in B.C. His research for *The Western Angler*, his popular fishing guide book, and his salmon and cougar books, exposed him to leading B.C. biologists including P.A. Larkin, W.A. Clemens and Ian McTaggart Cowan, with whom he later conducted BCNRC recreation and wildlife panels. As a recreational land use advocate, he consistently supported habitat protection as the key to maintaining wildlife breeding stocks, and as early as 1954 argued that parks should “preserve inviolable samples of natural country, large enough to be ecological units... .”<sup>102</sup> Haig-Brown’s protracted fight to preserve Strathcona Park from development exemplified his deep concern for the fragility of ecosystems.

At the same time, Haig-Brown remained wary of technocracy and the tendency of science to obscure values it could not quantify. In letters and discussions with the biologists sharing BCNRC panels, he was critical of “the elementary stage in which management now is ... and the limited thinking behind it.”<sup>103</sup> Haig-Brown was horrified when biologists such as Larkin proposed to measure the relative utility of recreational lands by gauging the “satisfaction derived per animal” and to engineer the maximum possible “harvests” of game. Haig-Brown believed a “philosophical and humanitarian” justification for recreation ought to precede such base measurements.<sup>104</sup> In “The Biologist and the Sportsman,” he argued that while biologists contributed useful information about the natural world, their utilitarian wildlife management schemes were little improvement on the sportsman’s ethical codes.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, Draft National Policy on recreational resources, ND (probably for 1954 national resources conference). RHB Papers, box 76, file 2.

<sup>103</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, letter to P.A. Larkin, 9 January 1954. RHB Papers, box 23, file 4.

<sup>104</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, letter to P.A. Larkin, 23 October 1952. RHB Papers, box 119, file 5.

<sup>105</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “The Biologist and the Sportsman,” pen draft, 29 July 1964. RHB Papers, box 52, file 1.

Haig-Brown strongly criticized the technical bent of BCNRC presentations. He was frustrated by delegates' lack of attention to non-material values and the social importance of recreation and wildlife. Haig-Brown supported the conference's educational mandate, but was disappointed when it moved away from making active recommendations to government.<sup>106</sup> Most alienating for Haig-Brown was the conference's increasing reliance on economics as a measurement and evaluative tool for resource decisions. Haig-Brown railed against economic justifications for development, both because they obscured non-material values and because they were based on a crude understanding of nature.<sup>107</sup> At natural resources conferences, Haig-Brown found himself in constant conflict with economics. "Generally, of the conferences, something beyond dollars and cents values has to be recognized if they are to be effective," he pleaded to the conference executive in 1951.<sup>108</sup> In his work on pollution panels, he resisted attempts to define pollution in utilitarian terms, arguing that "it is axiomatic that pollution be prevented" and the costs passed on to industry.<sup>109</sup> In 1964, Haig-Brown questioned the multiple-use principle, arguing that it failed to recognize that wilderness areas, by definition, were inviolable ecological systems.<sup>110</sup>

But despite his deep antipathy for materialism, Haig-Brown occasionally deployed economic justifications to defend recreational values in a language politicians and industrialists could understand. In one speech, he declared, "I avoid the word 'conservation' because it too often implies

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<sup>106</sup> "Minutes," meeting of BCNRC executive, 2 April 1952. RHB Papers, box 119, file 5.

<sup>107</sup> See for instance Roderick Haig-Brown, "Abstract Values," transcript of CBC Radio talk series *Variations on the Canadian Air*, 12 August 1951. RHB Papers, box 56, file 7.

<sup>108</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, proposal for conference theme to BCNRC executive, 1951. RHB Papers, box 119, file 4.

<sup>109</sup> "Pollution Panel. Sixth Resources Conference. Minutes of Meeting of September 19, 1952," page 3. RHB Papers, box 119, file 5.

