CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AND ADVOCACY CONVICTION: HOW THE FORCES OF PASSION AND REASON SHAPE CONTEMPORARY INDUSTRIAL ISSUES

By

Jocelyn Fraser

B.A. University of Alberta 1978

Project submitted in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Liberal Studies

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2006

Approval

Name: Jocelyn Fraser

Degree: Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

Title of Project: Corporate Responsibility and Advocacy Conviction: How the Forces of Passion and Reason Shape Contemporary Industrial Issues

Examining Committee

Chair: Anne-Marie Feenberg-Dibon, PhD

Associate Director/Graduate Chair, Associate Professor of Humanities, Director of the Institute for the Humanities

_____

Stephen Duguid, PhD
Senior Supervisor

Professor, Department of Humanities

_____

Geoff Poitras, PhD
Supervisor

Professor of Finance, Faculty of Business Administration

_____

Lawrence Boland, PhD
External Examiner

Professor of Economics, Department of Economics

Date Defended/Approved: Mar. 31/06

Abstract

Business leaders today are cognizant that public expectations of business have changed dramatically in recent years and are legitimate. The result is a value shift towards the ethics of responsibility. This is contrasted by advocacy groups, which tend to be motivated by passion, and adhere to the ethics of conviction, where the end justifies the means. Is it true, as German sociologist Max Weber suggests, that the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility are fundamentally differing – and in his view – irreconcilably opposed maxims? Or can they be bridged to enable thoughtful public debate on issues of importance? This project looks at the firestorms of negative publicity which often ensue around proposals to site industrial facilities in British Columbia, and the challenges posed for regulators attempting to make informed decisions. The role of the media is evaluated, as is the influence "experts" have on coverage of contentious issues.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisory committee, Doctors Stephen Duguid, Geoff Poitras and Lawrence Boland; as well as professors Dr. June Sturrock and Dr. Heribert Adam whose courses shaped many of the ideas presented here. While a Simon Fraser student, I had the opportunity to take a class at the UBC Graduate School of Journalism under the Western Dean's Agreement and Dr. Stephen Ward and Professor Mary Beth Young made a significant contribution to the portion of this work that considers the media.

I would also like to thank a few of the people with whom I have worked in recent years and whose projects are explored here: Chuck Martin, Mary Ellen Walling, Moira Chicilo and Donna McGeachie. And a special thanks to Robert Simpson, Keith Bell, Ian Fraser and George Cooper who were kind enough to offer, what I found to be, valuable and insightful comments.

My time as a student in the Liberal Studies program taught me to appreciate a wide variety of viewpoints and often challenged me to think about things in a different way, for which I would like to say thank you to my cohort, classmates and professors.

Finally, there were three people who sacrificed quite a lot so I could undertaken this degree and I save my most heart felt thank you for Scott, Devan and Emma.

Table of Contents

Approval ii

Abstract iii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents v

Glossary of Acronyms vii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: The Great Divide 7

Reason and Passion 11

Business as a Moral Actor 12

Chapter 2: Using Conviction to Motivate Social Change 21

Looking Back 23

Values and Accountability 26

Secular Missionaries 29

Trouble Along the Line 32

Self-interest, Motivation and Trust 37

Chapter 3: Who Should We Trust? A Question Asked By – And About – The Media. 40

PR: Progressive or Spin? 42

The Defence of Objectivity 43

The On-Going Quest for Credibility 44

Propaganda, Influence and Scrutiny 46

The Farmed Salmon PCB Scare 48

Experts: Whose "Truth" Should We Trust? 50

The Gap Between Fear and Fact 52

Where to From Here? 55

Chapter 4: Generating Controversy 58

A Proposal to Meet Regional Need 59

A Different View 61

The Decision 65

A Reality Check 67

Good Decisions Come From Good Facts 70

Chapter 5: Responsible Conviction 74

The Conundrum 78

The Road Ahead 81

Works Cited 83

Glossary of Acronyms

BANANA – Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything

BCTC – British Columbia Transmission Corporation

BCUC – British Columbia Utilities Commission

CAAR – Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform

CFCI – Coastal Forest Conservation Initiative

CSO – Civil Society Organization

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

EBM – Eco-system Based Management

EFSEC – Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council

EMF – Electric Magnetic Field

ENGO – Environmental Non-Governmental Organization

GVRD – Greater Vancouver Regional District

LULU – Locally Unwanted Land Use

NEB – National Energy Board

NESCO – National Energy Systems

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NIMBY – Not In My Backyard

PR – Public relations

SE2 – Sumas Energy 2

TRAHVOL – Tsawwassen Residents Against Higher Voltage Overhead Lines

Introduction

As I prepare to complete this project, the media report on a plethora of corporate scandals. Conrad Black, the fallen media baron, is facing fraud charges for alleged chicanery with the corporate coffers of Hollinger Inc. and could spend up to 40 years in prison. Montreal ad men Paul Coffin and Jean Brault, along with government bureaucrat Chuck Gité, face criminal charges for their part in the Government of Canada sponsorship scandal. And, British Columbia landowner and former WorldCom Inc. CEO Bernie Ebbers is sentenced to 25 years in jail when a judge rules that, although there was no paper trail linking Ebbers to the $11 billion implosion of WorldCom, as CEO, he had a moral responsibility to know what was going on.

On the surface, these reports of corporate wrongdoing and malfeasance make it difficult to reconcile the notion of corporate ethics and responsibility with reality. Yet, ironically, they serve to prove the point that immoral behaviour on the part of large organizations is no longer acceptable. Inquiries are called, allegations investigated, and criminal charges are pressed. There is a regulatory regime in place that must be honoured and, increasingly, shareholders view corporations through a moral lens. Nevertheless, surely writing a paper that scrutinized corporate opprobrium would be more logical than proposing – as I intend to do – that just as corporations have been forced to move towards ethics of responsibility, there is a need for a similar value shift within organizations working to protect the public from environmental hazards, and to

influence public opinion and public policy on issues related to the operation of industrial operations, which may benefit many but which affect local citizens.

While grappling with the apparent dichotomy between corporate ethics of responsibility and the clear evidence of continued corporate and government wrongdoing, I spot a billboard sponsored by a British Columbia environmental coalition, the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR). The advertising campaign carries a headline proclaiming "Ingredients for Extinction". The ad alleges that Safeway's sale of farmed salmon is threatening BC wild salmon with extinction and calls upon consumers to lobby Safeway to stop selling this product. Interestingly, Safeway does not sell BC farmed salmon – it finds it more cost effective to buy farmed salmon from Chile. CAAR knows this, but targets Safeway in the hope that it will bow to public pressure to promise not to sell BC farmed salmon, as Albertson's did in 2004 when faced with a similarly aggressive media campaign. A public commitment from Safeway not to buy or sell BC farmed salmon could be positioned as an endorsement of CAAR's position that "salmon farming is bad for the environment" (Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform). The facts do not need to be 100 per cent accurate if the end justifies the means. As Saul Alinksy, a leading American social activist, writes, "Means and ends are so qualitatively interrelated that the true question has never been the proverbial one, "Does this End justify the Means?" but always has been "Does this *particular* end justify this *particular* means" (Alinsky 47).

This line of thinking is also evident with coverage of a study, *Toxic Nation: A Report on Pollution in Canadians*, commissioned by Toronto-based, Environmental Defence

Canada. In the media coverage of the report, released November 9, 2005, Canadians were warned, "we all carry inside of us hundreds of different pollutants and these things are accumulating inside our bodies every day" (Picard A15). The story was the lead on the CTV National News and ran in *The Globe and Mail*, as well as a host of other daily newspapers. According to the study, wildlife artist and outdoor enthusiast, Robert Bateman, who "lives on BC's idyllic Saltspring Island and eats organic food" was found to be a repository for 48 different toxic substances including PCBs (polychlorinated buphenyls) pesticides, and insecticides. Environmental Defence claims its study is the first to test for a broad range of chemicals in average Canadians throughout the country. This makes the findings newsworthy, and articulate and willing spokespersons, including Robert Bateman, carried the message to the media.

Another participant in the study, Dr. Kapil Khatter told the *Globe and Mail* (Picard A15) that Canadians are generally too complacent about pollutants. Dr. Khatter's sentiments were taken one step further by the executive director of Environmental Defence who told CTV News, "We are frankly trying to ring an alarm bell with this report, and point out how bad the situation has become with pollution" (Environmental Defence). After hearing the news reports, Canadians may well feel alarmed. Will that concern translate into additional pressure on the government to ban the chemicals in question? It might, but is it responsible to suggest there is a serious health issue when only 11 people were tested? And what advice does Environmental Defence offer to people alarmed by the report? They suggest we reduce our personal exposure to chemicals by, for example, buying organic produce . . . although, as *Globe and Mail*

reporter Andre Picard pointed out, this does not appear to have helped Robert Bateman.

If a business was to announce results based on a sample size of 11 the research methodology would be questioned. When an environmental health watchdog publicizes these findings, the media often report the results. Groups such as CAAR and Environmental Defence Canada, which represent worthy causes and operate from conviction (rather than corporate self interest) have a credibility which business lacks, and the claims of advocacy groups are often not subjected to the same scrutiny as those of business, which is seen as only existing to make a profit. Where rationale self interest must guide one, passion often guides the other with both using reason and facts to buttress their arguments. In the divide that is created between proponents and opponents, stakeholders need to be mindful that when discussing environmental issues we should not rely solely upon environmental organizations, business lobbyists or the media – rather we should strive for balanced democratic debate and, as Immanuel Kant proposed, endeavour to think for ourselves. Paul Hawken describes the conundrum we face trying to sort out whose "truth" is the right truth,

> When repeated monotonously, environmental "facts" – bearing in mind that some of the facts are just as incorrect as some of the defenses to them – take on all of the aspects of a "sky is falling" exhortation, making the recipient feel either powerless or incredulous. Some environmentalists have justifiably been criticized as complainers, focusing too much on excesses and blame. Business has completed this anxious symmetry by only seeing the worst in environmentalism, and by oversimplifying issues to play to the fears of the public. Thus, a critical basis for change and consensus is to find a way to introduce and discuss ecological principles in society in a manner that draws people together, rather than repelling or deterring them. (Hawken 202-203)

Some continue to believe that the notion of corporations adhering to ethics alone, never mind ethics of responsibility, is a contradiction in terms. Skepticism is common. Some people I have talked to have been hostile to the idea of corporate ethics and question my rationale for criticizing advocacy groups. My intention is not to call into question the motives of these groups – many of which are constituency-based NGOs, small citizen groups mobilized on issues of local interest - but to assert that as self-appointed guardians of the public interest, trust is the greatest asset of these groups and, ultimately, trust can only be maintained through transparent reporting and the ability to withstand scrutiny. One measure of trust is provided by public opinion polling, and the evidence suggests that confidence in environmental groups is waning. For example, a Gallup Poll ("Who will protect the environment?"), conducted April 26, 2005, reports that while Americans place least trust in government and large corporations to protect the environment "fewer Americans trust national environmental groups now than did so in 2000, when a third of Americans trusted national environmental groups a great deal [versus a quarter of the public today]".

Just as the claims of corporations and business are questioned, this study suggests findings of advocacy groups should be scrutinized for accuracy and to reduce emotional rhetoric to a minimum. I believe my overall argument is sound and would hope readers will consider the benefits of ensuring accountability on the part of all groups engaged in making or influencing public policy. My objective is to contribute to the framework for future work on how the ethics of conviction and responsibility might be bridged to enable thoughtful public debate on issues of importance, rather

than creating firestorms of negative publicity that make it difficult for citizens to make informed decisions. The role of the media will be considered as will the influence "experts" have on coverage of contentious issues. While several cases will be referenced, the ethics of conviction and responsibility will be contrasted principally by examining community response to a proposal by the British Columbia Transmission Corporation (BCTC) to upgrade the transmission system between the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island; by analyzing a contentious proposal to site a gas-fired generating facility in Sumas Washington across the border from the City of Abbotsford; and, by looking at a couple of aspects of the controversy surrounding salmon farming in British Columbia.

The goal is to consider standards of accountability and how they are applied to industry and stakeholder groups. I do not profess to having the answers as to how we will bridge the gap that currently exists but I see the problem and, like Harvard professor Lynn Sharp Paine, I am a "firm believer in the power of reason to illuminate the way towards answers in this domain as in others" (Paine xiv).

Chapter 1: The Great Divide

"When falsehood can look so much like truth, who can assure themselves of happiness"
Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

Companies wishing to site new facilities, such as pipelines or power lines, mill or mines, in most first-world countries today must prove to permitting authorities that the project meets standards for public health and safety, and environmental protection. They must also demonstrate that they have consulted the public and attempted to address – and mitigate – concerns arising from the project proposal. Increasingly, the latter has proven more problematic than the former. The conundrum is that as technology develops to enable better protection of public health, safety, and environmental protection, fear of technological failure – sparked by catastrophic industrial accidents – has contributed to a public desire for absolute proof of zero risk (D. Smith 100). Initially business responded to this fear by conducting risk assessments and sharing the results of these studies. But this created a new problem: the mountains of data generated did quite the contrary of reassuring the public, instead, the empirical and analytical uncertainties sparked debate between experts and further alarmed the public (D. Smith 103). The rise of stakeholder groups and the recognition of their legitimate right to be involved in the decision-making process for siting industrial facilities creates an ethical battlefield with business interests seen to be

in opposition to community interests, and where concern runs high that corporate rights could trump the democratic rights of people in communities. Industrial proponents, accustomed to dealing with the pragmatic matters of engineering, are seldom effective when confronted with an emotional and angry public. While business has been forced to become increasingly accountable to the public and to employ the ethics of responsibility in consultation and reporting, the public frequently use the ethics of conviction. Both sides use public relations, which we will consider more closely in Chapter 3, and the gap that develops between the two can be difficult to bridge.

The terms "ethics of conviction" and the "ethics of responsibility" are an adaptation a definition proposed by German sociologist Max Weber who argued that the ethics of ultimate ends, which I see as conviction, and the ethics of responsibility are fundamentally differing maxims.

