

ALTERNATE ROUTES

A Critical Review

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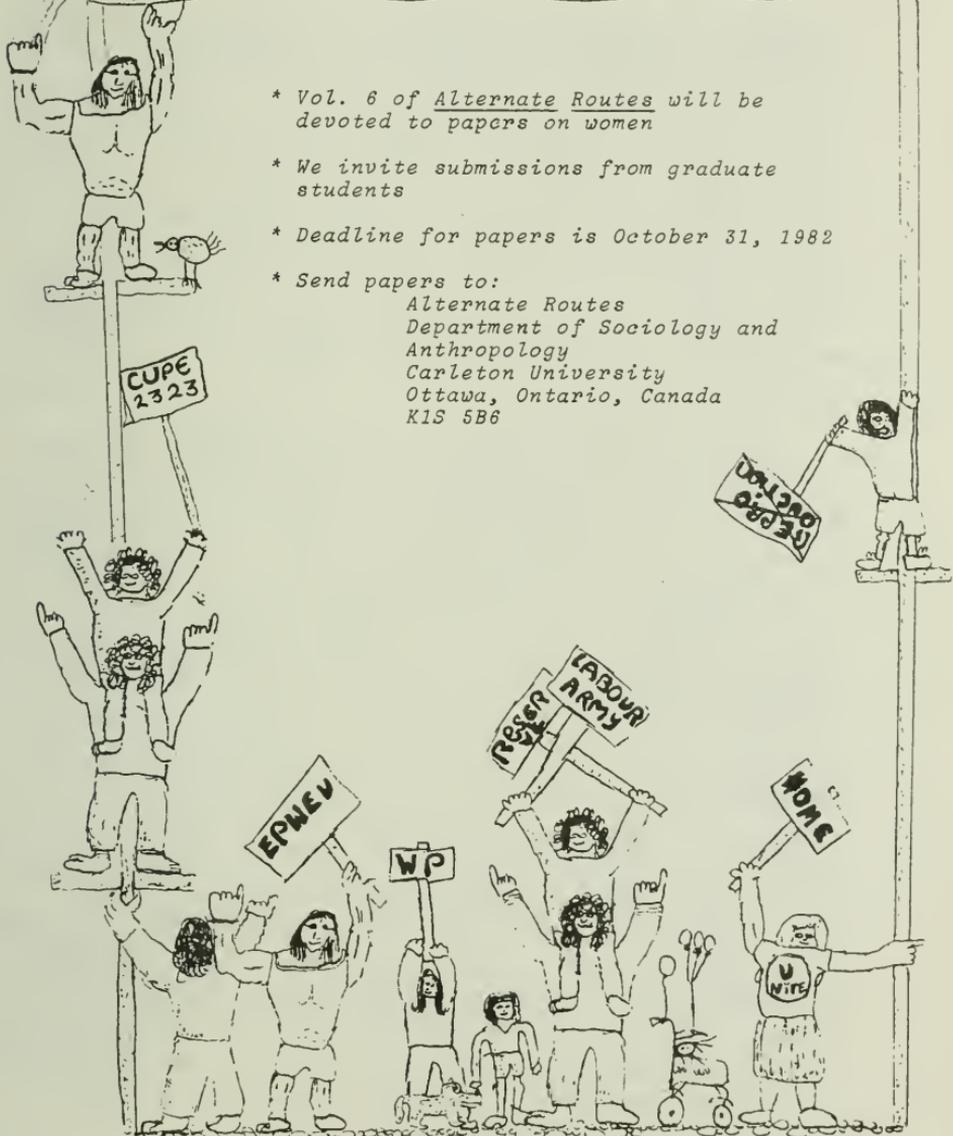
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CALL FOR PAPERS

- * Vol. 6 of Alternate Routes will be devoted to papers on women
- * We invite submissions from graduate students
- * Deadline for papers is October 31, 1982
- * Send papers to:
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EDITORIAL

La revue *Alternate Routes* est publiée par les étudiants gradués du département de sociologie et d'anthropologie de l'Université Carleton. La revue se veut une alternative offerte aux étudiants desireux de développer une connaissance critique et de participer aux débats actuels dans la société canadienne. Reconnaisant les contradictions inhérentes à cette société aussi bien qu'aux sciences sociales, nous rejetons d'emblée les divisions traditionnelles du savoir. Notre objectif est donc de contribuer au développement d'une pensée originale qui ne s'enferme plus dans les orthodoxies du pouvoir mais ouvre sur une vision radicale de la société canadienne. Nous invitons donc les étudiants que concernent ces questions à nous soumettre leurs articles.