<sup>110</sup> Haig-Brown, "Resource Management in Canada," 32.

a reactionary policy without regard for economic necessities.”<sup>111</sup> While he rarely repeated such boldly pro-development assertions, Haig-Brown occasionally used economics to back recreation and wildlife land use claims. In a 1963 exchange of letters with *Province* journalist Pat Carney, Haig-Brown noted that while economics could not express the true value of recreation, economic arguments were politically useful: “When and if the right kind of pressure is applied industry invariably can and will find the means of economic development without the grosser forms of destruction, pollution and restriction.”<sup>112</sup>

Haig-Brown’s contradictory attitudes towards technocratic conservation reflected his divided intellectual loyalties. For all his love of nature, Haig-Brown was a pragmatist and the product of an Edwardian society that believed in the goals of progress and prosperity. Still deeper contradictions lay in his attempts to meld utilitarian conservation with his spiritual interpretation of ecology. The following passage from *The Living Land* shows Haig-Brown’s attempt to bridge this conceptual gap:

...conservation is a dynamic, not a static conception. It does not mean simply hanging on to things, like a miser to his gold. It means putting them to use, seeking a valuable return from them and at the same time ensuring future yields of at least equal value. It means having enough faith in the future and the needs of future people; it means accepting moral and practical restraints that limit immediate self-interest; it means finding a measure of wisdom and understanding of natural things that few people have attained; ultimately, though we no longer see it in this way, it is a religious concept—the most universal and fundamental of all such concepts, the worship of fertility to which man has dedicated himself in every civilization since his race began. We may well believe now that an intellectual and scientific approach is more likely to succeed than a mystical one. But without moral concepts and without a sense of responsibility for the future of the human race, the idea of conservation could have little meaning.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Haig-Brown, “The Proper Use of Natural Resources,” no page number.

<sup>112</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, letters to Pat Carney, 27 May 1963 and 10 June 1963. RHB Papers, box 25, file 12.

<sup>113</sup> Haig-Brown, *Living Land*, 21.

Haig-Brown attempted to sustain this tenuous blend of pragmatism and spirituality throughout his career, but in the early 1960s, he began to increasingly emphasize the spiritual aspects of conservation. Spirituality, linked to ecological concepts such as holism and interdependence, influenced his social and moral philosophy of conservation. Much like the English Romantic poets, Haig-Brown found personal fulfilment in contemplation and recreation in the outdoors—a feeling he believed all outdoor enthusiasts shared. He portrayed outdoor recreation as “ways of finding or recovering the sense of identity with natural things,” a fundamental spiritual need in the twentieth century.<sup>114</sup> The “special mysticism” of fishing, hunting, canoeing or any outdoor activity justified the preservation of recreational areas far more effectively than could economics or practical considerations. “Personally, I care very much for this conception of man’s affinity with the earth, perhaps because I have found such keen and lasting pleasures in natural things myself,” he told CBC radio listeners in 1962. “It bores me and irritates me to have to find scientific and statistical justification for them.”<sup>115</sup>

This spiritual dimension makes Haig-Brown resemble less a twentieth-century ecologist than a naturalist in the tradition of the eighteenth-century English cleric, Gilbert White. Indeed, in his later years, he described himself as “that anachronism, the naturalist, reborn and with renewed freedom to observe and speculate.”<sup>116</sup> He took up skin diving in the 1960s to observe his beloved fish in their element, and hunted less frequently. For the aging outdoorsman, nature’s greatest value

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<sup>114</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “The Crisis in Recreation,” notes for address to Seminar on Parks and Nature Reserves in Ontario, 21 September 1960. RHB Papers, box 54, file 5. Haig-Brown often commented on the social and public-morality benefits of outdoor recreation, echoing the sentiments of Aldo Leopold (see Leopold’s “Wildlife in American Culture” in *A Sand County Almanac, with essays on conservation from Round River* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1949, reprint, New York, Oxford University Press, 1966], 211-222.)

<sup>115</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “Speaking Personally,” notes for CBC radio talk, 2 May 1962. RHB Papers, box 54, file 8.