> We must be clear about the fact that all ethically oriented conduct may be guided by one of two fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims: conduct can be oriented to an 'ethic of ultimate ends' or to an 'ethic of responsibility.' This is not to say that an ethic of ultimate ends is identical with irresponsibility, or that an ethic of responsibility is identical with unprincipled opportunism. Naturally nobody says that. However, there is an abysmal contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of ultimate ends--that is, in religious terms, 'The Christian does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord'--and conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of responsibility, in which case one has to give an account of the foreseeable results of one's action. (Weber 39)

Weber made his remarks in the context of politics yet there is a similar divide today between companies, now expected to use the ethics of responsibility to manage their operations, and interest groups that believe that the end justifies the means, a hallmark of the ethics of conviction. But what is really understood about these two

terms? As Weber argues, conviction and responsibility are not absolute contrasts – the claims of one should not necessarily put the other in the wrong, although in all matters of ethics there should be a duty of truthfulness. Saul Alinsky makes the relevant point that the evaluation of the ethic of the means is dependent upon the political position of the judge, using the example of the American Declaration of Independence – a "glorious document and an affirmation of human rights"– which was regarded by the British as a "statement notorious for its deceit by omission" (Alinsky 27). This was because the document lists all of the injustices the colony had experience under British rule and makes no mention of the benefits. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and the other authors of the declaration were honourable men but the declaration was a rallying cry to war and as such had to be a powerful statement of the justice of the colonists' cause.

A frequent user of the ethics of conviction is the contemporary environmental movement, which, to attract media attention and galvanize public opinion on issues of importance, often opts to use sensational tactics designed to attract media attention. Examples range from the use of celebrity photo opportunities (Beloe 38) – think of the media coverage generated in North American in March 2006 when Sir Paul McCartney and his wife, Heather Mills, clad in red survival suits, went nose-to-nose with a white-coated seal pup on the ice flows of the Saint Lawrence – to Frankenfood demonstrations complete with a GriM reaper and Frankenstein effigies, or dubious distinction awards such as "the 'Fossil of the Day' award to the country deemed to be the most obstructive to the [United Nations Climate Change] negotiations" (Carpenter

320). However, while ethics of conviction can help to draw attention to important issues, their use can also result in questionable ends: for example, the well-publicized opposition to genetically modified food prompted the Government of Zimbabwe to initially refuse maize – offered by the United Nations World Food Programme - to feed its starving population. Harare, like other southern African governments facing hunger, said it did not want GM maize to be distributed in Zimbabwe; fearing farmers could plant it and endanger future agricultural exports to the European Union, which has strict laws against the import of GM products (Coghlan).

Currently in British Columbia one of the most contentious debates centres on salmon farming. Is it a "sustainable way to harvest bounty from the seas to feed the world at reasonable cost" or is "farmed salmon [responsible] for depleting the wild salmon stocks by spreading sea lice and disease" (Wente A29)? Does salmon farming "offer economic hope to remote coastal communities that have no other livelihood" or is "farmed salmon laced with deadly cancer-causing chemicals such as PCBs" (A29)? Is it "a high-tech and very regulated" industry or is it responsible for "destroying the ecosystem of the seas" (A29)? The difference in opinion between salmon farmers and environmentalists is polarized and the arguments between the two groups are frequently vociferous. Chapters 3 and 5 will take a closer look at two specific aspects of the salmon farming debate in, and Chapter 2 will consider the ethics of conviction and the rise of special interest groups in more detail. First, a review of what Harvard professor Lynn Sharp Paine refers to as an emerging new standard of corporate performance that requires a fundamental value shift for

business wishing to meet public expectations and achieve success, and the challenges created when advocacy groups target business projects.

Reason and Passion

For business and industry, a highly instrumental form of reason is typically cited as the rationale, or justification, for projects. Charles Taylor defines "instrumental reason" as the rationality used to calculate the most economic application of means to a given ends (Taylor 5), and for much of the 19th and 20th centuries the public had little input to industrial planning: factories were built where owners felt it was convenient and made business sense; forests were logged; mineral deposits were mined. While there may have been occasional cases of individuals criticizing unacceptable behaviour (early examples could include the fictional work of Charles Dickens or William Blake), it was not until the later part of the 20th century that various stakeholder groups began to successfully pressure government and industry to move towards transparency in operational decision-making and financial reporting. (Paine 98).

As the recent business scandals referenced earlier have shown, some companies continue to adhere to Milton Friedman's notion – captured in the title of his 1970 *New York Times Magazine* article – "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" not ensuring ethical performance, solving social problems or contributing to sustainable development; however, a growing number of business leaders are now cognizant that public expectations of business have changed dramatically, and are

legitimate. They understand that in the 21st century it is necessary to deliver more than just solid financial results: increasingly, successful companies must also demonstrate social and environmental responsibility and "must satisfy a mix of economic and ethical criteria" (Paine 116).

Companies that are changing their ways have many different motives: some may be attempting to side step regulation or avoid liability, some may be trying to change the nature of business to become more socially responsible (Hawken xii). Knowing that critics use the Internet and the media to raise issues of concern, and that the resulting stories influence consumer purchasing and public opinion, which, in turn, influences public policy, is also a powerful incentive for responsible behaviour. But whether the motivation is altruistic or enlightened self-interest, successful companies recognize the new premise: "corporations, because they are the dominant institution on the planet, must squarely address the social and environmental problems that afflict humankind" (Hawken xiii). The result? Successful businesses are being forced to move towards the ethics of responsibility.

Business as a Moral Actor

The concept of the corporation as we know it today came into existence in the 16th century with the early state-charted corporations set up in Old World countries to explore, trade, and colonize the New World. The risk in these ventures was high, and, to encourage investment, legislation was introduced to limit each shareholder's liability for the journey to an amount no greater than the original investment (Hawken

106). The resulting commerce and resource development enriched ruling families, governments and the elite.

Towards the later part of the 19th century, the framework of the modern corporation was established, with the term "corporation" evolving to take on two meanings: one referring to the contractual agreement, the other referring to those individuals with the ability to act on behalf of the business entity. This metamorphosis piqued an academic debate on whether business had – or should have – a moral responsibility to society. According to Lynn Sharpe Paine, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, the view that corporations were moral actors with responsibilities in a range of social concerns was gaining credence, driven in part, by the birth of the modern environmental movement in North America in the 1960s (Paine 98-101). Legally, "a [US] 1970 federal court ruling that cleared the way for shareholders to use the proxy process to raise issues of social concern" (100) and provided socially active shareholders with a tool to register their disapproval of corporate practices in a tangible manner. In the decades since, it has become common to refer to the values, commitments, and responsibilities – all moral attributes – of corporations.

By the mid-1980s, there was a growing feeling that corporations should provide not just jobs and tax revenue, but that they should also act in an environmentally responsible manner – mitigating impacts and sometimes fixing the mistakes of predecessors; helping to solve community problems via investment; involving the public in decision making for issues with community impact; and addressing social problems (Paine 111). More recently, a year 2000 survey of jurors revealed that 40

per cent of respondents said corporations should be held to a higher standard of morality than individuals due their greater resources, size, impact and special role in society (112).

> As a purely pragmatic matter, a society cannot survive, let alone thrive, if it exempts its most powerful and pervasive institutions from all notions of morality. This, more than anything, explains why society has, in effect, endowed the corporation with the moral personality that many theorists have long insisted it could not have. (97)

Although the notion of the corporation as a moral entity may be said to have gained traction in the 1960s and 1970s, NGOs cannot claim all the credit for moving business towards the ethics of responsibility. The process of moralizing the corporation has been a long one, with origins in the 19th century (D. Smith 173). When William Blake wrote about "the dark Satanic mills" of industrial England his concern about the impact of industry on the environment is evident and was shared by others of his time. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* raises questions about the long-term impacts of technological development on the natural world that remain difficult to answer today. We can only surmise what Shelley might make of the way society has developed. Would she be encouraged by the rise in environmental activism; would she despair at the devastation unchecked industrial development has wrought; or, would she accept that 21st century society has imposed sufficient checks and balances on industrial development to regulate its progress? Even Adam Smith, often regarded as a proponent of an amoral market, warned in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* that– "There can be no proper motive for hurting our neighbours, there can be no

incitement to do evil to another . . ." (A. Smith 82) – a concept echoed in contemporary codes of business conduct.

Despite this early interest in corporate responsibility it was not until the later part of the 1980s that business become more aware of the importance of responding to growing public concern over environmental issues (D. Smith 2). The realization was no doubt heightened by two of the biggest industrial accidents of all time: the 1984 Union Carbide explosion in Bhopal, India that killed close to 3000 people, and committed many more to progressive and debilitating illness and premature death; and the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster in which a cloud of radioactive gas killed 10,000 people outright. Today,

> as environmental issues and programs have become more pervasive and complex, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and corporations themselves have developed a wide range of mechanisms to increase awareness about environmental activities and stimulate improved performance, at least in part in recognition of the need to rely on a broader range of behavioural motivators beyond the regulatory system (or to avoid the transactions costs associated with regulatory systems). (Paddock 3)

For companies, a commitment to values like honesty, fairness and responsibility are crucial for building a good reputation, and for many, the Never-Never Land of good intentions has been replaced with corporate social responsibility audits, community advisory panels, and environmental management plans that measure – and publicly report – results. Despite these efforts, there remains a feeling on the part of some that corporate vision and values statements and codes of ethics serve only to

cloak the corporation's true intent of making as much money as possible without corporate executives going to jail.

This skepticism presents a challenge for businesses adhering to the ethics of responsibility. While the skepticism is well-founded, arising from a proliferation of scandals and corruption that have eroded public trust in business, it means that company representatives attempting to communicate the processes that could be employed to offset or mitigate project impacts lack credibility and are frequently portrayed as self-interested at best, or – increasingly frequently in my personal experience – as liars. David Bidwell, writing in the International Association of Public Participation newsletter, recounts his experience of showing up to facilitate a community meeting and finding himself sharing the stage with a member of the public dressed as a dog and carrying a staffed pony to protest the corporate "dog and pony" show (Bidwell 3).. The meeting quickly disintegrated into an emotional free for all in which an exchange of information became virtually impossible. The session reinforced the public's perception that the project proponent was disingenuous and solidified the proponent's view that the public was irrational and bitter. There was lots of talking. No-one was listening.

The second challenge for business is that the claims of advocacy groups are often not subjected to the same scrutiny as those seen as only existing to make a profit. Non-corporate stakeholders, promoting worthy causes and operating from conviction – rather than corporate self-interest – have a credibility which business lacks, especially with the media, which is used as a conduit through which information flows

to influence public opinion and public policy. The issues which advocacy groups target are frequently complex but "the default setting of many NGOs when addressing an issue is an media campaign (Below 28). Arguments are presented in a manner to galvanize public opinion, and the use of "experts" and conflicting scientific evidence further complicate the issue for potentially impacted persons trying to sort through the competing assertions of business and its critics.

A third challenge is that self-interested individualism makes it difficult to hold a balanced public discourse on projects which potentially benefit regional or national groups but which have local consequences. Throughout the ages, self-interest has been recognized as a principal influencer of human behaviour. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* first published in 1759, Adam Smith weighed the fact that we are always much more concerned about ourselves than others. (Smith, however, ultimately decides – see pages 136-138 – that we would not accept the proposition of sacrificing the other because reason would intervene: that our morality would interject itself into our consciousness by cautioning us that by thinking solely of ourselves we become the proper object of contempt and indignation). More recently Saul Alinsky advised his readers,

> From the great teachers of Judaeo-Christian morality and the philosophers, to the economist, and to the wise observers of the politics of man, there has always been universal agreement on the part that self-interest plays as a prime moving force in man's behaviour. The importance of self-interest has never been challenged; it has been accepted as an inevitable fact of life. In the works of Christ, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Aristotle said, in Politics, "Everyone thinks chiefly of his own, hardly ever of the public interest. (Alinsky 54)

Another challenge is that business is now expected to respond to conflicting governance and social agendas, driven by groups whose tactics are sometimes judged by business to be emotional and unfounded, and which are viewed as having a negative impact on the bottom line.

> Today, business is being asked by environmentalists to internalize some of the costs that were formerly externalized and largely invisible, and thus is being forced to respond to conflicting signals. On the one hand, it is asked to deliver goods to the marketplace at the lowest possible price; on the other hand, it is asked to assume the 'new' costs of environmental stewardship. If it performs the first function too well, it is held accountable and punished by the government, if not by public opinion, because it cannot achieve the lowest price without some or many forms of environmental and societal compromises. If it performs the latter function well, its costs may be raised so high that it suffers in the marketplace. (Hawken 165)

The only way to ensure all companies meet the same standards is through regulation but where do we draw the line? In the auto industry all manufacturers must install emission reduction controls. The cost of this technology is passed onto the consumer, who pays it because it is no longer possible to buy a lower priced car without these pollution reduction devices. On the other hand, hybrid cars use less fossil fuel, have lower emissions, and are therefore a "better choice" yet the hybrid technology is not mandated and costs consumers more. The result? While hybrid cars have earned a market niche, only a small percentage of consumers are opting to pay the higher price for a vehicle that has less environmental impact. (Auto industry commentator J. D. Power Company, estimates that hybrids will make up a mere four per cent of global car sales by 2010).

In the coming chapters, three specific industrial initiatives, which provide a product or service that many use – one could argue, need – will be considered to illustrate the

challenges faced by business and advocacy groups wishing to communicate a specific point of view. These cases will help illustrate the differences between the ethics of responsibility and conviction, and the challenges posed for proponents seeking to earn public consent to operate. A full consideration of this issue would require a more detailed analysis than this paper and for that reason will focus narrowly on three recent British Columbia issues attracting the attention of advocacy groups: a proposal to upgrade the existing transmission system along a 50-year old right-of-way; an unsuccessful proposal to site a natural-gas fired generating facility across the border from Abbotsford; and one campaign in the ongoing, divisive debate about the sustainability of farming salmon in ocean pens along the British Columbia coast.

The public review process for industrial projects today is complex, time consuming and expensive, and offers project proponents no guarantees. This is as it should be, however, if we look at these three specific issues in British Columbia it is worth considering whether projects that will benefit regional or national groups can overcome vocal – and principally - local opposition, often based on conflicting scientific evidence. One can see that business used to wield too much influence (and still does in certain areas), that the involvement of the public today ensures that project planners take into account local interests and issues and, that when public input is accommodated better projects result. (Central to this belief is the conviction that the public is capable of critical reflection and analysis and that their input is both valuable and morally central to good decision making). In the emotional rhetoric that typically surrounds the siting of industrial facilities, are we at risk of losing our ability to

consider all stakeholders' needs? Are those who set public policy being overly influenced by the emotional arguments of vocal and well-organized opponents? In addition, how do the media and the public sort through competing scientific claims presented by "experts", especially when science is used to further political and ideological positions?

Having briefly addressed the value shift that has driven some businesses towards corporate social responsibility, it is equally important to examine the ethics of conviction and the current state of constituency-based non-governmental groups.