Dans ce volume, les deux premiers articles s'adressent au problème des petits producteurs indépendants. Christensen analyse la crise de la production fruitière dans la vallée de l'Okonagan en Colombie-Britannique; Myers, de son côté, étudie le développement des coopératives d'Etat chez les Inuit suite à l'extinction du marché de la fourrure. Dans le premier article publié en français dans la revue, Sansfaçon explore quelques-uns des problèmes reliés à une lecture marxiste du droit, en analysant une décision juridique. S'attardant aussi aux luttes en Colombie-Britannique, Edelson relate les tendances dans les relations de travail au niveau des gouvernements locaux et soutient qu'une alliance entre les travailleurs des services publics et les consommateurs de ces services est essentielle au syndicalisme dans ce secteur. Enfin, Robinson s'insère dans le débat marxiste sur la division entre travail manuel et travail intellectuel pour défendre l'argument que les collègues communautaires légitiment les relations politiques de domination dans le procès de travail.

Soulignons enfin, que dans la veine de notre éditorial, le prochain volume de la revue sera consacré aux articles touchant les questions féminines.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Alternate Routes is a journal published by the graduate students in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. The journal offers an alternative to students attempting to develop critical knowledge and to participate in continuing debates in Canadian society. Acknowledging the inherent contradictions in this society, as well as in the social sciences, we reject the traditional division of knowledge. It is our purpose to contribute to the development of thought which is critical of conventional science and open to a radical vision of Canadian society and we invite papers from graduate students concerned with these issues.

In the current issue, two contributions deal with independent commodity production. Christensen addresses the crisis in fruit farming in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia and Myers looks at the rise of state-sponsored co-operatives among the Inuit after the collapse of the fur trade. In the first French paper published by Alternate Routes, Sansfaçon explores some of the problems related to a marxist reading of law by way of a concrete analysis of a juridical decision. Yet another paper dealing with struggles in British Columbia comes from Edelson who looks at trends in management-labour relations in local government and argues for an alliance between civic workers and consumers of their services. Finally, Robinson enters the marxist debate on the division between manual and mental labour to argue that community colleges legitimize political relations in the labour process.

In line with our emphasis on provocative analysis of contemporary issues, our next volume will be devoted to papers on women.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Erling Christensen obtained his B.A. (sociology and political science) from Simon Fraser University and his M.A. (sociology) from Carleton University. He worked as a research coordinator with the Canadian Farmworkers' Union. He is presently finishing a dissertation on the political economy of agriculture at Simon Fraser University.

Miriam Edelson completed her B.A. Hon. (political science) at McMaster (1980). She is currently studying for an M.A. in political science at Carleton University. She is president of CUPE 2323, Carleton's Student Assistants' Union. The paper presented here is based on ongoing research on public sector unionization.

Marybelle Muers obtained her B.A. (eng lit) in 1963 from Trinity College, University of Toronto. She taught in the Northwest Territories for two years, from 1965 to 1967 and was manager of project development for Arctic Quebec co-operatives from 1970 to 1980. Her M.A. (sociology) was obtained at McGill University in 1978 and she is now a doctoral candidate at Carleton University.

David Robinson obtained his B.A. Hon. (sociology) from St. Francis Xavier University in 1980. He is currently writing his M.A. thesis in sociology, on community colleges, at Carleton University.

Daniel Sansfacon received his B.A. (psychology) and M.A. (criminology) from Ottawa University in 1976 and 1981 respectively. He is presently a graduate student in the doctoral program in sociology at Carleton University. His main research interests focus on the sociology of law and on the organization of social control.

A Critical Review Vol. 5, 1982

Contents

Erling V. Christensen

**Aspects of the Crisis in Petit Commodity Production
in the Okanagan Valley** 1

Marybelle Myers

**Beyond the Fur Trade: The Rise and Fall of the
Eskimo Co-operative** 27

Daniel Sansfaçon

**Sujet de droit et sujets de droit: de la pratique
juridique au pluriel** 67

Miriam Edelson

**Accountable to Whom? Trends in Management-
Labour Relations in Local Government** 95

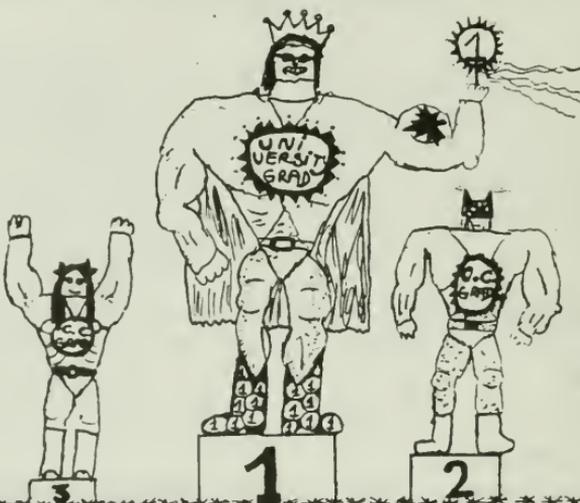
David Robinson

**Community Colleges and the Division Between
Mental and Manual Labour** 133

Communautés légitimes des relations politiques et

le procès de travail. Robinson 1982.

des collèges in the labor process.



