

From Weapons to Symbols of Privilege: Political Cartoons and the Rise and Fall of the Pulpwood Embargo Debate in Nova Scotia, 1923-1933*

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[See table of contents](#)

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L. ANDERS SANDBERG and BILL PARENTEAU

From Weapons to Symbols of Privilege: Political Cartoons and the Rise and Fall of the Pulpwood Embargo Debate in Nova Scotia, 1923-1933*

AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC QUESTIONS for Canadian governments in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was whether or not to allow the export of raw materials to the United States. In the forest sector, the question of pulpwood exports came to the fore after 1900 and became a major issue in Canadian-American trade relations at the end of the First World War. By 1911, both the federal government and the provincial governments in the major pulpwood producing provinces in Eastern Canada had banned the export of pulpwood from Crown land. After the War, economic nationalists lobbied for further restrictions, arguing that extending the ban to pulpwood cut on freehold (privately owned) land would serve to promote industrial development in Canada and, at the same time, conserve forest resources. Angered already by the export ban on Crown land wood, American pulp and paper manufacturers countered that such restrictions were inconsistent with modern corporate principles of investment security and detrimental to the thousands of Canadian farmers and other small producers who depended upon the United States pulpwood market. The controversy came to a head with the appointment of a Canadian Royal Commission on Pulpwood in 1923, but, in the end, the resulting report proved inconclusive. On the national level, the issue faded away within a few years after the report of the Commission, as American pulp and paper interests sidestepped the problem by building mills in Canada.

The details of the national debate over pulpwood exports and the motivations of its central protagonists have received significant attention from historians.¹ The issue of pulpwood exports surfaced within the context of the development of modern pulp and paper manufacturing. At stake at the end of the First World War was the

* The writing of this article was facilitated by the financial support of a SSHRCC Research Grant.

1 For some recent statements, see R.P. Gillis and T.R. Roach, *Lost Initiatives: Canada's Forest Industries, Forest Policy and Forest Conservation* (Westport, Conn., 1986); Bill Parenteau, "The Woods Transformed: The Emergence of the Pulp and Paper Industry in New Brunswick", *Acadiensis*, XII, 1 (Autumn 1992), pp. 5-43; Bill Parenteau and L. Anders Sandberg, "Conservation and the Gospel of Economic Nationalism: The Canadian Pulpwood Question in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 1918-1925", *Environmental History Review*, 19, 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 55-83.

L. Anders Sandberg and Bill Parenteau, "From Weapons to Symbols of Privilege: Political Cartoons and the Rise and Fall of the Pulpwood Embargo Debate in Nova Scotia, 1923-1933", *Acadiensis*, XXVI, 2 (Spring 1997), pp. 31-58.

division of forest resources in the eastern provinces among manufacturers on opposite sides of the border, the outcome of which was central to the future development of the industry. Although fundamentally an economic issue, the public discourse surrounding the pulpwood question often took the form of a debate over forest conservation. Both the American and Canadian pulp and paper trade associations employed self-serving conservation arguments to further their efforts to control forest resources. So too did Frank John Dixie Barnjum, the forest entrepreneur, conservationist and politician from Nova Scotia, who campaigned tirelessly for an export embargo as a conservation measure and was the driving force in convincing the Canadian House of Commons to appoint a national Royal Commission. Beneath Barnjum's civic-minded protestations that Canada was fast becoming a "desert wilderness" lay the fact that, as a land holder in Maine and a pulp mill owner in Nova Scotia, he stood to reap considerable economic benefits from pulpwood export restrictions.² Barnjum, in fact, continued to campaign for export restriction in his home province for nearly a decade after the national debate subsided.

Nova Scotia serves as a good case study for understanding the local political dynamics of the pulpwood issue, as well as the role played by the partisan press in the debate. Relatively little has been written concerning Barnjum's later activities and the debate over pulpwood export restrictions in his home province and some attention will, therefore, necessarily be given to these activities here. But the major purpose of this essay is to bring to light the political and public dimensions of the Nova Scotia campaign. Special attention will be paid to the significance of political cartoons, which in Nova Scotia, more than anywhere else, enlivened the debate. It will be argued that in addressing the pulpwood issue, cartoons served less as an attack on privilege, which some scholars have characterized as being the thrust of political cartoons in this era, than as weapons in support of economic forces — attacking privilege only rhetorically, as a mask for self-interest.³ Moreover, shifts in the content of the political cartoons which focussed on resource and industrial policy in Nova Scotia reflected the decline of small local competitive firms and the concomitant growth and idealization of the modern corporation.