Chapter 2: Using Conviction to Motivate Social Change

The clever person knows the best means to any possible end.
The wise person knows which ends are worth striving for.
Aristotle

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been around for generations, and today are best known for promoting worthy causes and operating on behalf of the public good, rather than corporate self-interest, which earns them a credibility business lacks. As international NGO numbers continue to rise – to more than 26,000 in 1999 from 6000 in 1990 (*Economist* 1999) – high profile victories such as preventing Shell's disposal of the Brent Spar oil platform, or securing a European ban on "Frankenfood," mean their influence also continues to rise. In an increasingly market-dominated world, no longer held in check by communism, civil society groups can be said to play an important role in challenging capitalism to achieve social and environmental sustainability. This call to action is executed despite the fact that most NGOs are relatively ignorant of how markets and business work, and often have little knowledge of the processes of wealth creation and distribution they challenge (Beloe 8, 11).

Advocacy groups in general and, more specific to this discussion, constituency-based NGOs – those groups operating locally and composed of grassroots individuals motivated to take action on issues they face in their daily lives – tend to

come together to address issues of personal concern. Motivated by passionate engagement with a specific concern, these groups often adhere to the ethics of conviction, an approach in which the end is seen to justify the means. In recent years, the rise in number and credibility of advocacy groups has earned a myriad of different groups including environmental and non-governmental organizations, church groups, social activists, and not-for-profit agencies the legitimate right to be classified as stakeholders in the operations of many different organizations.

Although NGOs have existed for some time, their influence has undergone a significant power shift in the decades since the 1970s when most corporations would have identified their "stakeholders" solely as their major shareholders or institutional investors (Paine 112). An indicator of the rising power of these groups is the fact they are recognized as stakeholders by regulatory agencies, including the British Columbia Utilities Commission (BCUC) and National Energy Board (NEB), which mandate public consultation as an integral part of the project permitting and review process, and which provide funding to enable interveners to participate fully in the review process. In addition, the unflagging commitment of advocacy groups to reform, and to act as a countervailing force to motivate corporate social responsibility, has yielded positive results: as reviewed in Chapter 1, business entities operating today are expected to contribute to the local community in visible and measurable ways; to solicit public input when planning projects; to be proactive in responding to social and environmental issues; and, to return part of the generated wealth to the local community.

NGO groups work for change through public pressure, using a variety of means to drive awareness of issues of importance to them and, as they are promoting worthy causes and have worked hard to develop an understanding of the needs and interest of the media, they have a credibility which business lacks. But can the claims they make withstand scrutiny? And, if not, is that a problem? It is a concern, and constant source of frustration, to business, which, as noted, has been forced to become more responsible in their reporting, but if the end benefits society, does the means employed by non-governmental and civil society groups matter? This will be considered in the context of several contemporary issues, but first it is important to consider the evolution of non-governmental organizations.

Looking Back

The first recorded not-for-profit, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, was founded in 1839, and by the end of the 19th century a number of other groups, still active today, had been established (Beloe 12-13). Frequently, the catalyst for the formation of many of the early associations was war, social injustice or protection of the natural world. The International Committee of the Red Cross was established in 1863 following a bloody battle between France and Austria at Solferino, Italy; the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the largest European conservation organization today, was started in 1889 to campaign against the Victorian trade in wild bird plumage.

Another of the most significant of the early groups was the Congo Reform Association, founded in 1904 by Edmund Dene Morel, a trusted employee of the Liverpool shipping company, Elder Dempster, who quit his job to campaign full time against the injustice perpetrated on the Congo during the reign of King Leopold of Belgium (Hochschild 207). As a shipping clerk in Belgium, Morel had noticed that trade statistics published by État Indépendent du Congo did not align with his shipping and receiving records. In *King Leopold's Ghost,* Adam Hochshild documents Morel's calculation that the deduced value of the goods being shipped out of Congo vastly exceeded the value of goods destined for Africa. Asking how this anomaly could be reconciled, Morel realized there could only be one answer: Belgium was using slave labour to extract rubber in the Congo (Hochschild 180). (By 1887, the inflatable bicycle tire and car tire were invented, giving rise to a worldwide rubber boom for which the Congo was the principal source). According to Hochschild, Morel was a strong believer in free trade and was convinced that only commerce would bring Africa into the modern age, but he abhorred the idea that commerce would be built upon the institution of slavery. His epiphany on the Antwerp dockside took him down the path to become Britain's greatest investigative journalist of his time (187). Hochschild notes that Morel's work was meticulously documented and based on fact but it was the ability to use the telegraph and the camera to transmit information and capture photos and to mobilize his fellow journalists that enabled Morel to mobilize international public opinion in support of his efforts to expose the first major international scandal of the 20th century (215).

By the 1960s and 1970s, a new, largely secular, and increasingly activist, wave of NGOs emerged (Beloe 12). Amnesty International and the World Wildlife Fund were launched in 1961; Greenpeace was born in Vancouver in 1971 when a boatload of volunteers and journalists sailed north past Alaska to intervene in US efforts to conduct underground nuclear tests. Since that time, NGOs have grown rapidly. By one estimate, there are now two million NGOs in America alone, most formed in the past 30 years. In Russia, where almost none existed before the fall of communism, there are at least 65,000 NGOs or civil society organizations (*Economist* 2000). Today, the not-for-profit sector is worth over $1 trillion a year globally, an amount equal to the world's eighth-largest economy (Beloe 2), and constituency-based NGOs develop rapidly in response to local issues which concern their citizen organizers.

In the decades since the 1970s, the media has become a powerful communications tool for NGOs who know the news media's insatiable appetite for controversy means journalists are susceptible to accepting NGO claims without scrutiny, especially if the resulting story attacks big business or positions the average person against a government entity or corporation. "Demonstrations and protest marches may be staged and managed for the benefit of the evening news slot. The rhetoric produced by these telegenic displays is concerned with manipulating sympathy or extorting public funds, not with accurate reflections of the facts" (Fleras 75).

One other communications tool that has helped both business and advocacy groups, but which is more effectively used by NGOs, is the Internet. The ability to post information to the Web and share it almost instantaneously with all interested parties

regardless of their geographic location has been of immense benefit for anyone looking to spread the word about an initiative of concern or topic of interest. In addition to building Web sites, NGOs make effective use of the Internet to mobilize their constituents by building stakeholder lists and media contact databases to which they post media friendly materials. Although a valuable communications tool, the Internet is not without its challenges. The meticulous fact gathering and checking, for which author Adam Hochschild commemorates Edmund Dene Morel can easily be side-stepped in the interest of getting the news out fast. Catchy headlines that pull readers into the text are seldom checked for factual accuracy with writers knowing – and readers seldom realizing - that, as Marshal McLuhan so famously wrote, "in the electric age, rumours are the real thing" (www.mcluhan.utoronto.ca)).

Values and Accountability

The authors of a report entitled *The 21st Century NGO* draw attention to the fact that the values of many working in NGOs are different from those working in the mainstream world of business and government, or within major economic and political institutions (Beloe 11). Within the NGO community, ethical, social and environmental issues are prioritized in different ways, and those working in civil society groups feel a stronger sense of outrage when these values are offended (Beloe 11). NGOs typically attract people driven by an urgent sense of social, economic, environmental or political injustice, and the values and ethics inherent in these positions probably represent the NGO sector's single greatest asset. "Whatever issues

[NGOs] address, [they] tend to be fuelled by a sense of injustice, even outrage. Passion is their fuel" (Beloe 25).

Although relatively little research effort has gone into why NGOs and their leaders are so trusted (Beloe 37), when public opinion research companies, such as Gallup, Environics, Ipsos Reid and others, ask people to rank most trusted sources of information on environmental issues, NGOs consistently score higher than government, business, industry and the media, earning a spot below academics but close to the top of the list of most trusted and credible spokespersons. It is deeply ingrained within the NGO community (and perhaps beyond) that not-for-profits are automatically good and for-profits automatically bad (Beloe 43). While NGOs have no monopoly on ethics, this dimension of their positioning accounts for much of the public trust in which they are held (37). NGOs may also be assumed to be less bureaucratic, wasteful or corrupt than governments, yet under-scrutinized groups can suffer from the same chief failing as business and government: slipping into poor practices because they are not accountable to anyone outside of their immediate constituents (*Economist* 2000).

NGO accountability in the 20th century was ad hoc. But with the move towards triple bottom line reporting (social, environmental, economic) imposed upon business in the later part of the 1900s, NGOs may see the whole issue of accountability looming for them as well. In a series of interviews conducted by the authors of the *21st Century NGO*, the issue of transparency frequently surfaced (Beloe 21). Some groups see a tension between increased accountability and the desire to flexible and nimble;

others argue that accountability is addressed as a function of the group's make-up. Stephen Tindale of Greenpeace UK argues that as a campaigning organization funded solely by individuals, Greenpeace does not expect to face questions on accountability (qtd. in Beloe 21). Others have opted to produce a type of annual report: some report principally on campaign activities, but others – including the David Suzuki Foundation and the WWF– now generate audited financial statements similar to those produced by public corporations. Constituency-based NGOs differ from large organizations such as Greenpeace or the David Suzuki Foundation and, in many cases, lack the resources to prepare audited financial statements. Nevertheless, just as sensational claims and the use of emotional rhetoric can undermine the credibility of large organizations and NGOs alike, they also have the potential to reduce the effectiveness of smaller groups hoping to influence business practices and siting decisions.

There is no question that the role of NGOs in society is different than that of corporate entities, yet there appears to be increasing interest – certainly on the part of the corporate sector – for NGOs to demonstrate accountability as a means of retaining its high degree of public trust. Voices, such as Jeffery E. Garten, dean, Yale School of Management, posit "NGOs have had too much of a free ride in identifying with the public interest . . . They have acquired the high ground of public opinion without being subjected to the same public scrutiny given to corporation and governments" (qtd. in Beloe 7). Disgruntled former environmentalists such as Patrick Moore, a founder of Greenpeace, allege environmentalists today have rejected

working towards solutions based on consensus and sustainable development, in favour of confrontation, extremism and an era of zero tolerance (Moore 4). Whether those subjective opinions are fair is difficult to decipher but one of the problems confronting those trying to site industrial facilities in British Columbia – and perhaps elsewhere – is this: to date, few NGOs have demonstrated the skills required to work effectively with business to create initiatives of real mutual value, and relatively few business people have the interest, or skills, required to work with NGOs (Beloe 8). (One example of an uneasy, yet ultimately productive, partnership – British Columbia's Coastal Forest Conservation Initiative – will be discussed in more detail later). Where NGOs are rarely obliged to think about trade-offs in policy or cross-sector approaches to development, business is now required to incorporate these concepts into project planning. NGOs are often organized to promote particular goals rather than the broader goal of development often assumed by business. The different orientations of the two groups create situations more conducive to conflict that consensus. As each side tries to convince the public and regulators that theirs is the "right" position, science is a weapon both sides deploy.

Secular Missionaries

The objectives of the NGOs considered in this paper are to win public favour and government support and, as most groups have learned, to generate a powerful public response issues must be framed simply and in a manner that motivates public interest. The complexity of environmental impacts means business must engage in open

discourse with project stakeholders and provide information to address perceptions and interest, but industry often falls short of meeting societal expectations about its environmental performance and frequently does not appreciate public perception of risk (D. Smith 3). While industry grapples with how to explain complex technical issues and to reassure an angry public, local opponents know the best way to attract interest in the issue is to gain media coverage (Beloe 38). The science may be complex but Stanford climatologist Stephen Schneider outlines the practical approach for galvanizing public interest on complex issues,

> [We] are not just scientists but human beings as well. And like most people we'd like to see the world a better place...To do that we need to get some broad-based support, to capture the public's imagination. That, of course, entails getting loads of media coverage. So we have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have...Each of us has to decide what the right balance is between being effective and being honest. (qtd. in *Economist* 2002)

From the perspective of an individual or organization dedicated to solving an environmental or social problem, this balancing act between effectiveness and honesty is a means to justify the end. The media sometimes employs a similar tactic of "limited truth telling". On November 14, 1999 CBC aired the television program *Undercurrents* in which Wendy Mesley interviewed award-winning Canadian journalist Lyndon McIntyre on the tactics journalists use to get a story. McIntyre described his use of "the theory of mental reservation", a similar approach to Dr. Schneider's, and which McIntrye says was taught to him by the Jesuits: one need not disclose one's full intent and if others are misled by virtue of their own expectations that becomes their problem, not the problem of the one who has employed the theory of mental

reservation (Mesley). For Saul Alinsky there is no dilemma in this because the "rule of the ethics of means and ends is that you do what you can with what you have and clothe it with moral garments" (Alinsky 36). As noted earlier, Alinsky's view is the only question regarding ethics of means and ends is, and always has been, "Does this *particular* end justify this *particular* means?" (24)

For those working in the corporate world it is frustrating that "the public environmental debate has unfortunately been characterized by an unpleasant tendency toward rash treatment of the truth . . . blatantly false claims can be made again and again, without any references, and yet still be believed" (Lomborg 12). It could be argued that corporations employ advertising to accomplish the same objective, and that given the size of corporate advertising budgets – De Beers, for example, had a global advertising budget of $200 million in 2000 (Hart 139) – their ability to influence public opinion is pervasive. Others might say that "some NGOs are a match for any advertising agency, with the added advantage that their messages tend to be believed" (Beloe 38) However, the companies considered in this project do little advertising and for that reason the focus will be principally on the efforts of business, industry and environmental NGOs (ENGOs) to influence public opinion and earn media coverage, and the scrutiny the editorial media applies to those efforts.

When considering the dichotomy between responsibility and means and ends in the context of siting facilities benefiting society but which impact local citizens, it is evident that both passion and reason must shape the debate. John Rawls notes that "being reasonable is not an epistemological idea – it is part of a political ideal of

democratic citizenship that includes the idea of public reason" (Rawls 62). The challenge comes from the need to accommodate the perspective of the facts available to each group, recognizing, as Robert Goodin points out, that each group's "own framework best fits the facts as they know them; and, in so far as other groups' frameworks differ from their own, those other groups are promulgating pernicious error untrue to the facts as they know them" (Goodin 553-554). The passion of community groups opposed to the siting of industrial facilities in their neighbourhood can often mean that their interpretation of the facts is wildly different than that of the proponent. The power of a constituency-based NGO, and the use of competing science and experts, is well illustrated in the British Columbia Transmission Corporation's (BCTC) effort to upgrade the existing transmission infrastructure, to provide residents of Vancouver Island with a continued supply of reliable electricity, and the opposition it encountered from a group of Tsawwassen home owners.

Trouble Along the Line

In December 2004, the BCTC announced its intention to upgrade the existing transmission system between Delta, in Vancouver's Lower Mainland, and Duncan on Vancouver Island. The proposal called for use of the existing right-of-way (no new right-of-way would be required) and would replace the aging infrastructure with new, higher voltage power lines and undersea cables (BCTC). In Tsawwassen, a neighbourhood in the municipality of Delta, the existing right-of-way passes through about 170 residential properties and homeowners made it clear they did not support

the upgrade. The residents formed a citizens' group, known as Tsawwassen Residents Against Higher Voltage Overhead Lines (TRAHVOL), to encourage the BCTC to consider alternative route options for the four-kilometre residential stretch.