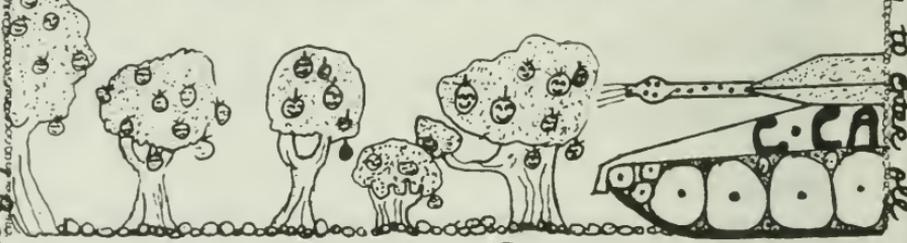
Community colleges legitimate political relations

Robinson p. 133-165

It is not always beneficial for CORPORATE CAPITAL

to extract all spheres of production.

to other all spheres of production



It is not always beneficial for CORPORATE CAPITAL

CHRISTENSEN p. 1-25

Aspects of the Crisis in Petit Commodity Production in the Okanagan Valley

Erling V. Christensen

Petit commodity production in agriculture has been undergoing changes since 1945, with the general trend being towards increased capitalization of production. Co-operative organization of production and distribution has enabled producers in the Okanagan Valley to resist, to a certain extent, the encroachment of capital. A crisis exists, nonetheless, in petit commodity production due to a pending breakdown of the co-operative structure as well as rising land prices due to speculation.

Les changements intervenus dans la petite production agricole depuis 1945 dénotent une tendance croissante vers la capitalisation de la production. L'organisation coopérative de la production et de la distribution a permis aux producteurs de la vallée de l'Okanagan de résister, jusqu'à un certain point, à cet envahissement du capital. Toutefois, en raison de sérieuses difficultés dans la structure coopérative et des hausses du prix des terres dues à la spéculation, la petite production indépendante traverse présentement un état de crise.

Introduction

Petit commodity production has, historically, been the basis of agricultural production in Canada. Although this basis has been transformed into larger capitalist units in some spheres of agricultural production, it has persisted in others. Consequently, much debate has developed in recent years over the concept of petit commodity production and its role in Canadian agriculture. In this paper, I focus on petit commodity production as a specific form of production. My argument is that, in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, this form of tree fruit production persists, not as an isolated instance that exists in spite of a changing capitalist economy, but rather as a part of it. Its persistence is due, in part, to the collective action of independent producers and their complementary roles in the larger capitalist economy. However, as independent producers in a capitalist economy they cannot escape the imminence of class struggle. It is, in fact, the contradictions inherent in their participation in the dominant capitalist economy that are responsible both for their persistence as independent producers and the severe crisis in their ability to continue as such. These contradictions are both external and internal. The internal contradictions become manifest, in part, by a crisis in collective responses to stave off transformation. The external contradictions become manifest, in part, by the pressures on agricultural land by state and capital.

The most important structural element of independent commodity production in the tree fruit industry in the Okanagan

Valley has been the co-operative structure known as the British Columbia Fruit Growers Association (BCFGA). This co-operative structure developed as an attempt to protect and rationalize an industry dominated by independent producers. It has enabled producers to band together and to put some logic into both production and marketing. The BCFGa has, however, been unable to control marketing. It has to compete with imports for the same market and, consequently, some producers have split from the organization and gone completely independent or have set up competing corporate structures. This split in the protective umbrella of the co-operative structure has created a crisis in both production and marketing in the industry as a whole.

Another important factor has been the limited land available in the Okanagan, a narrow valley, affected by favourable climatic conditions not existing elsewhere in the province. Some land has become available with increased technological advances in irrigation and fertilizing, but, as a whole, suitable land for tree fruit production remains limited. Since land is at a premium for the agricultural industry, as well as the recreation industry¹, reproduction and/or transformation of petit commodity producers is contingent upon the availability and price of land. In turn, these factors affect the returns of agricultural production. There have been attempts to keep the price of agricultural land at artificially lower prices by putting a freeze on non-agricultural development. In spite of land protection, however, speculation and rising prices are reappearing, due to the pressure of recreational

development as well as to the inconsistency of the Social Credit government in removing certain parcels of land from the Agricultural Land Reserves.

These important aspects of independent commodity production -- co-operative structure and land availability and price -- have undergone some critical changes which have created a crisis in both the industry and in the viability of petit commodity producers to reproduce themselves as an economic unit. As I argue, this crisis will accelerate the contradictory forces affecting independent commodity producers in a capitalist dominated mode of production. The outcome of this accelerated class struggle is dealt with at the end of this paper.

Petit commodity production

Agricultural production in British Columbia is generally organized into small independent production units, relying primarily upon family, as opposed to wage labour, a crucial distinction in the production of commodities (Marx, 1967b: 348). In family production units there is virtually no distinction between capital and labour. The producer owns the means of production and is directly engaged in labour as one aspect of the relations of production. Consequently, petit commodity production has been seen as constituting an independent mode of production. The conditions of petit commodity producers are, however, such that one cannot talk of an independent mode of production existing within a dominant capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1967a:713). The merging of labour and capital is generally thought of as a transitory

stage of development from feudalism to capitalism, not expected to persevere in any significant form under the onslaught of capitalist development within an increasingly dominant capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1967a:713-716; 1971:810,812-813). Herein lies the crux of the problem: why has petit commodity production persisted in agriculture for over a hundred years of capital development? Or, to put it differently, why has agricultural production not been fully "rationalized" within the capitalist mode of production?