The proposal for a Canadian embargo on pulpwood from private lands grew out of several precedents. Before the First World War, so-called "manufacturing conditions" were in place on federal and provincial Crown lands, by far the most dominant ownership category in Canada. Such conditions required Crown lessees

2 T. Roach and R. Judd, "Frank John Dixie Barnjum, A Man for All Seasons: Conservationist, Pulpwood Embargoist and Speculator!" *Acadiensis*, XX, 2 (Spring 1991), pp. 129-44.

3 Peter Desbarats and Terry Mosher, *The Hecklers: A History of Political Cartooning and a Cartoonists' History of Canada* (Toronto, 1979); Margaret Conrad, "The Art of Regional Protest: The Political Cartoons of Donald McRitchie, 1904-1937", *Acadiensis*, XXI, 1 (Autumn 1991), pp. 5-29; Margaret Conrad, "The Battle of the Cartoonists: The Cartoon Art of Donald McRitchie and Robert Chambers in Halifax Newspapers", in Gwendolyn Davies, ed., *Myth and Milieu: Atlantic Literature and Culture, 1918-1939* (Fredericton, 1993), pp. 17-36; Raymond Morris, *Behind the Jester's Mask: Canadian Editorial Cartoons about Dominant and Minority Groups, 1960-1979* (Toronto, 1989).

to conduct manufacturing in conjunction with their leases. Unpopular in the United States, but popular in Canada, the manufacturing condition was seen by some contemporary observers as responsible for the rapid increase in Canadian newsprint production after 1910. For economic nationalists, who wanted Canada to reap the harvest of unprecedented prices and demand for paper after World War I, preventing the export of raw pulpwood from private land seemed the obvious next step. There was some significant media support for this sentiment. *Saturday Night*, in particular, adopted a nationalist stance.⁴

The public drive for a national pulpwood export embargo was spearheaded by Frank Barnjum, who called for a complete embargo on pulpwood exports. His efforts were supplemented by the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association (CPPA), which advocated a heavy export tax, the proceeds of which would be used for conservation measures. On a less public level, both Barnjum and prominent members of the CPPA used their substantial political connections to push for legislation. In June of 1923, the efforts of the restrictionists seemed to bear fruit, when a Royal Commission on Pulpwood was sent around the country to investigate the issue. In reality, however, Barnjum had failed to convince the federal Liberal Government of the need for an embargo. And, in its report, the Royal Commission proved non-committal regarding the embargo issue.⁵

Barnjum therefore left the federal Liberal party in 1923 to look for other ways to promote the embargo, and he found support for his ideas in Nova Scotia. Here, in contrast to most other provinces, the level of private land ownership was high (at over three quarters of all forest lands), and these lands were increasingly being bought up by American absentee pulp and paper companies who held them as pulpwood reserves or as speculative ventures. The province also lacked any significant pulp and paper mill, leaving the provincial government desperate for such development, and worried lest it be left behind in the expansionist phase of the industry.⁶ Barnjum addressed these concerns. He decried both the increased control of Nova Scotian forest lands (Crown leases and freeholds) by American pulp and paper companies and the fivefold increase in pulpwood exports between 1922 and 1927.⁷ In the 1925 provincial election, he gained a seat in the legislature on the promise that he would build a pulp and paper mill in his Queens County riding within two years or resign. In 1927, having failed to make good that pledge, true to

4 See Morris Wolfe, *A Saturday Night Scrapbook* (Toronto, 1973), pp. 83-105. These concerns over national resource exports in Canada should be contrasted with the concerns over resource exploitation in the United States. Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York, 1968), p. 24. According to Glen Williams, this recurrent preoccupation with resource exports to the United States has blinded Canadians to the environmental effects of resource exploitation. Glen Williams, "Greening the New Canadian Political Economy", *Studies in Political Economy*, 37 (Spring 1992), pp. 5-30.

5 For more details, see Parenteau and Sandberg, "Conservation and the Gospel of Economic Nationalism".

6 *Ibid.*

7 By 1928, the major holders of forest lands were absentee American pulp and paper companies, the three most prominent being the Hollingsworth and Whitney Pulp and Paper Company, the Oxford Paper Company and the MacLeod's Pulp Company, all based in Boston.

his word, he resigned his seat, but he remained influential with the government and the civil service bureaucracy. The Attorney-General and the Minister for the newly-established Department of Lands and Forests from 1927 to 1931, W.L. Hall, and the Department's Chief Forester from 1926 to 1933, Otto Schierbeck, were friends and partners of Barnjum, and they continued to advocate a provincial pulpwood embargo and the establishment of a pulp and paper mill in the province.⁸