Visiting the homes, one can easily appreciate the residents desire to have the power lines removed. The municipality had allowed houses to be built along the edge of the right-of-way and, as a result, the transmission lines are literally right in the backyards. Since the power lines had been there when residents bought their homes TRAHVOL recognized their vulnerability to charges of NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard), and sought a way to mobilize the support of the community as a whole. They accomplished this by broadening the issue, moving it from a NIMBY issue to one of public health by raising the risk associated with electromagnetic fields (EMF). There have been studies suggesting that exposure to EMF poses a health risk – heightened for children – yet, most health authorities, including the World Health Organization (WHO), Health Canada, and the BC Cancer Agency, now agree that while some uncertainty remains, with more and more research data available, it has become increasingly unlikely that exposure to electromagnetic fields constitutes a serious health hazard. According to the WHO "guidelines indicate that, below a given threshold, electromagnetic fields are safe according to scientific knowledge. However, it does not automatically follow that, above a given limit, exposure is harmful" (WHO 12).

TRAHVOL organized presentations to the Delta School Board and the Parent Advisory Committee at South Delta Secondary, one of the schools through which the right-of-way passes. They developed information materials and recruited an EMF

expert to address the uncertainties in the scientific data, and sought media opportunities to warn the community of the risk BCTC was imposing upon those living, working, attending school or day care, or playing sports in areas adjacent to the power line (ww.trahvol.com). BCTC's efforts to reassure the community that the project would meet the safe guidelines set by leading health authorities went virtually unreported by media outlets covering the story, including the *Delta Optimist, Vancouver Sun, The Province,* Global TV and CKNW Radio. As did the fact that the proposal would have created lower EMF levels than were being produced by the existing, 50-year old, power lines

In the weeks leading up to the 2005 provincial election, TRAHVOL began petitioning the provincial government – BCTC is a Crown corporation – to do the right thing and relocate the transmission lines to one of five alternative routes. In response, the government asked BCTC to consider options other than building overhead lines in the existing right-of-way. At a community meeting in June 2005, the results of the comparative route options analysis were reviewed and BCTC announced that it would recommend placing the lines underground in the existing right-of-way (BCTC). TRAHVOL was outraged, believing that the BCTC and government had lied to them about plans to use the existing right-of-way, and had not properly investigated the other options.

As part of the regulatory review process, the BCUC hosted a town hall meeting in Tsawwassen in January 2006 at which 45 speakers registered (BCUC Town Hall Meeting). The Commission panel members sat through nine hours of hearings,

listening as TRAHVOL members and other interveners detailed their opinions about the project, and the risk of cancer believed to be caused by EMF.

> Every time a teacher goes to work, each time a student shows up for class, every day a business opens its doors for their workers and customers are at risk, and every time we watch and encourage our children and young adults to play outside at the parks criss-crossed with those lines, we are putting our health and their lives at risk (BCUC 584).

> Please, when you make your decision, think of the children. One sick child is one too many and would certainly not rest easily on my conscience. What about yours? (600).

> BCTC is trying to do to our community and environment system, poison all of us with EMF, upgrading the power lines just for the simple reason that we are living in BCTC's right of way (605-606).

> If [BC Hydro and its progeny, BCTC] can do this to us today and get away with it who knows where it will lead in the future. Suckled at the public trough with bottomless pockets, their arrogance is without parallel. When I purchased my property I never once dreamed that anyone would attempt to perpetuate such evil on a fellow human being (614-615).

With the regulatory review process still underway it remains to be seen how the Commission will rule. Yet the debate about the proper route to take when upgrading an existing industrial facility illustrates the duality between business and interest groups. Where BCTC may have felt it was acting responsibility in using the existing right-of-way and working to mitigate the impacts to landowners along an existing right-of-way by proposing the line be placed underground, the community interest group felt passionate about the need to improve upon a 50-year old problem. While one attempted to reason with the public by insisting the project would meet public safety guidelines endorsed by Health Canada and the World Health Organization, the other pointed out the discrepancies in the scientific literature on the association between

EMF and cancer and appealed for the company, government and the regulator to eliminate the potential for risk by relocating the power lines away from the residential neighbourhood. In effort to ensure the public had access to the best information, BCTC invited a doctor from the BC Cancer Agency to attend a public meeting in Tsawwassen to answer questions about EMF and cancer. When he acknowledged that he had been paid a honourarium to attend the meeting, residents felt his credibility was suspect (BCTC Delta Community Meeting 86).

How does society balance the concerns of a citizen's group with a Crown corporation's need to provide 700,000 residents on Vancouver Island with a reliable, cost-effective supply of electricity? How one defines cost-effectiveness can also be a subject of some debate. TRAHVOL members might say that a project which poses any potential risk of cancer cannot be cost-effective, while representatives of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the group representing provincial ratepayers, question the cost-effectiveness of adding $21 million to a project when replacing overhead lines with underground cable does not lower EMF rates or improve the efficacy of the transmission system (BCTC Letter Mayor Jackson).

Building the power line within an existing right-of-way seems a reasonable argument. When one factors in the Crown corporation's willingness to mitigate the concerns of Tsawwassen residents by replacing overhead lines with underground lines, despite this increasing the project cost by approximately 10 per cent, an amount paid by all ratepayers and despite the fact that EMF levels will be lower than those produced by the existing power lines, it appears as if BCTC acted in a responsible

manner. Of course, EMF will not be eliminated, construction of an underground power line will certainly disturb – TRAHVOL would say "destroy" – the beautifully landscaped gardens and backyards through which the line will pass, and once installed the lines are expected to be used for 60 years: for these reasons it is also understandable that TRAHVOL members are passionate about their cause. How can the dichotomy between the need for facilities which we all use and the lack of interest in having these facilities located in our communities be resolved? It is a question that will be considered in Chapter 5 as some options for the future are considered and four questions are posed to help determine if controversial projects – such as the Vancouver Island Transmission Reinforcement Project – should be permitted to proceed: Who is impacted? Can the burden be mitigated? Is the burden shifted from one group to a new stakeholder? And who – and how many – benefit from the proposal?

Self-interest, Motivation and Trust

It is often suggested that business cannot be trusted because it is self-interested and motivated by money. Government is sometimes characterized in the same manner: popular media personality Rafe Mair, an opponent of ocean-net salmon farming in British Columbia calls the research of government scientists monitoring pink salmon populations in the Broughton Archipelago– one of whom is an Order of Canada recipient - "barnyard droppings" (Mair 8). Saul Alinsky, however, notes that philosophers, economists and political scientists have always been in agreement on

the importance self-interest plays in all human behaviour: "We repeatedly get caught in this conflict between our professed moral principles and the real reasons why we do things – to wit, our self-interest" (Alinsky 58). Self-interest is easy to spot in business or industry, sometimes easy to spot in a government that wants to be re-elected, but it can be a lot more difficult to decipher in groups promoting worthy cases. Calls for increased transparency may be rebuffed by some in the NGO community – as is evidenced by the previously referenced comments of Greenpeace's Tindale – but it will only benefit those who truly operate for the greater good.

All groups operating with public funds should be able to withstand the same scrutiny as is applied to the claims of business and industry, especially when issues of science are being debated, or "experts" are being used. While there are many groups that might apply the scrutiny – for example, foundations that donate substantial amounts of money to NGOs – one of the most important scrutineers can be the media. For regardless of whether one sees the media as the fourth estate providing a valuable democratic service or a profession dedicated to scandal and sensationalism, throughout much of the 20th century – and in these first years of the 21st century – the media play an important role as a conduit through which information flows. Journalists not only report the news, their reports shape public opinion and public opinion shapes policy. Often criticized for manipulating their subjects, or being at the beck and call of their corporate owners, are the media themselves being manipulated by the public relations efforts of those in the NGO community who, like Dr. Stephen Schneider, are willing to offer scary scenarios and make dramatic statements to

generate the "loads" of media coverage necessary to motivate action on issues of concern? Chapter 3 looks at the symbiotic relationship between NGOs and the media, and the efforts of NGOs to provide appealing stories, expertise and background information. It will also provide a demonstration of how much of our understanding of "reality" is shaped by media reports, and will endeavour to illustrate that the media rarely present us with information to accurately assess risk. And, perhaps most importantly, it will demonstrate the influence public relations exercised over what gets reported, and will consider whose PR – or spin – is most effective a manipulating the news.

Chapter 3: Who Should We Trust?

A Question Asked By – And About – The Media

"The Press, Watson, is a most valuable institution, if you only know how to use it"
Sherlock Holmes in The Adventures of the Six Napoleons
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

From the 1920s when Edward Bernays, patron saint of modern public relations (PR), popularized the concept of "engineering consent" reporters have been skeptical of the claims of public relations professionals. Whether working for business, industry or government, those paid to secure news coverage for their employer's or client's projects, products, or initiatives, have attracted the scrutiny of reporters wary of being manipulated. As public relations grew as a profession, reporters' concerns about the pervasive influence of PR grew right along side and, as it turns out, those concerns were justified. In a Canadian survey undertaken in 2004 (Richards 18), investigators demonstrated that 88 per cent of the 301 stories that appeared on the front pages of *The National Post* and *The Globe and Mail* between 1998 – 2003 originated from "official sources", which the authors define as public relations practionners. And PR's influence is not limited to print. According to a March 13, 2005 article in the *New York Times,* MediaLink Worldwide - a PR company that produces and distributes more than 1000 video news releases (VNR) each year – has struck an agreement with Fox, which sees these VNRs distributed to 130 affiliates. CNN Newsource also distributes

VNRs to 750 Canadian and American stations, and AP Television News does the same thing globally via its Global Video Wire. While there are no exact numbers on VNR placement, records and interviews show that at least 20 US federal agencies have made and distributed hundreds of VNRs in the past four years, many of which were broadcast on local stations without any acknowledgement of the government's role in their production, and many of which reach a significant audience: one VNR distributed by the Office of National Drug Control was aired by 300 stations reaching 22 million households (Barstow).

Bernays and his contemporary Ivy Lee, another founding father of modern PR, may be credited with creating public relations, however, efforts to influence news coverage have been around almost as long as the press itself. Judged by today's standards the 1773 Boston Tea Party has all the elements of a successful PR campaign: a catchy slogan ("No taxation without representation"); an articulate spokesperson (Samuel Adams) plus a hero (Paul Revere); an event designed to attract press attention and galvanize public support (the tea party); a coalesced group of supporters committed to the program (American legislators, the "public," and the press); and a long-term commitment to the cause (in *Common Sense,* published in 1776,Thomas Paine continued to argue that the colonies had outgrown any need for English domination and should be given independence).

PR: Progressive or Spin?

In *Discovering the News* Michael Schudson writes that "there is such distaste in intellectual circles for the very notion of PR that it is difficult to believe that the public relations of Ivy Lee, Edward L. Bernays, and others pioneered in the first three decades of this century was, in many respects, progressive" (134). The distaste Schudson references about public relations is easily fuelled. In the view of authors Fleras and Kunz, "many organizations employ profession public relations and media consultants whose job description rarely includes telling the truth" (Fleras 75) and a visit to the website of the Center for Media and Democracy is likely to make even the most loyal PR practionners question his/her profession. This site, run by a non-profit, public interest organization, is dedicated to debunking "spin" and the group's publication *PR Watch* "specializes in blowing the lid off today's multi-billion dollar propaganda-for-hire industry, naming names and revealing how public relations wizards concoct and spin the news, organize phony 'grassroots' front groups, spy on citizens, and conspire with lobbyists and politicians to thwart democracy" (Center for Media and Democracy, 2005). From the site one can access *SourceWatch* a wiki-style project "to produce a directory of public relations firms, think tanks, industry-funded organizations and industry-friendly experts that work to influence public opinion and public policy on behalf of corporations, governments and special interests" (SourceWatch 2005). Started in February 2003, SourceWatch now includes case studies of more than 30 PR campaigns deemed to be particularly egregious, such as the Competitive Enterprise

Institute's program to position smoking as a civic duty. According to site authors, former investigative reporters, John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton:

> There is a precise and predictable inverse relationship between the work of journalists and the work of the public relations industry. Good investigative journalists work to inform the public about the activities of the rich and powerful. They uncover secrets known only to a few, and share those secrets with the rest of us. Public relations, on the other hand, works to control and limit the public's access to information about the rich and powerful. PR has its own techniques of investigation--techniques which range from opinion polling to covert surveillance of citizen activists. Rather than studying the few for the benefit of the many, these techniques study the many for the benefit of the few. (SourceWatch)

Despite this inverse relationship Richards and Rehberg Sedo suggest that "journalists rely on public relations for so much of their work that it's difficult to see the relationship as anything less than a partnership of convenience [despite the fact that] journalists have long lamented how public relations practitioners manipulate the news" (18).

The Defence of Objectivity

In the early 1900s, the concept of objectivity in journalism was endorsed by prominent figures, such as Walter Lippman, as a means to keep pure the "streams of fact which can feed the rivers of opinion" (Ward 467). While the popularity of objectivity was not solely the result of the influence of public relations and its cousin, war time propaganda efforts, these two forces contributed to a concern in society that facts could not be trusted. Objectivity was held up as a tool that the press could employ and that by making a commitment to separate facts from values it would better meet the public's needs for reliable information, and better position journalists

as "professionals". In the intervening years, the theory of objectivity has remained a central tenet of a responsible press, or in Lee Sigelman's view, an institutional myth used as a defensive shield against outside criticism. Sigelman quotes Gaye Tuchman noting that when the news media are "attacked for a controversial presentation of 'facts' newspapermen invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits" (qtd. in Sigelman 86). Whether one views objectivity as an ideal or a myth it is generally agreed that it is impossible for anyone to completely set aside all personal beliefs, and social and cultural biases, when reporting the news. Although a surprising number of North American journalists – and their audiences – continue to espouse some form of objectivity, today it is considered more practical to reveal one's biases to the reader, and attempt to neutralize it by soliciting different opinions to provide a balanced accounting of the facts and the context surrounding a story so that readers can reach their own conclusions. Author John Pavlik believes that "what is beginning to emerge [today] is a new type of storytelling that moves beyond the romantic but unachievable goal of pure objectivity in journalism. This new style will offer the audience a complex blend of perspectives on news stories and events that will be far more textured than any single point of view could ever achieve" (24).

The On-Going Quest for Credibility

Pavlik and other media scholars also posit that it is the public the news media serves in democracy and therefore that the news media plays an important – some

would say vital – role in helping build an informed citizenry. Credibility is an important criterion for success in educating the public and, before returning to look at the role of public relations in shaping what is news, it is worth looking at what the public says about media credibility.