There have been a number of recent attempts to develop a theoretical explanation of the persistence of independent commodity production and its varying rates of transformation. For, while it is true that it has persisted, especially in agricultural production, it has also been changed and, even, transformed, in certain areas and spheres of production. Petit commodity production persists, changes and transforms, then, in reaction to pressures and changes in the dominant capitalist mode of production. It has been argued by some that petit commodity production in agriculture, or "the family farm" is an apparition, or fossilized left-over from a previous time, and as such, must be understood in isolation (Hedley, 1976:414). Others argue that it is inevitable that small independent holdings will become part of a large corporate or capitalist structure (Burbach and Flynn, 1980; Hedley, 1976a). Such analyses, however, have found it difficult to explain the persistence of petit commodity production. They have been even less successful at explaining the small holding's contribution to and role in the larger economy. Some have even argued that

scale is of primary importance and that "... large farm units are necessary to allow efficient production of agricultural commodities" (Flynn and Buttel, 1980:949). Agricultural organization in Japan, Denmark and France, as well as certain sectors in Canadian agriculture, however, serves to refute that argument.

One of the more insightful attempts to analyze the role of petit commodity production in agriculture is that of Susan Mann and James Dickinson, who argue that the persistence of petit commodity production is due to "... an excess of production time over labour time..., labour recruitment problems, a lower rate of profit, and complications in the smooth realization of value in the sphere of circulation (1978:478)." This appears to be the first clear attempt to provide answers to why such forms persist. Mann and Dickinson argue that it is the nature of agricultural production which creates the obstacles for capitalist development. In agriculture, much time is devoted to "natural processes" of growth before labour time is expended to produce value. During the intervals between planting and harvesting, for example, neither value nor surplus value is created (1978:472). They make a strong argument, separating "unproductive" (of value) production time from "productive" (of value) production time. In computing value, they take into account labour invested in activities such as fertilizing and pruning, which create increases in production, hence, in value, but they eliminate activities such as tractor maintenance and shed building, which they consider to be non-value producing labour. Such labour may be necessary to

production but it does not "create" value.

The authors go on to link the possibilities of agricultural production with the problems of circulation, agreeing with Marx that, although the circulation sphere produces no value, it is necessary in order that surplus value may be realized. The speed of circulation, for instance is important to capital; for, the quicker the turn-over, the quicker capital is required to renew the process. In Canada, however, this process is determined, to a large extent, by climate which necessitates quick start-up of a new production cycle. Nonetheless, circulation time is still of utmost importance, especially in the sphere of fresh fruit production. Certain agricultural commodities, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, do not store well and require a quick turn-over in order to realize the full potential surplus value. Purchasers of such commodities are not likely to buy at prices reflecting the cost and profit if the commodity is in the process of spoiling. While other agricultural commodities have benefitted by increased technology in cold storage facilities and transportation systems, fresh products still pose a firm or "absolute" limit for the circuit of commodity capital (Mann and Dickinson, 1987:475; Marx, 1967b:131). As a consequence, capital has been slow to move into the production sector in most spheres of agricultural production. This limitation does not, of course, affect food grown for processing and in that sector there is already substantial involvement of capital.

Another attempt to analyze the persistence of petit commodity forms of production in agriculture has been undertaken

by Carol MacLennon and Richard Walker, who argue that the number of "family-owned and operated" farms has been declining and that the rural class structure is undergoing dramatic changes (1980:22). Their contention is that a new "agrarian bourgeoisie with roots in the traditional family farms" will emerge from this crisis to create "a polarized structure, dominated by a small but powerful agrarian bourgeoisie" (1980:20). The reason they give for the lack of corporate or "agribusiness" development is, however, superficial. They simply state that

industrial corporations do not want to be bothered with direct agricultural production. Big capital... has found it more advantageous in certain crops to contract with small farmers for their products rather than to invest directly in production (1980:3).