<sup>116</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “My Quarry Eye to Eye” in *Sports Illustrated* 21:16, 19 October 1964, 84-97.

was its potential to lead man to spiritual knowledge of place and self: “(T)he ethics of conservation go to the very heart (of non-material values), because they lead man to a closer and clearer understanding of his world and a deeper realization of his place and part in it.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, while ecological science offered technical solutions to conservation problems, Haig-Brown argued that spiritual needs provided the essential ethical justifications for the protection of nature.

Haig-Brown connected his spiritual values with social and political philosophy. He repeatedly referred to the consideration of abstract values as a sign of “civilization” and “maturity” in a society,<sup>118</sup> and argued that conservation meant responsibility to future generations. For Haig-Brown, people’s spiritual needs gave conservation meaning and authority, and wilderness recreation fulfilled these needs. Government and industry, engaged in their “piecemeal steal,” had proven themselves incapable and unwilling to defend wilderness values or even sustained yield concepts, and could not be trusted.<sup>119</sup> Luckily, Haig-Brown declared, public ownership of resources was a Canadian tradition, and offered a shot at redemption for the people. “I believe there is a Canadian conscience that respects the land and water and resources that depend upon them,” Haig-Brown wrote in 1964.<sup>120</sup> Conservation, he argued, promoted the reawakening of this conscience and the rediscovery of individual spiritual attachment to the land. Only then could humanity achieve a higher stage of civilization characterized by artistic and intellectual achievement.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, “Land and Space Requirements for Recreation and Conservation,” notes for speech to Pacific Northwest Tourist Association, 18 April 1967. RHB Papers, box 55, file 6.

<sup>118</sup> See for instance Haig-Brown, “Abstract Values,” *op. cit.*; “A Land Fit to Live In,” transcript of CBC Radio talk series *Variations on the Canadian Air*, July 1953. RHB Papers, box 59, file 3.

<sup>119</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, letter to R.J. Perrault, MLA, 17 February 1964. RHB Papers, box 25, file 13.

<sup>120</sup> Haig-Brown, “Resource Management in Canada,” 38.

<sup>121</sup> Haig-Brown, *Living Land*, 260.

In the 1960s, Haig-Brown's frustration with public apathy and government intransigence led him to embrace a more radical conservation philosophy based on this spiritualism. As early as 1961, in his conclusion to *The Living Land*, Haig-Brown called for the reawakening of B.C.'s "rebellious and dissatisfied spirit" and the release of "a spring of radical thinking, forceful enough to break through into wholly new channels...."<sup>122</sup> His acid criticism of this spirit's failure to materialize in B.C. created controversy in 1965.<sup>123</sup> But Haig-Brown continued to assert that adequate environmental protection depended upon "a major change of attitude and thinking. ... We need now an informed, considerate and ethical approach in all our citizens towards the land and all its values and creatures ... a new sense of the meaning of the land and the purpose of society in all people."<sup>124</sup> Though he did not explicitly refer to Aldo Leopold, Haig-Brown's calls for the ethical recognition of nature mirrored Leopold's "Land Ethic," articulated in the latter's influential 1949 book *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*.<sup>125</sup>

As his thinking shifted, Haig-Brown began to call for the creation of a "new man" who would extend moral consideration to the natural world. "This calls for a major philosophical shift, a new theory of economics, a whole new standard of habits, actually a new and different type of human being," he wrote in 1970.<sup>126</sup> Although government, industry and the dominant materialist ethos

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<sup>122</sup> Haig-Brown, *Living Land*, 259.

<sup>123</sup> "Why I Hate B.C.—by writer," *The Province*, 22 June 1965, 1; "Writer Detests Everything B.C. Stands For Now," *Victoria Daily Times*, 22 June 1965, 2; Paddy Sherman, "Acrid blast puzzling," *The Province*, 26 June 1965, 5. Despite the apparent outrage, three letters subsequently written to the *Province* supported Haig-Brown.

<sup>124</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, notes for address to Canadian Audubon Society, Toronto, 6 February 1965, 5. RHB Papers, box 59, file 5.

