

Mark McLaughlin's PhD Oral Presentation

Thank you: Drs. Kershaw, Parenteau, Frank, Kealey, Beckley, and Sandberg, and all of you in attendance.

Format: how I became interested in environmental history/dissertation topic, some insights gained from my research, description of historiographical and theoretical considerations, breakdown of chapters and findings, and highlight what I consider to be three important and interconnected conclusions.

My initial introduction to the field of environmental history was an undergraduate honours seminar with Dr. Bill Parenteau at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) in the fall of 2002. What piqued my interest was the way in which environmental history incorporated an analysis of human-environment interactions. Generally, environmental historians approach the study of the past with two foundational assumptions in mind: human actions have major impacts on non-human nature, and in turn, non-human nature can significantly impact the lives of humans. This analytical perspective was very different from what I had previously learned, which was mainly human-to-human interactions.

Over the next few years, my life's path always seemed to veer back to academia. In 2003, I started my Master of Arts under the supervision of Dr. Sean Cadigan at Memorial University of Newfoundland. My original Master's proposal was an exploration of the decline of the salmon fishery in New Brunswick, but as these things go, my topic morphed from salmon to cod, to the mixed household economy of Newfoundland fisherfolk, to the involvement of fishermen in the logging industry, and then finally to the mechanization of woods work in Newfoundland in the 1950s and 1960s. After my Master's and a six-month internship in India with the Canadian International Development Agency, I discussed the possibility of returning to UNB for my

doctoral studies with Dr. Parenteau at the 2005 meeting of the Canadian Historical Association. Then from the summer of 2005 to the summer of 2006, I worked at a law firm in St. John's to satisfy my curiosity about environmental law; needless to say, it was not made to be. Consequently, I returned to UNB in the fall of 2006 to begin my PhD in Canadian history.

My doctoral project developed gradually. I had originally intended to conduct a study of New Brunswick similar to my Master's project, essentially an examination of the mechanization and professionalization of the New Brunswick logging industry and the subsequent effects on woods workers and the province's Crown (public) forests. However, the boundaries of my dissertation began to expand through discussions with my supervisor and as I made my way through a variety of recent and classic academic books and articles. I started to re-conceptualize my project as a broader examination of New Brunswick's forestry sector from the onset of the Second World War to the full implementation of a new Crown Lands and Forests Act in 1982, but still retaining a strong element of environmental history through an analysis focussed at least in part on the Crown forests. Moreover, it was apparent even during these earliest phases that the New Brunswick government, as steward of the Crown forests, was going to occupy a central role within my dissertation. As a result, my first major research foray was to the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, located here on the UNB campus.

I soon gained several insights from my research. The first was the richness of the archival record. I probably should not have been surprised by the sheer quantity of available primary sources, because, aside from British Columbia, forestry had more impact on the historical development of New Brunswick than any other province in Canada in the 20th century. Nonetheless, as any historical researcher knows, you are never truly aware of what you have to work with until you actually get into the archives. The record at the provincial archives was so

rich that it ended up being the location where I conducted most of the research for my dissertation. I have since searched through tens of thousands of pages of correspondence, memoranda, reports, studies, and other such primary sources, and I have photographed, indexed, and digitally archived thousands of pages of documentary evidence. The most useful manuscript collections for my doctoral project were the Records of the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and the records of the various premiers.

Second, I quickly learned that New Brunswick's forestry landscape was crowded in the years after the Second World War. From my reading of secondary sources, I had expected involvement from government, private industry, forestry-dependent communities, and some other key groups, but the breadth of actual historical actors was unexpected. The list was long: the federal and provincial governments, established and newly-arrived pulp and paper companies, lumber and sawmill operators of all sizes, communities that were dependent on different and often competing forest industries, professional foresters, scientists (from fish biologists to entomologists), unionized and non-unionized woods workers, a range of woodlot owners' associations (from conservative to more radical), and environmentalists and conservationists, to name just some of them. It became apparent that I would face tough decisions about how to weave together numerous historical narratives, and even decisions about which of these groups to include in my dissertation.

The third insight was the degree to which the New Brunswick government, that is, the provincial state, was an active participant in the development of the forestry sector after the Second World War. In many ways, this seemed at odds with conventional historiographical wisdom. The historiography of forestry in Canada is quite vast, and has traditionally approached the role of the state as one of passive participant, often incorporating the term "client state." As

Richard Rajala has argued, provincial governments were “[so] [h]ighly dependent upon the revenues generated by resource corporations for financial health, they tended to define the public interest in terms of the corporate interest.” The state, so the argument went, simply provided the political and economic conditions necessary for private industry to prosper, and in cases where legislation was enacted, the state was merely catching up to measures private industry had already put in place. From what I was finding, the theoretical model of the client state applied to the situation in New Brunswick up until the end of the 1950s, but less so for the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, the provincial government adopted numerous interventionist policies that had profound impacts on the forest industries.