According to The Pew Research Center, which conducts the biennial *People in the Press* survey, press credibility – defined as believability – has been eroding over the past two decades. Interviewed on *Online NewsHour* January 13, 2005 Pew Research Center president Andrew Kohut pointed out that in early surveys (conducted since 1996), 55 per cent respondents said that the media usually gets the story right. Researchers defined this number as very low yet in the 2004 survey only 36 per cent of respondents believed the media usually reports the facts accurately (Pew 43). Kohut offered the following explanation for this discovery that a majority of people say media credibility is declining:

> There's a lot of skepticism out there. It's longstanding . . . For a very long time, the American public has been skeptical of the news process, the way the news is collected, the way it's reported, but while they were skeptical of the process, they liked the product. What they don't like now is the product. And more and more people doubt the values of journalists. Fewer Americans are thinking they're professional. Fewer Americans are saying they're moral. Fewer Americans are saying they care about what they're doing. That's a real big problem. (Online NewsHour)

The Pew Center findings are the middle ground when compared to a survey conducted by the Harvard Institute of Politics in 2003 (Stoff 11), where only 18 per cent of 1200 students surveyed from 34 universities said media could be trusted all the time, and a Gallup poll conducted in September 2004 which also found the news media's credibility has declined significantly. While the Gallup research showed a

slightly higher number (44 %) of Americans expressing confidence in the media's ability to report news stories accurately and fairly this represented the lowest level of confidence in the media since Gallup first asked the question in 1972. In Canada, almost one in every three Canadians (31%) think news reports are inaccurate; almost 80 per cent of Canadians think that reporters' bias influences news often or sometimes; and 59 per cent think that in the past few years maintaining fairness and balance has become a bigger problem (Report Card on Canadian News Media, 2004).

Propaganda, Influence and Scrutiny

Charges of bias in the media are nothing new but today are hurled from all sides of the political, economic and social arena at media executives and journalists. In *News: The Politics of Illusion* W. Lance Bennett asks "how can we reconcile the official bias of the news with the common assumptions the media are (or at least have the potential to be) objective, independent, professional, and even adversarial in their relations with news sources?" (Bennett 150). Before approaching the media, or responding to a media request for information, business interests need to know their facts, collect evidence to support those facts, and be prepared to withstand a skeptical evaluation of their claims. This is understandable and acceptable: industry should be held accountable and should be able to withstand media scrutiny. However, on a number of issues where opponents have developed powerful information campaigns in opposition to specific projects – NESCO's efforts to site an electrical generating facility across the border from Abbotsford, which we will consider in the next chapter,

or as referenced in Chapter 1, De Beers and the issue of conflict diamonds – it has sometimes been the case that the claims of critics do not appear to have been subjected to the same degree of scrutiny as those of industry. In the cases mentioned, the issues which advocacy groups targeted were complex but were presented to create an emotional response, which successfully raised public interest in an issue of importance. This is not necessarily a problem – mobilizing interest in public policy issues can be extremely difficult and there is no reason that emotional arguments cannot be used (industry also makes emotional appeals) if that is what it takes to motivate public participation, however, once the argument is framed in an emotional manner, which is difficult to qualify or quantify, the business in question quickly becomes associated with the problem and seldom with the solution. These observations suggest that the questions commonly asked of business and industry (and which should continue to be asked) should also apply to advocacy groups: Are advocacy groups manipulating the media? Are journalists probing the claims of activist groups with the same scrutiny as is applied to business and industry? If not, should they be?

If we consider the research done to assess who influences the media, the most common assumptions tend to be government and business. In the *Report Card on Canadian News Media*, respondents were asked "Apart from journalists and editors, what outside groups, if any, do you think influence the news?" Political interests (42 %), economic interests (27%), lobby groups (12%) and media owners (12%) were cited as the principal groups. Just three per cent of respondents said they felt protest

groups influence the news. Interestingly, a Gallup poll undertaken in 2002 showed that 83 per cent of Americans said they agreed with the goals of the environmental movement (Rogers 33) - this may suggest that when the source is trusted, there is less sense that the final story is a result of manipulation and more a result of objective or balanced reporting.

Journalists cannot be expected to cover all sides of as story equally and "in a workday world filled with short deadlines, demanding editors, and persuasive news sources, the formulas become the course of least resistance" (Bennett 154). However, when picking a side to highlight journalists need to consider the position of their sources and to know they are shaping public opinion and knowledge of the topic. This gives us an opportunity to return to the influence of public relations on the news media - this time to consider the influence of NGOs on the coverage.

The Farmed Salmon PCB Scare

In 2004, a study on organic contaminants in farmed salmon was published in the January issue of the American journal, *Science*. The magazine set a release date and time (known as an embargo) for other groups interested in covering the report, an embargo broken by a Canadian environmental group opposed to salmon farming. By announcing the study results the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform employed a standard PR tactic: if you announce a story, you own the story and others will be required to respond to your point of view. Issuing a news release the morning of January 8 (CAAR "The proof is in") meant that CAAR effectively created an opportunity

to publicize their interpretation of the results - that eating farmed salmon posed a serious health risk. Their position was supported by the study authors which led to it being widely and uncritically reported, as is evidenced by the lead from the *Associated Press* story that ran January 8, 2002: "Farm-raised salmon contain significantly more dioxins and other potentially cancer-causing pollutants than do salmon caught in the wild, says a major study that tested contaminants in fish bought around the world".

On the surface, the story is true – farmed salmon do contain higher levels of PCBs than wild salmon. Yet a quick read of the *Science* article, rather than the CAAR news release, shows that while higher levels of PCBs were found in farmed than wild salmon, both types of fish tested well below safe exposure levels set by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Health Canada and the World Health Organization (WHO): wild salmon at approximately eight - 10 parts per billion (ppb) and farmed salmon, at its highest, at 36 ppb. The fact that the US FDA safe exposure limit is 2000 ppb was seldom reported and, as only a handful of stories reported on how levels of PCB in farmed salmon compared to levels found in other food more common in the North American diet such as beef, poultry and pork, little media coverage enabled consumers to put the issue into a context that permitted a reasonable risk assessment.

Once the initial reports began to circulate other scientists jumped into the debate. But those with opposing views, such as Dr. Charles Santerre - an associate professor of food and nutrition at Purdue University who had spoken in the past on behalf of an aquaculture association - were quickly discounted by the NGO community as having a vested interest in promoting industry. This disparaging of an opposing point of view

created a conflict which, in this case, shifted the focus away from a balanced assessment of the research results and of the risk of eating farmed salmon. CAAR's PR campaign for this study was one part of a larger, sustained, strategy to mandate aquaculture reform and points to a situation where science is used as a tool in a political and ideological debate, a positioning difficult for journalists to decipher.

Experts: Whose "Truth" Should We Trust?

Experts are the public's short cut to a good decision (Centre for Media and Democracy PR Watch). We rely on them to help us decide who to vote for, how to lead a healthy life, how to invest our money, how to categorize society's problems. And experts are everywhere – on TV, radio, and the Internet, in newspapers, magazines and journals - commenting on news stories, analyzing situations and interpreting the maelstrom of information coming at us. Journalists reporting on environmental or public health issues need to be wary of being seduced by scientists and experts with competing interests and agendas, and of the potential to slip into the gap between fact and fear. In the farmed salmon debate both sides utilized "experts" to help shape public opinion about the industry and its issues. Dr. David Suzuki, one of Canada's best-known popular scientists, was quoted in *The Toronto Star* saying "I would never feed a child farmed salmon. It's poison" (Sampson); meanwhile Eric Rimm of the Harvard School of Public Health, a specialist on nutrition and chronic disease, said, "To alarm people away from [farmed] fish because of some potential, at this point undocumented, risk of long-term cancer - that does worry me" (Associated

Press). When such a divergence of opinion is presented by two experts, journalists best serve the public by probing to determine what evidence each side is using to reach their conclusions. And to assess if that evidence withstands scrutiny.

Like the larger NGOs, citizens groups also rely on "experts" to help mobilize public opinion in support of their cause. In the case of TRAHVOL versus BCTC, introduced in Chapter 2, the original scientific discussion about the interpretation of controversial EMF results has become a societal as well as political issue and TRAHVOL was easily able to recruit an EMF "expert" who spoke at community meetings and to the media about the adverse health effects of EMFs generated by power lines. The "well known Vancouver EMF expert" (Guylas) appeared on a CKNW radio talk show and TV news casts, such as Global TV, and was quoted in newspaper articles, including a feature in the *Vancouver Sun*. What are the "expert's" credentials? After becoming concerned about the potential risks posed by EMF from cell phones he spearheaded a successful effort to halt construction of a microwave tower at his son's school; he has read extensively on the issue; and has attended several conferences where EMF was addressed. He now sells devices to shield people from EMFs. He does not claim any academic qualifications in this field. While the "expert" is obviously a concerned citizen, with many scientists saying there is no evidence electromagnetic radiation below certain levels causes harm, this citizen activist's status as an "expert" merits scrutiny, especially by the media who accepted his allegations about the dangers posed by exposure to an EMF measuring four milliGaus. To put the four milliGaus standard in context, when in use a hairdryer gives off between 150-

600 mG; standing a metre away from a refrigerator creates a 10 mG exposure (WHO).

The Center for Media and Democracy has raised concerns about the use of experts by public relations practionners – although they do not consider NGOs as PR practionners – and identifies a long list of individuals whose opinion should be discounted because their research has been sponsored by an organization deemed suspect. While it is easy to dismiss those who defend the tobacco industry other initiatives can be harder to discount. Many drug companies sponsor scientific research, sometimes paying doctors and researchers both a fee for patients recruited as well as a consulting fee. Pharmaceutical companies are frequently clients of public relations firms and the use of third-party experts to garner credibility for a product is a standard PR tactic. Journalists should be encouraged to ask who funded the study and what sorts of payments were received so they can sort through the web of potential conflict, yet they also need to be aware that in today's research environment, where government funding has significantly declined, $1 billion in annual research funding is now provided by the major pharmaceutical companies (Munroe). Practically, how will scientific research be funded if not by business and industry? Very few NGOs have the resources required to sponsor new drug therapy research.

The Gap Between Fear and Fact

What NGOs do have is skill at using the media to get their messages heard and to extend the reach of their communications. They have learned that attacks based on

emotion are seldom defeated by the use of science and fact. The farmed salmon debate is a good example. CAAR and the other ENGOs set out to publicize a conclusion that eating farmed salmon was dangerous. With all the talk in the media about PCBs, cancer risks and toxicity, could a consumer standing at the fish counter be certain that eating farmed salmon was safe? Even if the fact that the safe exposure levels are set at 2000 ppb versus the less than 40 ppb found in farmed salmon penetrates the fear of PCBs, is the average consumer reassured by these exposure guidelines? It is unlikely. What is far more likely is that media coverage of carcinogens and PCBs frighten many people away from eating salmon.

NGOs invest tremendous effort – and are often extremely effective – generating media coverage and publicizing the results of that coverage. A principal difference between the PR efforts of advocacy groups and those of corporations is that the NGO community sees media contact on controversial issues as an opportunity while many corporations and government departments see media interest in the issue as a signal of impending "bad" news. Where NGOs use controversy to attract media attention, many corporations when faced with an issue tend to hunker down in the hopes that some other company or agency will end up responding to the media request for information. "Gotcha" journalism has contributed to a climate of mistrust: where the media are wary of being manipulated, corporate spokespersons are equally wary of being misrepresented or making what is known as a CLM (career limiting move) or a CEM (career ending move).

Presenting dualisms is always a risky proposition as they so seldom are an accurate reflection of the situation. In this case it is important to say that just as many journalists employ fair and ethical news gathering practices and many NGOs lead responsible campaigns to engage the public on important social and public policy issues, not all PR people advocate spin. It is also the case that business and government's reputation for using PR to manipulate public opinion has been earned – not fabricated - and that there are many examples of business and/or government proactively seeking media coverage on a potentially "hot" issue in an effort to minimize negative coverage. However, just as not all journalists adhere to "gotcha" journalism and not all NGOs rely solely on sensational scare tactics, there are many PR people who adhere to codes of ethics, counsel clients to work with the media and NGOs, to respect reporter deadlines, and to contribute to balanced coverage by responding to media requests for information.

In *Market Driven Journalism*, John McManus notes that orientation journalism (stories which are primarily intellectual or cognitive and which serve to educate consumers to their environment) draws a smaller audience than entertainment. Orientation stories tend to cost more to prepare because they require background reporting and because, in order to meet objectivity norms, more than one side of the story must be presented. Journalists who see themselves as fulfilling a role in educating people on the size and certainty of risk must grapple with how information should be weighed in order to provide the public with the context they need to assess the situation (McManus 118).

Reporters covering environmental issues must also compete for air time or print inches. In the US in 2002, 187 minutes of environmental news aired on television between January and September, compared to 596 minutes in the same period in 2001 (Rogers 32); and even in 2000 an analysis of US daily newspaper content, which categorized 75,000 stories in 100 newspapers, found that science, technology and environment constituted only three per cent of the stories carried in daily newspapers (Readership Institute Media Management). Those wishing to keep environmental issues top-of-mind track media coverage closely and know that the scarcity of coverage suggests that only high profile stories will get reported. They also know that scarcity of coverage is likely to mean fewer reporters will be assigned exclusively to cover environmental issues. These two realities combined with the challenge of covering environmental stories - where complex public policy, arcane government regulation, science, business and economics, and risk management all constitute a component of the story - raises the likelihood that journalists can be manipulated by NGOs anxious to keep environmental issues in the forefront of reporting and willing to "pitch" story ideas which appear to be science-based and which are endorsed by experts and validated by third parties.

Where to From Here?

Several conclusions can be drawn from this assessment of the influence of advocacy PR on news coverage. The first is that it is important to recognize that many advocacy groups are savvy manipulators of public opinion. They see the media as a

conduit through which information flows and are often quick to approach the media with stories. Since the story ideas frequently cast dispersions on business practices, journalists – driven by deadlines, editorial pressure and the push to entertain rather than orientate – sometimes run with the story without applying the same scrutiny to the claims of advocacy groups that they would apply to business, industry or government.

The second point to make is that while there is no question that advocacy groups have exposed unacceptable practices, helped to galvanize opinion and sustain interest on issues worthy of public debate, such as the climate change, when these groups offer scientific evidence or "experts" to explain the story, journalists should be wary of manipulation. Spokespersons for advocacy groups are at least as skilled in public relations as many PR agency personnel and their willingness to appeal to the media means they can often successfully set the tone for a story.