<sup>125</sup> Leopold's "synthesis of the logic of a scientist with the ethical and aesthetic sensitivity of a Romantic was effective armament for the defense of wilderness." Nash, *Wilderness*, 182.

<sup>126</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, prefatory letter to article by John Massey, "The Environmental Crisis," *Western Fish and Game and Outdoor Recreation*, January 1970, 9.

resisted the creation of ecological man, Haig-Brown saw hope in the counter-cultural activities of the baby boom generation. "The present climate, in which old values are actively challenged by young people everywhere, is highly favourable to change," he wrote in 1965.<sup>127</sup> By 1972, Haig-Brown welcomed what he saw as the emergence of an ecological conscience and was quick to credit the social agitation of the 1960s: "(O)ne can feel that the cause is accepted, the concern is vital and that youth will carry it to new realization."<sup>128</sup>

### **Conclusion: Conservation and the Influence of Ecological Ideas**

As a scientific theory, ecology organizes and advances certain conceptions of human-natural relations and imbues them with the authority of science. In the two decades after the Second World War, experts and authors began to appeal to this authority in popular books about population, conservation and pollution.<sup>129</sup> At the same time, Roderick Nash notes, the new conservationism of the 1960s, increasingly known as environmentalism, was characterized by "the volume and intensity of public concern and the tendency to define the issue in ethical rather than economic terms."<sup>130</sup> Ecology, Worster observes, came to "offer a pathway to a kind of moral enlightenment that we can

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<sup>127</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, "Some Thoughts on Conservation," draft article, 19 November 1966, 8. RHB Papers, box 55, file 5. This remarkable article, written for *Sports Illustrated* but not published, presciently described the impending clash of ecological values and corporate capitalism, and laid out a political program for the environmental movement. It was eventually published in the posthumous collection *From the World of Roderick Haig-Brown: Writings and Reflections*, Valerie Haig-Brown, ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

<sup>128</sup> Roderick Haig-Brown, "Parks and the New Conscience," in *Park News*, 8:1, January 1972, 3. RHB Papers, box 146, file 5.

<sup>129</sup> Benjamin Kline, *First Along The River: A Brief History of the Environmental Movement* (San Francisco: Acada, 1997), 75-77. Many authors cite *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson's 1962 exposé of the effects of DDT pesticides on human and animal health, as the beginning of mass environmental awareness.

<sup>130</sup> Nash, *Wilderness*, 254. Hays argues that there was a fundamental discontinuity between conservation and environmentalism, as the former was an ideology of production and the latter an ideology of consumption. See Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13-39.

call, for the purposes of simplicity, 'conservation.'"<sup>131</sup> This moral concern presented a challenge to the long-time conservation tenets of eliminating waste and using resources efficiently.

The activities of Haig-Brown and the BCNRC in the mid- to late 1960s reflected these changing attitudes. After its thirteenth conference in 1961, BCNRC meetings attracted more than 200 delegates only once, in 1964. Besides the annual proceedings (which shrank along with the conference), the BCNRC published only an updated version of its resource inventory. Government patronage continued, and high-profile speakers continued to attend, but much of the dynamism and optimism of the 1950s disappeared. In 1969, the Social Credit government introduced its Land Use Committee, which effectively took over the BCNRC's co-ordinating capacity, and the conference disappeared a year later. As Wilson notes, "broader conceptions of environmental health and the value of wilderness were being advanced, forcing government and industry to consider more substantial concessions (to the environmental movement)."<sup>132</sup>

As his own conservation thinking changed, Haig-Brown appeared to distance himself from the BCNRC. After attending the conference in 1961 to launch *The Living Land*, he attended only once more, in 1964, and no longer sat on pre-conference panels. His correspondence with conference regulars dropped off and he increased his activities in American sporting organizations such as the Izaak Walton League, as well as joining the newly formed National Parks Protection Association in Canada. Although he never publicly criticized the BCNRC, it appears that Haig-Brown found little in common with its reliance on economics as the arbiter of resource management. Haig-Brown, along with other ethical conservationists and ecologists, shifted the goals of

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<sup>131</sup> Worster, "The Ecology of Order and Chaos," 156.