They offer no explanation as to why this is so but, if their argument is put into the context established by Mann and Dickinson, there is, I believe, the possibility of further theoretical development. The major focus of the argument made by MacLennon and Walker is the changing rural class structure. Illustration 1 is an attempt to graphically expand their argument, the crux of which is that family farm production is doomed to become a capitalist unit of production with a number of these farmers/owners being proletarianized into a combination of owner/off-farm labourers. As we shall see later, however, family farm production has options which will delay this transformation, if not stop it altogether in certain spheres such as fresh fruit production. MacLennon and Walker argue further that increased labour productivity with increased debt to meet the cost price squeeze (where the costs of

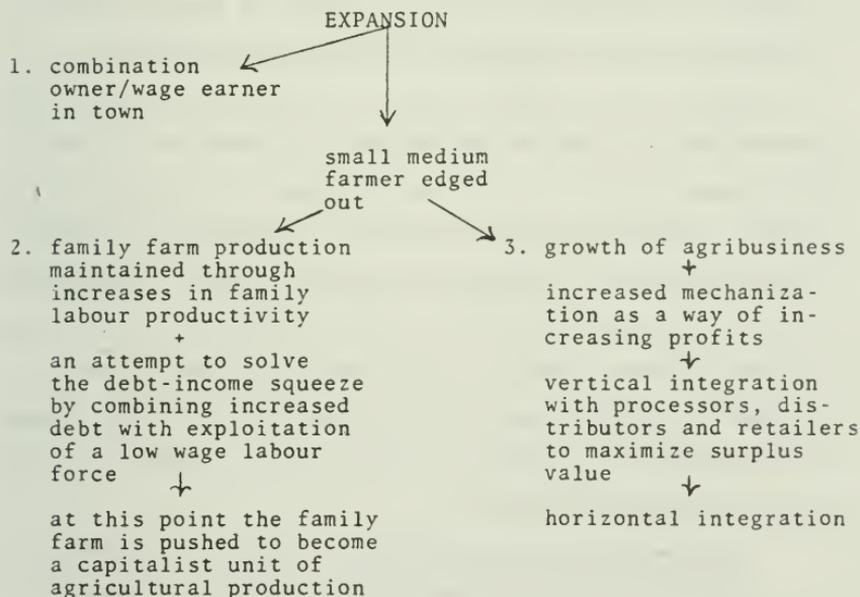
production, including heavy finance charges to banks and other lending agencies, greatly outdistance returns to the producer) will generate an increased reliance on wage labour at which point the "farm is pushed to become a capitalist unit of production" (1980:36). The difference between the development of a new "agrarian bourgeoisie" and the integration of agribusiness into industrial capital is not explained sufficiently.

Illustration 1

the changing rural class structure

(proletarianization of farm classes)

FAMILY OWNER OPERATORS



Again, this argument could be made more attractive if combined with the argument made by Mann and Dickinson. This would help to clarify the dynamics of production which encourages expansion and integration in certain spheres of production and

consolidation and change which maintains smaller "independent" units in other spheres. At any rate, both argue that capital integration is not inevitable (at least into the industrial sectors) for reasons which lie in the peculiarities of agricultural production which puts obstacles in the way of capital's need and development.

While it is true that petit commodity production has persisted, it is also true that it is in a state of constant turmoil. Petit commodity producers are pressured and hemmed in in every direction. Capital has developed control of production at both the input and the output side of agricultural production. The input level is dominated by capital in the areas of seed and fertilizer production, pesticides, farm machinery, etc. The output level is dominated in such areas as processing, wholesaling and retailing, as well as in the provision of transportation and storage facilities. This squeeze on the "independent" producer has the effect of increasing their dependence to the point where they can no longer control costs and prices or returns on their production. In fact, in certain instances and in certain spheres of petit commodity production in agriculture, it can be argued that the producer, far from being in control, is, rather, in possession of "sham property". As Marx argues

(the merchant) buys their (the independent producer's) labour and takes their property first in the form of the product, and soon after that the instrument as well, or he leaves it to them as sham property in order to reduce his own production costs (1973:510).

This argument has been developed by Hegedus in his distinction between ownership and possession of the means of production

(1976:95). The producer may "own" his property but the corporations which sell and buy from the producer may enjoy a "restricted-ownership exercise" or possession of the producer's means of production, labour power and product. The producer has often been forced to take conventional steps in order to survive such as increasing debt and attempts to increase productivity. As Bernard Bernier has so convincingly shown in his analysis of Quebec agriculture, however, scale is "not a guarantee of rising income; for, the increase in productivity is more than offset by larger increases in expenses" (1976: 431). The same can be said of increased labour exploitation. As the percentage of labour costs goes up, so do management costs. At a certain level, the economic unit will either transform into a "capital" unit or it will have to increase labour productivity by further mechanization which, in turn, increases debt. This debt is not necessarily met with an increase in the price of the commodity. Increases in debt are, in fact, often an important stage in the transformation of petit commodity producers or proletarianized labour (Marx, 1971:435-441).

Other attempts which have been more successful in maintaining independent units of production have been the development of marketing boards and co-operative structures as mechanisms to rationalize costs, production and price. These attempts help to develop a solution to the pressures of capital upon agricultural production. As Marx argues:

The moral of history... is that the capitalist system works against a rational agriculture, or that a rational agriculture is incompatible with the capitalist system ... and needs either the

small farmer living on his own labour or the control of associated producers (1971:121).

What works specifically against a "rational" agriculture for capitalism is the long periods of "non-productive" (of value) time where large amounts of capital are tied up but create no value as well as factors such as climate and soil conditions which affect the production process and restrict the circulation of capital. It has also become increasingly difficult to exist strictly by one's own labour, due to the control over the input levels by capital and to land prices which do not reflect agricultural productivity. In response, many producers have formed associated organizations or co-operatives.