The third conclusion is that not all things are what they seem. Public relations people are criticized for setting up organizations that appear to be grassroots driven and independent, but advocacy groups are using the same tactic equally well: the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) referenced earlier is funded by a variety of environmental advocacy groups; in the US, the Center for Food Safety or the Center for Science in Public Interest are examples of agencies set up by advocacy groups to garner credibility for positions on public policy issues.

Finally, journalists should be wary of experts. They are everywhere and are popular sources for the media; however, scrutiny should be applied to NGO experts in the same way it is applied to industry and government sources. To ensure experts

can help the public make informed decisions, their credentials should be examined and potential conflicts probed.

Ivy Lee defined propaganda as "the effort to propagate ideas" and argued this was acceptable as long as the public knew who was responsible for the various points of view. If we follow that logic, it seems reasonable for journalists – especially those who still embrace some ideal of objectivity – to be cautious about being manipulated, even by those who appear to walk on the side of the public good rather than the side of corporate self interest. While industry and government representatives are frequently cast in the role of the manipulators of public opinion there is good reason for journalists to be concerned about manipulation by other sources. Perhaps as Ivy Lee suggested all is fair in the effort to propagate ideas but in the interests of journalistic fairness and balance surely all sources should be held to the same standards of accountability.

The situation in which NESCO, a small, family-owned business, with a track record in developing power projects, found itself when it proposed siting a natural gas-fired generating facility in Sumas, Washington provides another example of a polarized public debate. Chapter 4 considers the situation NESCO faced and illustrates the role the media play in shaping public opinion, and how the use of emotional arguments by highly mobilized opponents can influence public policy decisions.

Chapter 4: Generating Controversy

"When we present an argument, there is never enough space or time to state all assumptions, include all data and make all deductions. Thus, to a certain extent all argument relies on metaphors and rhetorical shortcuts. However, we must always be very careful not to let rhetoric cloud reality."
Dr. Bjørn Lomborg, The Skeptical Environmentalist

Electricity: we all use it yet few want a generating facility in their backyard. How do we reconcile our societal expectation that we should be able to go home at night and turn the lights on with our lack of willingness to see generating plants in our own communities? One could argue that our discussion should be about how we generate that electricity in a manner that has the least environmental impact. Yet the situation encountered by National Energy Systems (NESCO), which hoped to build a natural gas-fired generating station in Sumas Washington, across the border from Abbotsford, British Columbia, suggests that facts, science and a transparent review process are no match for a coalesced group of citizens employing the ethics of conviction to ensure industrial facilities are not built in their backyard. For those who work in public consultation, this approach goes by various names – NIMBY (Not In My Backyard), LULU (Locally Unwanted Land Use), or BANANA (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything) to name a few – but the end result is often the same: emotional arguments create a climate of fear and galvanize public opposition to

projects that meet regional need but have a local impact. In this chapter, the conflict that developed around the proposed siting of the Sumas Energy 2 (SE2) generating station will be reviewed.

A Proposal to Meet Regional Need

Following the energy crisis of the late 1990s, the Northwest Power Planning Council of the State of Washington estimated that the region needed approximately 3000-4000 megawatts of additional power to offset out-of-region generation. It cited the benefits of low power rates and noted that regional generation would contribute to a more secure energy future – i.e. one that was less vulnerable to power marketing schemes (Sumas Energy 2 Fact Sheet Old vs. New). With the area from Vancouver to Seattle projected to be one of the fastest growing in North America, NESCO, a family-owned business employing about a dozen people, felt it feasible to propose the construction of an electrical generating facility close to where there was a projected need for power (Sumas Energy 2). The result was a proposal to build a gas-fired co-generation plant, known as Sumas Energy 2 or SE2 in Sumas, Washington, on industrial land adjacent to an existing generating facility. The site was very close to existing transmission infrastructure, including the regional transmission grid located approximately 10 kilometres away in Clayburn, British Columbia, and to gas pipelines, both of which would minimize construction impacts. In addition, an existing rail right-of-way could be used for the power line route, minimizing the need to acquire new right-of-way and avoiding construction through farmland. The proposed plant would

generate 660 MW of electricity (enough power for 400,000 homes) for sale to purchasers within the region (Sumas Energy 2 Fact Sheet Providing BC).

In January 1999, NESCO submitted a permit application to the Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC). Initial feedback identified a number of areas for improvement and the application was revised and re-submitted the following January. Hearings were held and the permit application was denied. The NESCO team went back to the drawing board and the second revised application, which included a site-specific environmental assessment, was submitted in June 2001. The review process began in the summer of 2001 and in May 2002 EFSEC recommended approval of the SE2 application. In August 2002, Washington Governor Gary Locke approved the permit, commenting in a August 23, 2002 news release that SE2 "sets a new standard of excellence for environmental protection", and paving the way for SE2 to make an application to Canada's National Energy Board (NEB) for permission to build an eight-kilometre power line to connect the Sumas plant to the regional power grid station in Clayburn BC (Washington Business Magazine).

The regional power grid enables the import and export of electricity throughout the region – British Columbia, Alberta, and 11 northwest states. In recent years, British Columbia has exported power for sale to the United States and each year from 2001 - 2004 has imported up to 12 per cent of provincial electricity needs (BC Progress Board 33). There is a long history of reciprocity in the energy trade with benefits accruing to the various participants. Proposing a power line that would originate in

Washington State and terminate at the regional power grid station in British Columbia was, therefore, not an unreasonable or innovative proposition.

The project itself, however, was innovative in several ways. NESCO allocated US$8 million for voluntary greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation, and the SE2 proposal also included a commitment to offset 100 per cent of the emissions of nitrogen oxide (NOx) and fine particulate matter (PM_{10}) — two of the leading contributors to pollution in the regional airshed(Sumas Energy 2). Either the company would finance environmental upgrades to reduce emissions at existing point sources of pollution or, if the company could not find sufficient offsets, NESCO would provide the governments of British Columbia and Washington State with C$2 million to administer joint air quality improvements (Sumas Energy 2). The offset proposal was made despite the fact that SE2 would meet Canada-wide emissions standards projected to come into effect in 2010 upon commissioning the plant in 2007 (Washington Business Magazine).

But despite the extensive review process in Washington State, and EFSEC's determination that the project would provide the region significant energy benefits with no significant unmitigated environmental impacts, trouble was brewing for SE2 north of the border.

A Different View

The City of Abbotsford had been an intervener in the EFSEC hearings and filed a motion for reconsideration when EFSEC recommended approval of the second revised

SE2 application (Toth). Although the request for reconsideration was denied, a highly mobilized group of opponents now existed in the Fraser Valley, on the Canadian side of the border. They were not convinced by EFSEC's ruling that there were no significant environmental impacts. They worried that the projected 2.5 tonnes of daily plant emissions would threaten air quality in the Lower Fraser Valley, and they questioned whether an American regulatory agency would put the health and welfare of Canadians ahead of the economic advantages the plant would generate for Washington State.

The opponents found a champion in Trudy Beyak, a reporter working at the *Abbotsford News*. Articles began appearing on a regular basis with Beyak alleging that SE2 would wreak "environmental genocide" in the area. In the August 11, 2003 edition of the *Abbotsford News*, Beyak characterized the issue as follows, "Battle lines in the Sumas Energy 2 controversy are clearly marked: The environment and health of the Fraser Valley and Whatcom County versus profits for an American company, and jobs and energy for the U.S. Pacific Northwest". Citizens lined up to challenge SE2's claims that the plant could be operated in a manner that would not harm human health or the environment, and Abbotsford Councillor Patricia Ross appeared on talk shows and television programs, and was interviewed by every major print outlet in the Lower Mainland. A frequent visual for the project was a shot of Councillor Ross, or one of the other opponents, standing under the steel transmission towers (Murray A15) – a compelling image but one that did not in any way convey the true scope of the project. The power line proposed to connect SE2 to the regional power grid would

have been a 230 kV wire on a wooden pole. According to the testimony of Charles Martin at the NEB hearing "The proposed power line route is primarily on an existing rail and industrial corridor and will be undergrounded where it passes through residential and downtown commercial areas of Abbotsford" (Martin 1).

The message that SE2 would dump 2.5 tonnes of pollutants into the sensitive Fraser Valley Airshed was repeatedly reported, and NESCO was cast as an American multi-national recklessly endangering the health of Fraser Valley residents to generate power for sale south of the border. Interviewed by *The Peak,* Councillor Ross summed up her struggle against Sumas 2 by dubbing it "a real powerful example of how people can make a difference. This is a story of corruption and deceit and it's also a story of ordinary decent people coming together and overcoming something they don't want" (Ramin 22/10/01). NESCO's assertion that the project would produce C$230 million (Sumas Energy 2 Fact Sheet Providing BC) of revenue annually for the province of British Columbia was met with contempt: opponents discounting the economic benefit because it could potentially accrue to BC through the sale of natural gas to other users. And the proposal to offset 100 per cent of the NOx and PM_{10} emissions was ridiculed: how could SE2, which would be the largest point source of pollution in the Abbotsford airshed, offset that pollution?

SE2's argument that by reducing emissions from existing sources of NOx and PM_{10} within the regional airshed so there would be no net increase in these air pollutants when SE2 began operation was rejected by the growing number of vocal opponents in the Fraser Valley. In *The Abbbotsford News* April 26, 2002, Beyak wrote, "The [offset]

plan has met criticism in Canada, with Abbotsford Coun. Patricia Ross labelling it a 'sick joke' that SE2 can emit, on a daily basis, two and half tons of pollution into the Fraser Valley airshed, then pretend to clean up air quality".

Although the power plant was approved in the United States, the fact that the plant needed an international power line to connect to the regional grid triggered an application to Canada's National Energy Board. In the lengthy, emotional, and often-times acrimonious, public hearing the NEB held as part of the permitting process for the power line, more than 400 interveners were heard and a record number of letters were submitted into evidence (NEB 23). The NEB listened as experts were questioned by opponents who conceded they had no academic qualifications to contest technical details presented but who then challenged SE2's planners, environmental consultants, toxicologists, seismic engineers, and hydrologists. One irate resident of Abbotsford interrupted his testimony to the NEB to glare at the NESCO team and shrilly insist that if anyone on the team was a parent he or she did not deserve to be. And, perhaps sensing the potential political fall out, local politicians lined up behind their constituents to announce SE2 would not be built on their watch. Then-Member of Parliament Randy White appeared in the hearing room carrying a box of silt, which he explained he had collected from the top of Mount Baker and which he insisted was particulate matter deposited from industrial operations in the region, and told hearing participants and the media that he would tie himself to the railway line that SE2 proposed to use for the power line right-of-way if that was what it took to prevent construction. But White, the provincial politicians and local SE2 opponents did not

need to resort to radical action. Instead, in a move that surprised opponents and proponents alike, the National Energy Board deliberated for several months and in April 2004 ruled it would not grant SE2 permission to construct an international power line.

The Decision

In its decision, the NEB concluded that the power line – and power plant located in Washington State – would comply with the most stringent Canadian regulatory standards,

> . . . the Board accepts that the maximum concentrations of pollutants from the Power Plant, in combination with background levels, would likely be below the most stringent Canadian requirements and, hence, meet both the BC and Canadian Air Quality Objectives and Standards for these pollutants, (Decision 62)

that the environmental impact of the power line would not be significant,

> Having considered the ESR [Environmental Screening Report] and the public's comments thereon, in accordance with Hearing Order EH-1-2000 and the CEA [Canadian Environmental Assessment] Act, the Board is of the view that, subject to implementation of the proposed mitigation measures and the conditions listed in Appendix II, the IPL would not likely cause significant adverse environmental effects, (46)

and that the project would not result in demonstrable health effects in Canada.

> With respect to potential health impacts arising from the Power Plant, SE2's health risk assessment demonstrated that, although pollutants from the Power Plant would result in a change in ground-level concentrations of the pollutants in the Lower Fraser Valley, the change would be small and not likely to result in a measurable effect on human health. . . The Board accepts that, as the airshed exists today, the pollutants from the operation of the Power Plant would not be likely to result in demonstrable health effects in Canada. 62)

In addition, the Board found there was a growing need for electricity within the market region (British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest).

> . . . .the Board considers SE2's market forecast, which suggests a growing need for electricity in the region between 2003 and 2025, to be reasonable...The Board recognizes that there will likely be growth in the demand for electricity in the Canadian portion of SE2's market region... (41)

The NEB also noted that SE2, as a new state-of-the-art plant, would be less costly to operate, would burn fuel more cleanly than other older facilities (such as Burrard Thermal located in the same airshed) and could therefore displace power from older fossil fuel-fired power generation facilities in the region which could reduce overall regional emissions and moderate price risks.

> By virtue of the Power Plant being a new state-of-the-art facility, which could be less costly to operate and would burn fuel more cleanly than some older facilities in the region, and by virtue of its location, SE2 power could displace the power from older fossil fuel– fired power generation facilities in the region, thereby reducing the aggregate cost of producing electricity and reducing aggregate emissions in the region. This, in turn, could moderate power price increases and other costs associated with higher levels of air pollution. (94)

Yet the SE2 application was denied with the NEB ruling that the project did not generate sufficient local benefit to offset the historic level of public opposition to the project.

NESCO appealed the decision and lost, and with sustained high natural gas prices continuing in the first quarter of 2006 it appears almost certain the plant will not be built. Residents of Abbotsford were ecstatic citing the win as an inspiring example of the power of the citizen over corporate America. They acknowledged that the region and their growing city needs electricity, but maintain the Lower Mainland is not the proper spot for any type of generating facility.

A Reality Check

The Sumas Energy 2 proposal review generated a passionate debate which made it challenging to assess the risks – or benefits – of the project to the local environment. According to the GVRD, the airshed is a regional – rather than a local – resource: Abbotsford is part of the Lower Fraser Valley Airshed, which stretches across the Greater Vancouver Regional District from the Strait of Georgia through the Fraser Valley to Hope and south through Whatcom County (GVRD). According to the *Greater Vancouver Regional District's 2000 Emission Inventory for the Lower Fraser Valley Airshed,* 56 per cent of the smog-forming contaminants in the airshed originate within the GVRD with the remainder coming from Whatcom County (29%) and 15 per cent from the Fraser Valley Regional District. This means the offsets SE2 proposed could, theoretically, have been effective anywhere within the region – soot filters on diesel buses and medium or heavy duty trucks, replacing inefficient burners at plants in the Lower Mainland, installing new high-efficiency boilers at industrial locations, or purchasing equipment so wood waste from the Fraser Valley could have been chipped for landscaping rather than burning it as has been the practice for many years.

Where did SE2 fail? Not because the proponent acted irresponsibly or unethically: the US and Canadian regulatory processes were comprehensive and transparent; SE2 responded to public input and modified the original proposal; in response to concerns about emissions the company came up with an innovative proposal to offset two of the plant's emissions most detrimental to air quality or to fund offsets if they could not be found voluntarily. They did not fail because they proposed building the cleanest

burning plant in North America in an area of projected need, close to the regional transmission grid and on land zoned for industrial operations. They failed because they did not predict and respond effectively to a passionate, emotional argument, and because they did not appreciate the public perception of risk, which affects how decisions are made in society today.

