Review of European Community & International Environmental Law

Focus on: Hazardous Substances and Activities

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- The Shipment of Ultrahazardous Nuclear Materials in International Law
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- Transfer of Biological Resources under the Biodiversity Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention
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More than any other political economy, British Columbia has seen an extensive social welfare system constructed around revenue from the conversion of temperate rainforest ecosystems to the impoverished landscapes called, euphemistically, in the 1980s, 'working forests'. The Government of British Columbia has a great deal of ancient forest. Roughly 84% of the province's 9 million hectares of land base is publicly owned. Roughly half of these public lands are considered productive forest. Roughly a third of these lands ever supported the more spectacular sorts of temperate rainforests. At least half of these ancient forests have been liquidated largely through clearcuts because from this conflict terrain has originated such global organizations as the leading corporation advocates of clearcutting, MacMillan Bloedel, as well as Greenpeace (which only after a decade and a half in existence moved its headquarters from Vancouver to Amsterdam). Talk and Log is the first province-wide history of this political economy of widespread loss of ancient forest and only modest wilderness preservation and habitat protection. Wilson painstakingly chronicles legislation, agencies and advisory bodies. He begins to evaluate the application of various, often aborted, laws. At the end of Wilson's saga of debates from 1966 to 1996, 150,000 hectares of forest, the great majority being previously undisturbed, are still being clearcut annually.

Perhaps the most important contribution of Talk and Log is in sketching the post-war construction and normalization of this bizarre political economy. British Columbia has a strong cabinet/weak legislature form of parliamentary democracy with typically higher levels of government secrecy and lower levels of legislative scrutiny than in the neighbouring United States. Decisions over the land base have suffered from relatively high levels of ministerial discretion. Wilson examines the strain of that by local democracy and describes poorly implemented reformist legislation and subsequent backroom deals that emasculate challenges to corporate control of the land base. Since the Cold War, we see a powerful industry engaged in an increasingly complicated struggle to contain a 'wild environment' movement'. (xxvi). To achieve this 'hegemony' for the ancient forest 'liquidation-conversion project', one provincial ministry, that for forests, has dominated other interests notably fisheries, wildlife, and recreation. Forestry became totally saturated in terms of large-scale operations that often required outside capital. The author also analyzes over half a century of resistance. For example, the United States-based union, the International Woodworkers of America, was actively discouraging corporate corporations continue to insist on unsustainably forestry as early as 1855 (pp 115 - 116).

Federal government interventions in such a land base so controlled by provincial agencies have often been greeted with hostility. For example, federal policy in national parks on the West Coast only became active three decades ago under ministerial leadership of today's prime minister, Jean Chrétien. The neglect of this political economy of destruction of ancient forest becomes apparent in considering how much of the current liquidation has been on land that various First Nations governments consider theirs. The Crown Colony of British Columbia joined Canada in 1871 and then took part to avoid making the treaties on which London insisted. This unresolved legacy has played out as multinational corporations to illustrate, time and time again, how liquidation of forests of great local and global significance can continue in the face of widespread public resistance because of industry intimidation and agency obfuscation.

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EC Institutions and Legislation

Understanding the key issues of EC institutional and legislative law is essential when working with EC environmental law and policy. This book by John Usher provides a basic, step-by-step guide to EC institutions and legislation. The book is part of the Longman European Law Series which publishes