Petit commodity production in the Okanagan Valley

Tree fruit production in the Okanagan Valley has long been organized along co-operative lines. Since 1939, single-desk selling (marketing control by one agency) through the grower owned British Columbia Tree Fruits Limited (BCTF) has controlled the marketing of tree fruits in that province. As well as marketing control, the BCTF has expanded into processing under the name of Sun-Rype Limited and into controlled atmosphere storage under the name of British Columbia Fresh Storage Limited. These companies all come under the nominal control of the British Columbia Tree Fruit Growers Association (BCFGA). The 2200 members of the BCFGGA constitute the vast majority of the tree fruit producers in the Okanagan Valley.

In the valley there are 2703 farms under crops and 91.6 per cent of these farms are classified as individual or family owned and operated farms. Of the total number of crop producers 65.4 per cent are engaged in tree fruit production.

Table 1
Farms in the Okanagan Valley

Type	Acres	% of growers	% of land
part-time	2 - 5	22	6
small commercial	5 -25	58	57
medium commercial	25 -60	8	24
large commercial	60 plus	1	11

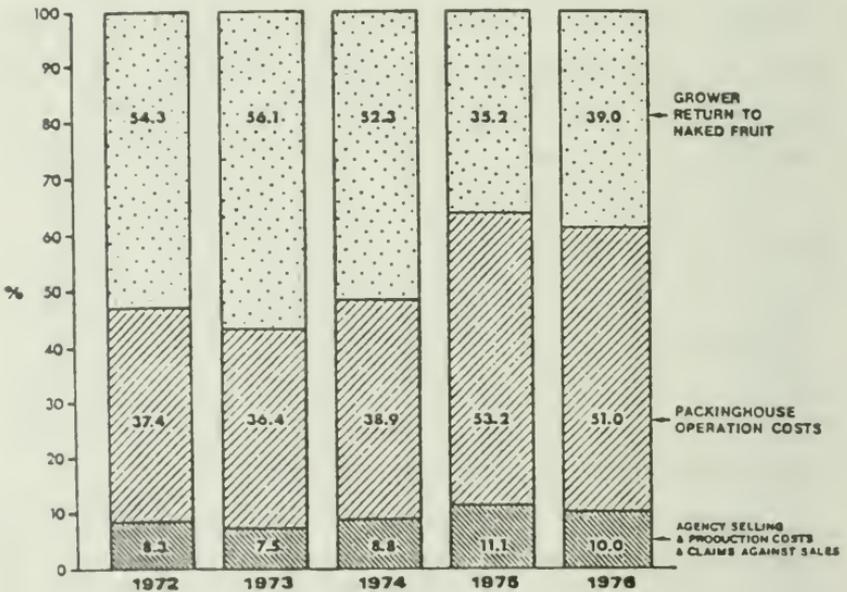
These farms are generally small in size and, for the purpose of this study, are broken into four distinct categories (table 1). With 80 per cent of all tree fruit producers farming less than 25 acres, petit commodity production is the most common type of enterprise. These farms rely primarily upon family labour. The average small commercial farm will hire five to seven pickers at various times over a four month period to pick fruit as it ripens. It is estimated that wage labour constitutes 20 to 30 per cent of the total yearly labour.² Of the two larger categories, medium commercial farms rely to a greater extent on wage labour (estimated at 30 to 60 per cent of the total labour depending upon a number of variables such as family size and type of crop produced), while the large commercial farm is a capitalist unit of production with more than 60 per cent reliance on wage labour. In my study, any farm requiring over 50 per cent wage labour is not considered a family owned and operated farm (Mann and Dickinson, 1978:477).

The majority of production is destined for the fresh fruit market, a crucial market if small independent producers are to realize a price for their produce sufficiently high to allow them to continue production. Fruit destined for processing is

designated as "culls", and realizes only one third of the price of fresh fruit. The returns on processed fruit are, however, beginning to climb, comparatively, due to huge increases in packing costs of fresh fruit. For example, in 1972, packing costs represented 37.4 per cent of the total returns on all fruit commodities. This proportion of the cost has risen steadily and, by 1976, it constituted over 50 per cent of total returns (table 2).

table 2

British Columbia Tree Fruits Limited
distribution of the sales dollar
all commodities



Source: British Columbia Tree Fruits Limited Annual Reports.

This has created a problem for the grower in that the price of the commodity has not risen accordingly. The returns on apples and pears, for example, have remained constant in terms of sales value, and grower returns have decreased from approximately five cents a pound to less than three cents a pound (Select Standing Committee on Agriculture, 1978:10).

The combined effects of climbing costs and diminishing returns has put the independent producers into a precarious position. This problem is exacerbated by the BCTF's inability to generate fresh fruit markets capable of absorbing the majority of fruit produced. In certain commodities, the BCTF has been unable to market even 50 per cent of the production. A case in point is cherries. In 1978, only 30 per cent of all cherries produced could be marketed through the association. Consequently, much of the cherry production was marketed independently on roadside stands, the alternative being to have them designated as culls receiving a lower return. Vast quantities were also sold to "fruitleggers"³, or, directly, to wholesalers and retailers.

