

Jean L. Manore. *Cross-Currents: Hydroelectricity and the Engineering of Northern Ontario*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999, 209 pp.

Review by Martin Loney, Manotick, Ontario.

The generation of hydroelectric power was central to the development of mining and industry in northern Ontario. Manore examines the history of the Moose River watershed in northeastern Ontario, focusing on the interplay between the natural environment, developers and the competing users of the rivers, including the First Nations. Manore argues that the doctrine of the mutuality of rights led to efforts to ensure the balancing of competing interests, resources were to be developed for the common good. This afforded legitimacy to the interests of others using the rivers to seek to profit from northern development where these were in conflict with hydro regulation. This ensured the protection of the interests of commercial loggers using the rivers to transport timber. The doctrine did not, however, provide any assistance to First Nations: because mutuality of rights was tied into the common good principle, it would not acknowledge the rights of Aboriginal people to use the waterways to pursue their traditional vocations. The common good principle looked after the interests of the developers and urban communities not the few Aboriginal people who lived in the North.

The power companies were prepared to provide narrow compensation to Aboriginals affected by hydro regulation, primarily by addressing any loss of land, but they did not afford protection to Aboriginal harvesting activities that were adversely impacted. Recognition of such interests would have had a significant impact on the shape of development: Hydroelectric development under the progressive ideology of the early 20th century could not have occurred unless the sustainable ideology of the First Nations was swept aside. The result was that, while hydro development accelerated the growth of mining and other enterprises, it did so at a continuing and escalating cost to Aboriginal harvesting. The political intervention, which sought to balance the competing interests of various power users and suppliers, was absent when it came to representing the interests of aboriginal stakeholders.

Much of Manore's account details the nuts and bolts of hydro development and the interplay between the different corporate and governmental actors, it will provide a useful resource to readers seeking further information on the contested history of the rivers and the impact on Aboriginal interests.

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