This last insight about the state was an important one, because, after some discussion with my supervisor, it occurred to me that an analysis centred in large part on the activities and influence of the state was the most effective way to organize my doctoral project. As steward of the public forests, the New Brunswick government occupied a particularly crucial role as the manager of ecosystems and as the intermediary between competing forest users. One of the major contentions of my dissertation is that the state of and control of the Crown forests significantly impacted the development of the province's forest industries, and in turn, the development of the forest industries had major impacts on the Crown forests. Fundamentally, my study uses the management of the Crown forests (and by extension, the provincial state) as an analytical focal point, because it was essentially the one issue where the interests of all those who were concerned about forestry matters intersected in the post-war period.

There was, though, still the question of how to theorize the role of the state as an active participant in the development of the forestry sector. The concept of the "relative autonomy" of the state has been used by some forest historians and others to describe how government officials

have to preserve a certain amount of autonomy from private industry in order to create the conditions necessary for capitalist accumulation. This degree of autonomy allows the state to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate and mediate the resistance that inevitably occurs as the capitalist process unfolds. While a good starting point, relative autonomy still did not fully capture how the New Brunswick government used the Crown forests as part of social and economic development schemes in the 1960s and 1970s.

A good theoretical fit was the historiography of the impact of the post-war modernization ethos in Canada. Studies within this body of literature have been greatly influenced by James C. Scott's seminal book *Seeing Like a State*, published in 1998. Environmental historians and other academics have used his book as a model for how to analyze large-scale interactions between the modern state and nature in the post-war period. The central theoretical concept of Scott's work is "high modernism." High modernists believed strongly that science, technology, and the social sciences could be harnessed to modernize society through rational, objective, and apolitical planning and reforms. Such schemes often required the centralized powers of the state, and as Scott points out, the reforms of high modernist regimes were facilitated and financed in large part by the control of nature through state-sponsored megaprojects, such as hydroelectric dams and mining operations. A common feature of many of these modernization schemes was the presence of a rural populace deemed to be economically backward, or those who needed to be particularly integrated into a modern, market-based economy. Scholars who have incorporated aspects of Scott's theoretical framework into their analyses of the impact of the post-war modernization ethos in Canada include Miriam Wright in her book on the Newfoundland fishery, Tina Loo in her article on the High Arrow Dam in British Columbia, and James Kenny and

Andrew Secord in their work on the multipurpose development of the Mactaquac region in New Brunswick.

Through a series of five chapters or case studies that weave together numerous narrative threads, my dissertation examines the growing influence of the post-war modernization ethos on the development of the forest industries and forest management in New Brunswick. The provincial state exercised a high degree of autonomy from the specific interests of existing forest companies by the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, the New Brunswick government came to approach the industrial development of the Crown forests as one large megaproject, believing that it was the key to the province's economic and social modernization. This study thus contributes to the broader international examination of the impact of the post-war modernization ethos on resource-dependent states, particularly with regard to the emphasis on rationalization and consolidation of forests, fish, minerals, and other resources.

The first chapter focuses on the period from 1940 to 1960, years marked by the New Brunswick government rarely wavering from its traditional role as a client state. During the Second World War, which lasted until 1945, industrial mobilization on the Canadian homefront generated a strong interest in the state of and rationalization of New Brunswick's forests and forest industries. Forestry organizations, such as the New Brunswick section of the Canadian Forestry Association, used the post-war reconstruction debates to push for the inclusion of more scientific forestry practices and a re-conceptualization of the province's forests as crops, arguing that the future health of the forests and forest industries required organized industrial development. Due to a lack of funds and certain political considerations, the provincial governments of the 1940s and 1950s failed to implement most of the recommendations that arose during this period. Management of the Crown forests remained the responsibility of the

licensees, and as most Crown land was licensed to pulp and paper companies, forestry practices never moved much beyond the "mining" of forests. In reality, the pulp and paper companies used the rhetoric and growing popularity of scientific forest management in New Brunswick to solidify their dominant position within the province's forestry sector.

The second chapter focuses on the decade of the 1960s, when the modernization ethos took hold and began to reshape management of New Brunswick's forests. The agent for modernization in New Brunswick was Louis J. Robichaud, premier from 1960 to 1970. He was part of a new generation of post-war politicians who believed the state should have a positive impact on the social and economic well-being of citizens, and his administration instituted numerous high modernist political, economic, and social reforms. The New Brunswick government thus viewed development of the forest industries and forest management in the 1960s as a way to facilitate and finance these reforms. As tens of millions of dollars in federal regional economic development funds flowed into the province, the Robichaud government pushed for the so-called full utilization of forest resources. This vision of an efficient, planned, province-wide system of industrial forestry was rooted in the belief that towns with pulp and paper mills could act as effective growth centres and that greater industrial integration was necessary within the forestry sector. The Robichaud government consequently restructured the Crown forest regulatory regime and implemented economic incentives to support its reforms, and by 1970, much of its agenda was completed, including the construction of four new pulp and paper mills in the province.