The developing crisis in the industry's inability to market all of the fruit production through the BCTF exploded in 1974. After numerous demonstrations and battles with the police, dissident growers put enough pressure on the provincial NDP government to have marketing restrictions lifted. This was done by instituting a farm income assurance program which would pay all farmers who stayed in the BCFGA the difference between production and marketing quotas when the need arose. The only criterion for benefit would be marketing through the BCTF.

This development gave growers the legitimate right to sell independently, but as a consequence they would be struck from the BCFGAs and thus not be eligible for assurance benefits. Even though most growers did not opt out of the BCFGAs, independent sales were, however, not curtailed. Many farmers play both sides of the fence, selling to the BCTF, in order to claim assurance benefits from the government, and then selling the remainder to "fruitrunners" from the Lower Mainland and Alberta. According to government figures, more than 20 per cent of fruit production is sold outside agency control (Select Standing Committee on Agriculture, 1978:24), although some estimates are that up to 50 per cent of all producers are involved in this scheme (Vancouver Sun:june 19,1978:3). Certainly, fruitlegging has become a lucrative business in the valley. In the 1960's it was common for a few people to arrive with half-ton trucks, buy fruit and then travel to Alberta to sell it from roadside stands. By the mid-1970's, fleets of semi-trailers were arriving to purchase 100 per cent of some farmers' production in commodities such as cherries. The fruitrunners would then travel throughout British Columbia and the prairies, undercutting major retailers. This had the effect of pressure being put on the BCFGAs by major wholesalers and retailers, who threatened not to purchase through them if they did not control or clean up the industry. In fact, one of the major wholesalers and retailers in western Canada is already being supplied outside the BCTF. Kelly Douglas and Super-Valu (a part of the Weston chain) is now purchasing from a newly formed, independent corporation.

Two dissident growers, Ronald Fournier and Graeme Nelson, broke away from the BCFGA and set up their own corporation, Black Sage Orchards, which sells directly to Kelly Douglas. In 1979, this new corporation was being supplied by 75 orchardists and marketed in excess of 3/4 million pounds of apples to the Weston empire. They undersold the BCTF by a sufficient amount to enable Super-Valu to sell apples at twenty cents per pound below its competitors' price (the Province, October 5, 1979:A2). Safeway, the other major retailer in western Canada, is contemplating following suit. The major saving that these "independents" have achieved is in the packaging of the fruit. Since, for example, they do not wax and individually pack apples, they can realise a higher profit than they can on the returns they receive from the BCTF. They can still sell cheaper to the wholesalers and retailers than the BCTF can.

The long term effect of this trend will be to erode industry protection of single-desk marketing. This, in turn, will allow large wholesalers and retailers to play producers off against each other. Potentially, this situation may create a severe economic crisis among petit commodity producers in the valley, one from which they may not recover. At this stage, larger productive units will become increasingly viable and necessary. And, with larger productive units, mechanization and production for processing become possible.

The advantages of discord in the industry for capital, whether processors, wholesalers or retailers, are obvious. Discord allows increasing control and the merging of Okanagan tree fruit production into a capitalist organized and

controlled market. This may allow the producers to remain owners of their property but they will have lost more of what they possess as a result of their production by losing the ability to even partially determine price by control over marketing. In order for that to occur, the protection that petit commodity producers have provided for themselves must be eroded.

A second factor creating pressure on petit commodity producers in the Okanagan Valley is that of agricultural land prices. The price of farm land in the Okanagan has been going up rapidly, in spite of the freeze put on agricultural land by the creation of the Agricultural Land Reserves. These reserves were created to protect agricultural land for future use and thus to aid the survival of viable farm units. This was seen as an important step in protecting British Columbia agriculture. Prime agricultural land in the province occupies less than 1 per cent of the total land area. Land suitable for fruit production occupies only 1/100th of 1 per cent of the land area (British Columbia Land Commission, 1975:5).

Agricultural land is generally "lost" through three related processes (Environment Canada, 1978:4-4). The first is through direct conversion to urban, commercial, industrial, or transport use. The second is through indirect urban impacts such as recreational development. The third is through economic decline and uncertainty in the agricultural industry. In the Okanagan, pressures to take over farm land are generally related to growth in the recreation industry and urban growth. Unfortunately for the agricultural industry in the valley,

lake frontage, the most desirable land, is also prime agricultural land.