<sup>132</sup> Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 14.

conservation away from utility and efficiency and towards environmental stability and ecological diversity.<sup>133</sup>

The divergent ideas espoused by the BCNRC and Haig-Brown illustrated the deep conflicts within the conservation movement between this emergent ethical view and the dominant utilitarianism. To some extent, B.C.'s conservationists reflected the utilitarian/Romantic dichotomy familiar to conservation historians. The BCRNC's functionalist, economic strain of ecology blended with postwar planning impulses to beget technocratic conservation. By the late 1950s, economics had become not only the underlying theoretical model of ecological relationships, but the overriding evaluative principle in the development of resources and the determination of public interest. By contrast, Haig-Brown may be seen as the foremost advocate in B.C. of the Romantic, preservationist interpretation of ecological concepts. His ideas were often contradictory, however, revealing the limitations of labels. He participated in and admired some of the scientific planning and research activities of the BCNRC, yet he also underscored the spiritual meanings of ecology, emphasizing human affinity with nature and the importance of wilderness preservation. Despite his politically pragmatic invocation of economics, Haig-Brown argued that economic evaluations obscured nature's "real," non-material value, reducing it to the cold analysis of the ledger. Haig-Brown was a divided soul, caught between the social imperatives of order and development on one hand and a Romantic attachment to natural beauty and spirituality on the other. His evolving philosophy bridged the dominance of utilitarian conservationism in B.C. and the rise of environmentalism.

Beyond categorization, quantifying the influence of these contesting philosophies can be difficult for historians. As noted, conservationists' direct impact on resource policy in B.C. was

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<sup>133</sup> Terpenning, 23-24, highlights the role of the BC Wildlife Federation in this effort.

limited. The 1945 Sloan Commission on Forestry report was perhaps the best example of scientific, utilitarian conservation as public policy, as it enshrined the goal of sustained yield production of forest crops to feed industry.<sup>134</sup> Suggestions by Haig-Brown at BCNRC meetings spurred the creation of the first Pollution Control Board under the Department of Municipal Affairs in 1956 and the formation of the Ministry of Recreation and Conservation in 1957. In general, however, wildlife and parks advocates fared especially poorly in the political arena; high-profile efforts to prevent development in Strathcona and Tweedsmuir parks failed, and the government drastically reduced parkland and opened the remaining parks to development with relatively little public outcry.<sup>135</sup>

The foregoing discussion does suggest that the radical thinking of the environmental movement in B.C. has roots in the mid-century conservation movement. The BCNRC's annual meetings put conservation ideas in the news, and its published proceedings provided a ready, if highly technical, source of information on resource development issues. While its utilitarian approach buttressed the ideology of development with ecology, the conference also helped educate a generation of British Columbians on their resource dependence and the interrelations of natural (and social) systems. Readers of Haig-Brown's books on fishing, hunting, trapping and logging absorbed the author's deep love and respect for nature. His public persona as a conservationist, reinforced by his conservation appeals in speeches and in the media, gave him the opportunity to advance complex and critical ideas about the devastating pace of development in B.C. Like Aldo Leopold, Haig-Brown derived both the spiritual and scientific insights from ecology, a move Samuel

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<sup>134</sup> Wilson, "Forest Conservation in British Columbia," 10-13. Sustainable yield forestry promoter F.D. Mulholland and long-time deputy minister of forests C.D. Orchard often attended the BCNRC meetings, where the implementation of Sloan's recommendations was charted and discussed.

<sup>135</sup> Leonard, *Parks and Resource Policy*, *passim*.

Hays notes is characteristic of the nascent environmental movement.<sup>136</sup> Together, Haig-Brown and the BCNRC fostered an awareness of conservation in B.C. that provided a foundation for the emergence of the environmental movement in the late 1960s.

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<sup>136</sup> Hays, *Beauty, Health, Permanence*, 26.

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