SE2 staff and consultants continually tried to talk about facts and science. They tried to draw attention to a study done by Environment Canada that stated the plant's impacts could be mitigated; they offered offsets when the public had no interest in hearing about a program that had no track record of success; they tried repeatedly to point out that power from SE2 could replace power from Burrard Thermal but since Burrard Thermal is not located in Abbotsford opponents did not accept that logic; and SE2's insistence that the emission profile of SE2 would set a new standard for future projects to meet was rejected as irrelevant because the project was undesirable. They failed because they believed that by acting responsibility, by sharing the scientific data, by offering to offset plant pollution that they could use a rational scientific argument to counter the "irrationality of contemporary political arguments" (D. Smith 100).

As Weber points out, it is not appropriate to suggest that "an ethic of ultimate ends is identical with irresponsibility" (Weber 39). Citizens in a democracy who feel strongly about issues that could affect their community are entitled to use the media, petitions, protests and any other means short of violence to galvanize public, political and regulatory support for their issue; however, as Dennis Smith writes, some in the environmental movement have a vested political interest in exploiting the general

public's fear and the high degree of public ignorance regarding technical risk (D. Smith 101). Fear is a powerful motivator and when advocacy groups can tap into that emotion they can more easily motivate their audience to accept their point of view. As a result of the proliferation of environmental disasters (oil spills, toxic waste disposal, water contamination, air pollution, etc.) the public distrusts operators of industrial facilities. Company personnel have little credibility and mountains of technical data debated by "experts" on both sides of the issue create further confusion and prompt the public to simply say "No" to the building of new facilities.

Residents of Abbotsford have every right to be concerned about the air quality in their region. Although the GVRD-produced *Emissions Inventory* records a reduction in "smog-forming pollutants" (GVRD 38-39), citizens need to be vigilant, and every summer brings with it hazy days when a thick mustard-coloured layer of smog cloaks the Fraser Valley. The stack of a power plant is not something many people want to look at across their morning coffee but is it ethical to use emotion and fear to mobilize public opposition to a facility that meets a regional need in a manner deemed by regulators to have little non-mitigated environmental impact? Is it appropriate to employ ethics of conviction to disparage a project that meets all regulatory guidelines, including proposed, more stringent Canada-wide air emission standards? And is it appropriate for people who use more electricity than almost every other region in the world, and for the politicians responsible for setting energy policy, to say "no" to power generation in their region?

Good Decisions Come From Good Facts

Gro Harlem Brundtland, the former prime minister of Norway and author of *Our Common Future* once said, "politics that disregard science and knowledge will not stand the test of time. Indeed, there is no other basis for sound political decisions than the best scientific evidence. This is especially true in the fields of science and resource management" (qtd. Lomberg 5). To make good decisions the public needs access to figures and trends that are true and this can be difficult: whose science is the "right" science? When Abbotsford opponents to SE2 said the plant would spew 2.5 tonnes of toxic pollutants into the sensitive airshed, they were right. But without knowing that 2.5 tonnes would account for less than one per cent of total emissions in the airshed can we evaluate the risk the plant truly posed? Both are factual statements but talking about 2.5 tonnes of pollution is much more likely to galvanize public opinion than talking about a less than one per cent increase in total airshed emissions.

Aristotle posited that there are standards in reason, but matter-of-fact discussion on the environment is always difficult because most everyone has strong feelings on the subject. Some even embrace a moral position on environmental issues and as Charles Taylor notes in *The Malaise of Modernity* "moral positions are not in any way grounded in reason or the nature of things but are ultimately just adopted by each of us because we find ourselves drawn to them, therefore, reason can't adjudicate moral disputes" (18). This poses a challenge for regulators and others responsible for public policy decisions: both sides present reasonable arguments but employ different versions of the "facts" making it difficult to arbitrate rulings on controversial projects

which may benefit society but which have local impacts. As difficult as it is to determine whose facts are the real facts, regulators must attempt to balance the rationale self interest of project proponents with the equally rationale yet more passionate self interested individualism of local opponents. This is a delicate, but important balancing act for "it cannot be in the interest of our society for debate about such a vital issue to be based more on myth than truth" (Lomberg 32).

Despite challenges, effective partnerships between industry and advocacy groups can be built and provide an encouraging perspective on the effectiveness of working together to balance local self-interest with regional need and to address social problems. One international example is provided by a joint project initiated in August 2000 by Swedish global furniture company IKEA and UNICEF, an international advocacy group, to address child rights in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The project came about after IKEA was named in a documentary on child labour in the hand-woven carpet industry that aired on Swedish television in 1994 (Paine 120). The subsequent project, developed in association with UNICEF, targets an area covering roughly 1.5 million people in 650 villages in districts around Varanasi (Luce). The aim of the project is to prevent child labour in the carpet weaving district by addressing the root causes, such as debt, poverty, the lack of access to education, disability, and ill health.

Rather than relying upon trade sanctions, as the United States had done in the 1990s with disastrous results (Luce), IKEA's initiative aims to give financial independence to poorer woman in the region. By paying 20-50 rupees a month into

self-help groups, lower caste women collectively save enough to open bank accounts and borrow at market, rather than usurious, rates of interest. The money is used to pay off debts to moneylenders who often own the handlooms on which the women earn a living: it is typically the inability to repay moneylenders that forces women to supply their children as collateral (Luce).

IKEA, like its competitors in the carpet making business, has a commercial interest in minimizing child labour: the bad publicity child labour generates harms business (Luce). The innovative thing about the program in Uttar Pradesh is that the focus is on preventing indebtedness, not on offering a guarantee that no child labour was used to manufacture the carpets. Is this an example of a project where the ethics of conviction and responsibility meet? On the surface, IKEA's lack of willingness to guarantee that no child labour is used in the carpets it manufactures would seem to be deal breaker with UNICEF, an organization dedicated to children's rights. Yet, the two groups set aside their differences to work towards a common goal and the resulting initiative benefits both sponsor organizations, the children formerly forced into the labour market, and the women who have an opportunity to practice sound financial management. This is not to suggest that all problems have been eliminated. In the highly fragmented Indian carpet weaving business where manufacturing is sub–contracted to roughly 500,000 workers across thousands of villages, measuring the success of the project is challenging. Nevertheless, from IKEA's and UNICEF's point-of-view, the success of the initial three-year project led IKEA to support its expansion

into another 300 villages and in 2003, IKEA committed US$1.4 million to fund the project over a five-year period (UNICEF).

Finding co-operation on significant, international human rights issues is encouraging but is it possible to see a similar type of co-operation on local environmental issues with – principally – local consequences? In the next chapter, two specific initiatives are considered with a view to evaluating whether the ethics of conviction and responsibility are – as Weber asserts - irreconcilably opposed maxims, or if a case can be made for bridging the fundamental differences to enable a framework for dialogue.

Chapter 5: Responsible Conviction

"Many hard decisions seem to have no clear answers."
John Rawls

The January 13, 2006 edition of the *Vancouver Sun* carried a front page story "Partnership signals truce in salmon wars: Partnership emphasizes cooperative research instead of conflict". In the article, reporter Scott Simpson writes,

> One of British Columbia's most bitter public policy debates took a dramatic turn on Thursday with an announcement that a salmon farming company is teaming up with its toughest critics in a new partnership to resolve conflicts over the potential threat that fish farms pose to BC's wild salmon populations. (Simpson A1)

The article detailed an agreement between Marine Harvest (MHC), the largest salmon aquaculture company operating in BC, and CAAR, a coalition of eight ENGOs and one First Nation. The "Framework for Dialogue", negotiated over the course of 18 months (June 2004 to January 2006), is intended to,

> support constructive, efficient, interest-based results that address the needs of both MHC and CAAR; increase knowledge with respect to environmental, social and economic factors associated with salmon farming; reduce conflict associated with MHC's salmon farming; and direct change to current practices where best available information demonstrates there are impacts to the environment and wild salmon as a result of current practices (CAAR MHC Framework 1-2).

The Marine Harvest spokesperson says the agreement "opens the door to meaningful dialogue as opposed to just conflict-based rhetoric" (Simpson A1). The provincial government pronounced it was "very, very pleased with this memorandum" (A1). As part of the agreement Marine Harvest can continue to operate most of their

farms in the contentious area of the Broughton Archipelago, where the impact of sea lice on pink salmon is a hotly contested issue, and CAAR maintains the right to continue its "public education" campaigns – two of which have been discussed previously.

Does the agreement make British Columbia a world leader for collaborative research between salmon farmers and ENGOs as CAAR claims in the *Vancouver Sun* article? It may become true over time but there is a long way to go before BC can be said to have surpassed the work of Norwegians fish farmers and that country's leading ENGO, Bellona, who have worked cooperatively together for some years. Bellona, which was founded in 1986 as an activist organization pressuring industrial companies to improve environmental compliance, has today eschewed the type of direct action campaign CAAR pursues in favour of "forming alliances of great surprise" (Bellona) to address environmental issues with business leaders and government. CAAR may have a way to go before it is willing to abandon direct action and its desire to continue its public education campaign was reflected in the fact that three days after the cooperative announcement, CAAR members released a study on sea lice in the Broughton which claimed to provide "one more solid piece of evidence" (Fowlie A1) that lice from farms kills pink salmon. The news release was issued despite an agreement in the framework which states "Research is best undertaken collaboratively and in a manner that seeks to reduce the polarity that has existed within the scientific community regarding aquaculture issues" (CAAR MHC Framework Article 17). MHC was given no warning of the study's release yet issued

no rebuttal. Meanwhile the CAAR website carries a stern warning to Marine Harvest in response to an industry trade magazine article warning that CAAR "trust[s] future statements from the company will not undermine cooperation by mischaracterizing CAAR positions"(Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform). It is an interesting dichotomy. It could be argued that CAAR undermined the Framework Agreement by releasing results of a study perpetuating the long-standing disagreement within the scientific community regarding the impact of sea lice from salmon farms on wild salmon. True to the terms of the Framework, CAAR had not specifically named MHC in the research findings, yet it is not surprising that some might question CAAR's ability to bypass the opportunity for a sound bite in favour of a collaborative research environment. While Marine Harvest says it hopes the agreement will create an improved, more positive outlook for the salmon farming industry in BC, CAAR hopes to prove there is a problem with open net cage farming and that closed containment pens work. Neither industry nor the NGO community has done a comparative environmental impact assessment to evaluate the affects of each type of farming method: for example, where one has an impact on the ocean floor from waste, the other will emit greenhouse gases produced from the use of fossil fuel. With the goals and objectives – and one might say the ethics -- of each group being so opposite, is it likely the framework agreement will succeed? It can be hoped it will because as Dennis Smith points out,

> the issue [environmentalism] has now emerged on to the policy agenda at public, government and corporate levels and there is a need for a partnership approach between theses groups in order to ensure that the best policy options are followed to ensure environmental improvements.(4)

In BC, one partnership agreement that has experienced some success is the Coast Forest Conservation Initiative (CFCI) – an alliance between five forest companies and four environmental groups to develop a conservation plan for forests within the Central Coast, North Coast and Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands regions. The purpose of the 2001 alliance was to generate new solutions to long-standing environmental conflicts on the coast, and came about following a market campaign that saw Lowes, Home Depot and other large customers publicly commit not to buy old growth lumber from BC. The CFCI has focused on furthering sustainable forestry and developing a new forestry practice called ecosystem-based management (EBM), a concept that evolved during five years of planning. Initial implementation began in March 2004 with full implementation targeted for March 2009. Although a complete accounting of the costs has not been undertaken, more than $1 million was spent since 2004 to guide voluntary implementation of EBM and more than $3.2 million has been invested by the members companies, as well as the ENGO partners, and the provincial and federal government to fund independent science used to support EBM (Coast Forest Conservation Initiative). There have been accomplishments but in a Web update available from the CFCI site –www.coastforestconservationinitiative.com – it is noted that "implementing change can be hard work and making the transition to ecosystem-based management (EBM) in the rugged and beautiful forests of BC's Central and North Coast is as hard as it gets". It is likely that both sides compromised to move the joint solution process forward but one thing that the ENGOs gave up was the sustained media coverage to which they were accustomed: a database search

through Canadian News Source shows only two stories on the CFCI from 2001 to January 2006. This can be compared, for example, to CAAR which, according to the same database, used the media to debate the merits of salmon farming in BC by generating 18 news stories in 2005 alone as noted above, one additional story in the days immediately after the Framework Agreement was announced. Working towards solutions on contentious issues is much tougher, and takes much longer, than generating a snappy news story.

The Conundrum

Max Weber points out that the ethic of ultimate ends – conviction – and the ethics of responsibility are fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims. Yet Weber also stresses that we should not view these two maxims as absolute contrasts, that the claims of one should not necessarily put the other in the wrong. Regrettably, that is what can be seen in many of today's polarized debates about the siting or operation of industrial facilities. From power lines and generating stations to fish farming the work of serious scientists discredited by pseudoscientific counter evidence. NGOs and industry each charge the other with producing junk science with the ensuing debate amongst the experts serves only to confuse the public.

Matter-of-fact discussion on the environment is always problematic because people hold such strong views on the environment and many people's opinions are rooted in emotion. (Every summer as I walk the beach below the cottage that my great-grandfather built on the north coast of Nova Scotia, and listen to the sound of

the waves meeting the rocky shore, I am reminded of how significantly the physical environment impacts our emotions). When it comes to considering industrial projects such as building generating stations or upgrading power lines that will impact the environment, "Better safe than sorry" is a very appealing proposition. Few things have scientific certainty; however, the use of scientific uncertainty as a political strategy to avoid building facilities that we all need and use can be problematic. For example, in the case against Sumas Energy 2, opponents did not cite specific studies but rather made an emotional appeal based on a visceral argument: one could look out the window and "see" poor air quality.

The central questions for consideration are how to evaluate and manage risk to earn the approval required to build and operate facilities that are used in society, from power lines to fish farms, in a manner that has the least environmental impact. To address these questions, business needs to better appreciate the emotional factors that cause some people to fear things that others don't; NGOs need to recognize market demands for the provision of service; and, both sides need to acknowledge that the debate need not be about greater economic welfare versus a greener environment.