Although the vast majority of producers support legislation protecting farm land (Environment Canada, 1978:73), organizations such as the Okanagan Mainland Real Estate Board, various construction firms, and municipal councils frequently put pressure on the provincial cabinet to "unfreeze" certain land. Others, such as private entrepreneurs with known Social Credit affiliation, have put pressure on the government to take land out of the reserve. A prime example is that of Tom Capozzi, a long-time Social Credit Party supporter, who attempted to remove 1400 acres for subdivision into "ranchettes" to be sold to retiring Albertans. He was so confident about the successful outcome of his application that he went ahead with subdivision and roadbuilding before a formal decision was made. While still under protection, the price of his land rose from \$350 an acre in 1972 to \$1750 an acre in 1979 (Vancouver Sun, October 27, 1979:A10). This speculation in reserve land is not unusual in the Okanagan Valley, nor in the province as a whole.

The implementation of land reserves has had two immediate effects: a rise in land prices for non-reserve land and demands for exclusion of certain lands from reserve protection. This also had the effect of increasing the price of protected land since the government has been amenable to passing orders-in-council to release land, upon request, bypassing the protective commission. This made speculating in agricultural reserve land, for eventual removal, quite lucrative.

Two related pressures developed on agricultural petit commodity production. Further growth through the acquisition of more land was stunted, and secondly, younger or new producers were discouraged from entering agriculture. A number of producers, being squeezed by an increasing price/debt trap, became quite amenable to selling out. The only way a number of producers stood to gain from their enterprise was to sell out and reap the benefits of rapidly rising land prices. Rather than attempting to discourage speculation in agricultural land, the provincial government fed the uncertainty of land protection through erratic approval of application for land reserve removals.

Conclusion

The net effect of problems in the co-operative organization of tree fruit production and the protected today/gone tomorrow land policies of the provincial government is a crisis in petit commodity production in the Okanagan. It is a crisis that has very real consequences for the maintenance and reproduction of petit commodity production as the basis of agriculture in the valley.

In terms of maintenance and reproduction, land prices are too high to encourage the upcoming generation of producers to enter farming. Land prices further encourage the selling of agricultural land to reap the benefits of high prices. This may suit present growers, but it will have devastating effects on future agricultural production. If the land is not removed from production through sales, then it will likely be transformed into larger capital units, either directly

controlled by a newly developing agrarian bourgeoisie or controlled by a hired manager on behalf of a non-farming owner or corporate enterprise holding the land for speculation. In either case, the land is removed from fresh fruit production. The so-called "new agrarian bourgeoisie" will likely mechanize and grow crops for processing since fresh fruit production is too labour intensive to be profitable. Non-farming owners may be expected to remove agricultural land from production and turn it into more profitable parking lots or condominium projects geared to the tourist industry.

The second aspect of the crisis in petit commodity production, that of strains in the protective umbrella of single-desk selling, has accentuated the attractiveness of selling out. This occurs when sufficient income cannot be generated through production. The crisis in co-operation in the valley has the potential of accelerating the transformation of production to larger units of production. It likewise has the potential to increase the necessity of having to augment family income by off-farm labour, if complete bankruptcy is to be avoided.

There is, of course, also the possibility that the petit commodity producers will weather this storm, as they have others in the past. This time, however, they are beset by other problems. The importation of cheap fresh and processed products has cut into the industry's share of the market and farm labour problems are increasing and will lead to higher labour costs. Last year, the newly formed Canadian Farmworkers' Union started organizing in the valley. This will

put pressure on the small producer and help accelerate the transformation of the industry away from petit commodity based productive units. Also, the costs of increasing productivity through technology are growing at a faster rate than are the returns on production.

In conclusion, the basis of the crisis of continued existence of petit commodity producers lies in the relationship between petty commodity producers and the larger capitalist economy. Numerous pressures, two of which are dealt with in this paper, are brought to bear on these producers. As a class, they are waging a constant struggle with the larger capitalist economy to avoid being swallowed up or proletarianized. Their long-term survival prospects seem bleak. They have always been bleak. Historically, they have played a role compatible with the needs of the larger capitalist economy and it is far from clear that this role has ceased. Independent producers have persevered, creating new solutions to contradictions which in turn generate new contradictions requiring new solutions. Their survival is due, in part to the nature of agricultural production, and, in part, to the needs of capital. It is not always beneficial for corporate capital to enter all spheres of production.

NOTES

1. The same climatic conditions which make tree fruit production possible, also make this area a very desirable place for recreational activities, including a commodified tourist industry. Farmers and speculators in the tourist industry are competing for the same land, the price of which increasingly reflects the higher prices that the investors in the recreation industry can offer.
2. It is difficult to compare the exact amount of wage labour with family labour due to the lack of compatible statistical data. However, the small commercial and part-time farms hire wage labour only at peak picking times and during the rest of the year rely upon family labour. The estimate of 20 to 30 per cent hired labour comes from a comparison of Farm Labour Pool data, census data and interviews with farmers. The estimates for the larger units were somewhat easier due to more permanent employment of wage labour and clearer statistical data.
3. "Fruitleggers" and "fruitrunners" are terms given to private entrepreneurs who come into the Valley, buy fruit directly from the producers and then sell the fruit to small retailers and on roadside stands throughout the Western provinces. Since this bypasses the marketing control of the BCTF, it is seen as an illegal activity.

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