Not surprisingly, other forest users had become increasingly upset at how the Crown forest management system and the forestry sector in general had come to revolve increasingly

around the pulp and paper industry in the 1950s and 1960s. These other forest user groups responded by forming their own representative organizations by the late 1960s.

The third chapter examines the collective organization of the province's two largest groups of wood producers, woods workers and woodlot owners, from 1940 to 1970. The pulp and paper companies viewed the wages and benefits of woods workers and the prices paid for pulpwood from independent woodlots as simply part of wood procurements costs that had to be kept to a minimum. Woods workers and woodlot owners, on the other hand, believed they deserved fair remuneration for the wood they produced, since both groups of producers formed their own representative organizations to negotiate on their behalf. Additionally, Crown forest management was an integral part of the debates between the producers' organizations, the province, and the pulp and paper industry, because the wood producers believed the Crown forests should be used for the benefit of the province's residents, not large international corporations. Woods workers in northern New Brunswick first organized an independent union in 1949 and then affiliated with an international union in 1953, whereas woodlot owners, along with other private wood producers, did not form their own associations until the early 1960s. In both cases, the organization process was difficult, as the provincial government usually sided with the pulp and paper companies in disputes over union certification and industry-independent wood producer relations.

The fourth chapter is an examination of the emergence of the environment as a political issue in New Brunswick from 1940 to 1975. The two main issues that fuelled public reaction in the years after the Second World War were the spruce budworm spraying program and water pollution from pulp and paper mills, which were both associated with industrial forestry. For each issue, the New Brunswick government adopted a different regulatory approach. With

regards to the spruce budworm spraying program, virtually no regulatory action was taken prior to the 1970s. Provincial government and industry officials countered assertions of massive ecological damage by arguing that the spray option was necessary to save the province's forests and forest industries from the budworm. In contrast, the issue of water pollution was a by-product of the pulp and paper manufacturing process, so government officials were less concerned about the effects of water regulations on the pulp and paper industry than potentially halting the spraying program. In 1958, the provincial government created the New Brunswick Water Authority, an independent technocratic resource management agency, but even the Authority's appearance of objective regulatory activity was shattered by the politics of pulp and paper by 1970. Richard Hatfield's administration, which recognized the growing importance of the environment as a political issue, finally took some steps to regulate industrial practices associated with pulp and paper manufacturing in the early 1970s.

The fifth chapter examines the forest industries and forest management in the 1970s. A downturn in global paper markets in the early 1970s produced a general consensus that dramatic solutions had to be considered with regard to the pulp and paper-dominated system of Crown forest management, and the Richard Hatfield government, elected in 1970, responded by launching a massive experiment in state-managed forests in northeastern New Brunswick. Known as the Bathurst Pilot Project and operated by a Crown corporation called the New Brunswick Forest Authority, the whole endeavour was predicated on the notion that industrial forestry practices were the most effective and efficient means to manage the Crown forests and would provide the greatest economic returns. The Bathurst Pilot Project was thus the next phase along the high modernist curve -- a state-run experiment in the type of industrial forest management that the private sector had so far failed to implement. Even though certain aspects

of the pilot project were discredited, the Hatfield government adhered to the belief that large-scale industrial forest management was the future of forestry on Crown lands. Consequently, industrial forestry became the foundation of the next generation of provincial forestry legislation, the Crown Lands and Forests Act of 1980, a combination of the traditional Crown land licensing system and elements of the Bathurst Pilot Project. The new act represented a step back from the intensive state intervention of the 1970s, and the Hatfield government continued to rely on private industry to assume many of the responsibilities of Crown forest management.

I would like end my presentation by highlighting what I consider to be three important and interconnected conclusions from my research. First, and as I mentioned earlier, New Brunswick's forestry landscape was crowded in the years after the Second World War. There was a wide variety of groups with interests in forestry-related matters, and they had differing views as to how the Crown forests should be managed – views which were communicated to subsequent provincial governments.

Relatedly, New Brunswick's Crown Lands and Forests Act was not inevitable. Rather than the result of some sort of natural industrial progression, the passage of the act was the culmination of more than 40 years of a plethora of actions taken and decisions made by provincial government departments, agencies, and officials; that is, the state.

Finally, in terms of forestry in New Brunswick, 1960 to 1980 was an era of lost opportunities. It was a rare period in the history of the province when the state did not simply equate the public interest with the specific interests of the forest industries. The high degree of autonomy exhibited by the provincial government in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated that the Crown forests could be managed outside the dictates of the corporate agenda. Crown forest management plans could have been crafted to provide greater benefits to a wider variety of forest

user groups and to operate more within the ecological limits of local forests. Instead, the New Brunswick government chose the path of industrial forestry and adhered to the notion that "trees are a crop." In a manner of speaking, the boundaries of relative autonomy had been stretched, but were never truly broken.