Environmental development often originates in economic development. This statement is not as paradoxical as it might seem: our historical experience shows that it is only when our economy is strong and people are employed that we begin to think about environmental issues. To illustrate that higher income is generally correlated with higher environmental sustainability Bjorn Lomberg graphs the connection for 117 nations between GDP per capita and the 2001 environmental sustainability index

(Lomberg 33). While residents of Abbotsford did not want a power plant to be located in Sumas, the US$9 million offered by the project proponents for voluntary greenhouse gas emissions could have made a contribution to environmental improvements and, by offering to offset emissions and to meet proposed Canada-wide emissions standards in advance of those standards being enacted, the project might have set a new standard of compliance for existing and future projects.

Gaining consensus from competing interests is seldom easy when one is dealing with issues which tap into emotionally-based values. Yet, as Paul Hawken writes, "In order to break out of the destructive and ultimately fatal loop in which we're trapped, we need a consensus-building, collaborative approach that both guardians [NGOs] and commerce can support" (Hawken165-166).

Although the doctrine of corporate immorality has left a legacy that is not easily erased today successful businesses recognize the need to satisfy multiple constituencies (shareholders plus stakeholders).

> To be considered truly outstanding, companies today must do more that achieve superior financial results or meet impressive production targets. They must receive high marks not only from shareholders concerned with financial returns but also from other parties with whom they interact. And to do so, as we have seen, they must satisfy a mix of economic and ethical criteria. (Paine 116)

Corporate values, ethics, and social responsibility are all relatively recent terms, originating in the needs of a modern industrial society and their inclusion in the corporate lexicon reflects a value shift on the part of business in the late 20th century. As business leaders seek to meet increased expectations for accountability, companies

have moved towards, or in some cases, been pushed and pulled, towards ethics of responsibility.

At the moment, NGOs, which operate not from self-interest but from conviction, have a trust which business lacks. These groups play a vital role in democratic society and while government and industry may resist their advocacy there is growing evidence of a role for NGOs to play in developing solutions (Beloe 3). Participating in finding solutions, which is a change from exposing problems, will require different skills. To date, NGOs have only been accountable to themselves but as their profile and influence grows, the public may subject NGOs to calls for increased accountability, and they may experience a value shift not dissimilar to the one that rocked the corporate world (Beloe 24,47).

The Road Ahead

While considerable work has been done by many scholars on the issues of corporate social responsibility, accountability and ethics, little research seems to have been done on how to bridge the gap between groups dedicated to ethics of conviction and those forced to adhere to ethics of responsibility. The differences in approach are evident from looking at the debates that typically surround the siting of industrial facilities and while many posit about how to improve the effectiveness of consultation, few seem to have considered Weber's notion of "two fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims," the "abysmal contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of ultimate ends . . . and conduct that follows the maxim of an

ethic of responsibility," and the challenge this creates for those tasked with making public policy decisions, such as the siting of industrial facilities which we all need and use but which few want in their own communities. This creates an opportunity for additional research and this will be important because, as Paul Hawken notes,

> Today, because business has refused to face and confront environmental issues, there are tens of thousands of environmental groups in the world trying to abate or at least ameliorate the destruction of the world by commerce. As important as their gains have been, this battle cannot be won, because commerce and industry are growing faster than nature. No amount of isolated action will transform the system. We're still operating under commercial rules, placing the reputed need of humankind above the health of the planet. (31)

In today's increasingly market-dominated world, no longer held in check by communism, civil society groups play an important role in challenging capitalism to achieve social and environmental sustainability. That critical function must be maintained, but all groups operating with public trust benefit from being able to withstand the same type of scrutiny as is applied to the claims of business and industry, especially when issues of science are being debated, or "experts" are being used to influence public policy decisions. The move towards increased accountability will reinforce the credibility of established groups and will inspire the trust new groups need to earn credibility.

Works Cited

Alinsky, Saul. Rules for Radicals. 2nd edition. Toronto: Random House, 1989.

"An Analysis of U.S. Daily Newspaper Content: What Makes Readers More Satisfied" Readership Institute: Media Management Center at Northwestern University. 2001 <http://www.readership.org/content/content_analysis/>

Associated Press "Farm-Raised Salmon Linked to Pollutants." 8 January 2004.

Barstow, David and Stein, Robin. "Under Bush, a New Age of Prepackaged TV News." New York Times. 13 March 2005: online edition.

Bellona. 31 January 2006. <www.bellona.no>

Beloe, Seb and John Elkington. The 21st Century NGO in the Market for Change. Sustainability, The Global Compact, United Nations Environment Programme. London: 10 December 2003.

Bennett, Lance W. News: The Politics of Illusion. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2004.

Bidwell, David. "Exception proves the rule." Participation Quarterly. International Association of Public Participation. February 2005: 3-4.

British Columbia Progress Board. Strategic Imperatives for BC's Energy Future. Vancouver: 9 November 2005.

British Columbia Transmission Corporation. <www.bctc.com>

Vancouver Island Transmission Reinforcement Project: Ensuring Vancouver Island has the power it needs.
http://www.bctc.com/community_engagement/project_consultation/vancouver_island_transmission_reinforcement/ Accessed 4 April 2006

The Vancouver Island Transmission Reinforcement Project Community Information Session Transcript – Errata Tuesday, May 31, 2005
http://www.bctc.com/NR/rdonlyres/A625E1C9-BE60-4DBA-9D99-C7386F1A3D3D/0/BCTCTranscriptMay31TsawwassenwithErrata.pdf
Acccessed 4 April 2006

Letter to Mayor Lois Jackson
http://www.bctc.com/NR/rdonlyres/2829A2A9-C091-4B74-BCFD-4A792E4D837C/0/LtrtoMayorLoisJacksonfromPeverett17Aug05.pdf
Accessed 4 April 2006

British Columbia Utilities Commission. <www.bcuc.com>

Town Hall Meeting Project No. 3698395 /Order No. G-70-05 Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity ("CPCN") Application Vancouver Island Transmission Reinforcement Project ("VITR") Volume 5 Delta, BC: January 14, 2006.

Carpenter, Chad. "Business, green groups and the media: The role of non-government organizations in the climate change debate." International Affairs 77.2 (2001): 313 – 328.

Carpenter, David and Foran, Jeffery; Hamilton, Coreen; Hites, Ronald; Knuth, Barbara; Schwager, Steven. "Global Assessment of Organic Contaminants in Farmed Salmon". Science. 9 January 2004: 226–229.

Center for Media and Democracy. <www.prwatch.org>

About PR Watch. 15 March 2005.<http://www.prwatch.org/cmd/prwatch.html>

SourceWatch. 15 March 2005.

<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=PR_and_Journalism>

Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform <www.farmedanddangerous.org>

3 January 2006

Coastal Alliance For Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) And Marine Harvest Canada (MHC) Framework For Dialogue – Summary January 12, 2006 Background http://www.farmedanddangerous.org/?action=d7_article_view_folder&Join_ID=82887 March 9, 2006

"Early Numbers Show Another Pink Salmon Collapse In The Making: Safe Migration Route Through Salmon Farms Essential". 28 September 2005 http://www.farmedanddangerous.org/?action=d7_article_view_folder&Join_ID=82887

"The proof is in: Farmed salmon contains significantly higher levels of contaminants like PCBs and dioxins, according to a global scientific study published in Science magazine today." 8 January 2004.

Coast Forest Conservation Initiative. <www.coastforestconservationinitiative.com >

5 February 2006. <http://www.coastforestconservationinitiative.com/pdf6/Implemtning_EBM_Update.pdf>

Coglan, Andy. "GM row delays food aid to Zimbabwe." New Scientist: 31 July 2002

http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=dn2618 Accessed 1 April 2006.

Economist.

"Defending Science" Editorial. 31 January 2002

"The Non-Governmental Order." Editorial. . 12 November 1999: 20+

Economist.

"The Sins of the Secular Missionaries" 29 January 2000: 25+

Environmental Defence. <www.environmentaldefence.ca> 9 November 2005

"Study finds pollutants in Canadian blood samples." http://www.environmentaldefence.ca/pressroom/edcinnews/20051109a.htm 17 January 2005

Fleras, Augie and Kunz, Jean Lock. Media and Minorities: Representing Diversity in a Multicultural Canada. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing Inc., 2001.

Fowlie, Jonathan. "Dying Fish had Twice the Sea Lice." Vancouver Sun: 16 January 2006, A1.

Gallup Organization

"Media Credibility Reaches Lowest Point in Three Decades". 23 September 2004. http://www.gallup.com/poll/content/login.aspx?ci=13132

"Who Will Protect the Environment?" Gallup Organization 26 April 2005.

http://www.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=16015&pg=1&VERSION=p

Goodin, Robert. "Communities of Engagement." British Journal of Political Science. Vol. 28 no.3 (July 1998): 531-558.

Greater Vancouver Regional District. Policy and Planning Department. Forecast and Backcast of the 2000 Emission Inventory for the Lower Fraser Valley Airshed 1985-2025. Burnaby: July 2003

Greater Vancouver Regional District. <www.gvrd.bc.ca/air/quality.htm>

Guylus, Maureen. "Residents hosting forum to hear EMF expert." Delta Optimist Online 22 February 2005 <http://www.delta-optimist.com/>

Hart, Mathew. Diamond: A Journey to the Heart of an Obsession. Toronto, Ontario: Pengiun Books, 2001.

Hawken, Paul. The Ecology of Commerce. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

Hochschild, Adam. King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa. New York, New York: First Mariner Books, 1999.

Kant, Emmanuel. "What is Enlightenment" http://foucault.info/documents/whatIsEnlightenment/kant.whatIsEnlightenment.en.html 5 April 2006

Lomborg, Bjørn. The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Luce, Edward. "Ikea's grown-up plan to tackle child labour." Financial Times Online edition: 14 September 2004. 3 April 2006.

<http://financialtimes.printhtis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title+FEATURES%3A+Ikea>

Mair, Rafe. "Pink salmon slaughtered by lice." Burnaby News Leader Online. 06 October 2005. 14 January 2006.

Martin, Charles E. In the Matter of the National Energy Board Act and the Regulations Made Thereunder and In the Matter of an Application by Sumas Energy 2, Inc. to Construct and Operate an International Power Line. NEB File 2200-S040-1Hearing Order AO-1-EH-1-2000.

McLuhan, Marshall. <www.mcluhan.utoronto.ca>

McManus, John. Market Driven Journalism. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1994.

Mesley, Wendy. "Media – how far they will go to get a story." With Lyndon McIntyre. Undercurrents. CBC Television. 14 November 1999.

Moore, Patrick. "Environmentalism for the 21st Century."

http://greenspriit.com/21st_century.cfm?msid+29&pg+20 Accessed 15 February 2006.

Munroe, Margaret. "Money, Drugs, and Ethics: Being Transparent With The Media And The Public About Who's Paying The Research Bills." Brown Bag Lunch. UBC School of Journalism, Vancouver. 22 March 2005.

Murray, John. "War over energy and clean air leaves neighbours divided – but determined". The Province. 25 May 2003 A15.

National Energy Board. Reasons for Decision Sumas Energy 2 Inc: Application dated 7 July 1999, amended 23 October 2000, for the construction and operation of an International Power Line EH 1-2000. Calgary: 4 March 2004.

Online News Hour.13 January 2005. "Credibility Gap " <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june05/credibility_1-13.html>

Paddock, LeRoy. "Environmental Accountability and Public Involvement." Pace Environmental Law Review. Summer 2004: 243-264.

http://web.lexus-nexis.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/envuniv/printdoc Accessed 10/4/2005

Paine, Lynn Sharp. Value Shift. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Pavlik, John. Journalism and the New Media. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Pew Research Centre for People and the Press "News Audiences Increasingly Politicized". . 8 June 2004

<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=833> Accessed 5 March 2005.

"Online News Audiences Larger, More Diverse". Washington: 8 June 2004.

<htttp://people-press.org/reports/pdf/215.pdg> Accessed 1 April 2006

Picard, Andre. "Canadians a toxic lot, study finds". Globe and Mail. 9 November 2005: A15.

Ramin, Brodie. "Beware: hungry for power." The Peak Online 22 October 2001. 06 January 2006.

Rawls, John. Political Liberalism: The John Dewey Essays. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Report Card on Canadian News Media. 14 June 2004. <http://www.cmrcccrm.ca/english/reportcard2004/01.html>

Richards, Trudie, and Rehberg Sedo, Denel. "Journalists rely too heavily on spinmeisters." Media Vol. 10 Issue 4 (Fall 2004): 18. ProQuest. March 11, 2005. <http://proquest.umi.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca>

Rogers, Paul. "Complexity in environmental reporting is critical to public decision making." Nieman Reports. Winter 2002: 32–33.

Salmon of the Americas <http://www.salmonoftheamericas.com/topic_01_04_press.html>

"Medical, health and food safety experts advise reading past the headlines in the new news about farmed salmon". 10 January 2004. 06 January 2006.

Sampon, Susan. *"The great salmon debate."* Toronto Star. 15 September 2004

Schudson, Michael. Discovering the News. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 1991.

Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003.

Sigelman, Lee. "Reporting the News: An Organizational Analysis". University of British Columbia Journalism 535 Courseware 2005: Chapter 11.

Simpson, Scott. "Partnership Signals Truce in Salmon Wars." Vancouver Sun: 13 January 2006 A1.

Smith, Adam. The Theory of Moral Sentiments. Ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L.. Macfie. Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund Inc, 1982

Smith, Dennis, editor. Business and the Environment: Implications of the New Environmentalism. London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1993.

Stoff, Rick. "Public distrust still declining." St. Louis Journalism Review, Vol. 34 Issue 262 (December 2003/Janaury 2004): 11-25.

Sumas Energy 2. <http://sumasenergy2.com>15 January 2006

Sumas Energy 2. Fact sheet: Providing BC and the Northwest with clean, affordable, reliable energy. Sumas, Washington: Spring 2003

Sumas Energy 2. Fact sheet: SE2 Comparison – old vs. new application. Sumas, Washington: Fall 2002.

Taylor, Charles. The Malaise of Modernity. Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1991.

TRAHVOL. http://www.trahvol.com/trahvol_documents.htm. Accessed 4 April 2006.

Toth, Christina. "No surprise as EFSEC turns down SE2 appeal." Chilliwack Times Online edition: 9 December 2003. 4 April 2006.

UNICEF <http://www.unicef.org/corporate_partners/index_25092.html> 26 January 2006.

Ward, Stephen J.A. Invention of Journalism Ethics. Author's revised manuscript: January 2004.

Washington Business Magazine. <http://www.awb.org/cgibin/absolutenm/templates/?a=16&z=3>

"Sumas Energy 2 Approved." Fall 2002. 4 April 2006.

Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation" 1919. <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/lecture/politics_vocation.html > 23 September 2005.

Wente, Margaret. "Will David Suzuki Please Shut Up" Globe and Mail. 27 November 2004: A29.

World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/peh-emf/about/WhatisEMF/en/print.html.

"What are electromagnetic fields?" 2 February 2005.