A provincial embargo, Bill 151, was eventually passed in 1930, although it included only large private land in excess of 1,000 acres.⁹ This amendment was seen as necessary in order not to prejudice small holders, who held over 50 per cent of the forest lands in the province, in their quest for profitable pulpwood markets in both the United States and Canada. However, even with the inclusion of this amendment, the Bill was never advocated forcefully and, most significant, was never proclaimed. During the public hearings on the Bill, even Hall stated that it would only be proclaimed if necessary.¹⁰ And it would not be deemed necessary. One year later, Hall was appointed Justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia and replaced by a new Minister. In 1933, Barnjum died and Schierbeck was dismissed. Later in the same year the Conservatives lost the election and Bill 151 was buried for posterity.¹¹

More than any other figure, Frank Barnjum represented the local Canadian forest entrepreneur, tied to industrial development strategies based upon a

8 Hall was a lawyer who handled Barnjum's forest holdings. For Schierbeck's connection to Barnjum, see L. Anders Sandberg and Peter Clancy, "Forestry in a Staples Economy: The Checkered Career of Otto Schierbeck, Chief Forester, Nova Scotia, Canada, 1925-1933", *Environmental History*, 2, 1 (January 1997), pp. 74-95.

9 On the defeat of the export tax, see *Halifax Chronicle*, 14, 19, 20, 27 January 1927. Barnjum expressed his delight on the enactment of Bill 151 as follows: "The campaign that has been waged in Nova Scotia against a measure of forest conservation in that province during the past few weeks is a fair sample of their [the foreign interests and their paid representatives] methods. I say all honour to an Attorney-General who, with a majority of only two behind him in the legislature, had the courage, the forthrightness and the ability to force the fight to a successful conclusion". Frank Barnjum to The Editor (this was a form letter, sent out to several newspapers), 3 May 1930, MG 2, vol. 650, no. 39186, Public of Archives Nova Scotia [PANS].

10 This no doubt had to do with the fact that where partisan interests clashed with economic gain, the latter prevailed. Conservative Premier Rhodes, for example, was reluctant to support the embargo, arguing that it was not within the competence of the province "to pass legislation by way of an embargo upon wood cut on lands owned in fee simple". Quoted in L.A. Sandberg, "Forest Policy in Nova Scotia: The Big Lease, Cape Breton Island, 1899-1960", in L.A. Sandberg, ed., *Trouble in the Woods: Forest Policy and Social Conflict in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* (Fredericton, 1992), p. 79. No doubt, his reluctance was related to his past role as speculator and beneficiary in the sale of pulpwood lands to an American pulp and paper company. Rhodes and Curry was the province's largest contracting firm which also operated the Sheet Harbour Lumber Company which Rhodes inherited in 1909. In 1923, he sold the lands to the Albany Perforated Paper Company of New York. At that time, the property comprised 65,000 acres of freehold timber lands, 40,000 acres of leased Crown lands, and a wharf and buildings. J. Rutledge, *Sheet Harbour: A Local History* (Halifax, 1954) and MG 1, vol. 2861, no. 13, PANS.

11 For more detail, see Sandberg, "The Big Lease", p. 79.

nationalist policy of restricting American access to raw materials. Through his strong connections to the federal Liberal Party and later as a Conservative member of the Nova Scotia legislature, he pursued his dream of a pulp and paper mill by traditional means: by exerting his influence within the political apparatus of the state.¹² At both the federal and provincial levels Barnjum was able to use his political connections to raise the issue of pulpwood exports to the forefront of political debate and, for a time, build momentum for restrictions. But by the late 1920s the days of the local owner-operator in the Canadian forest industries were quickly passing, as the pulp and paper capacity of the nation was being consolidated under the control of three large conglomerates.¹³ Thus, on the provincial, as on the federal, level, the Gilded Age-style entrepreneur ran headlong into the emerging forces of monopoly capital, which represented a more continentalist vision of forest industry development and different strategies for pursuing that vision.¹⁴

During the decade of debate on the issue, the use of political rhetoric and

12 The argument presented here is that there was a critical transition in industry-state relations, as the provincial forest industry passed from the hands of local owner-operators to large conglomerates, or, to put it more abstractly, from competitive to monopoly capital. Local entrepreneurs like Frank Barnjum traditionally pursued access to Crown forest resources, tax relief, infrastructure support and other economic benefits by exploiting political office or party affiliation — by operating within the political and administrative apparatus of the state. In contrast, the corporations that were coming to dominate the North American forest industries in the post-War period rigidly avoided getting caught up in local politics. The strategy of monopoly capital was to operate outside of the political apparatus of the state, as companies investing such enormous amounts in mills and forest holdings could not afford to face the implications of the changes in government which often had a significant impact on local owner-operators. By investing millions in the provinces and creating hundreds of jobs, from which ruling parties reaped political capital, the pulp and paper corporations were able to demand generous, long-term contracts and maintain a secure climate for capital investment. This transition is more fully examined in Bill Parenteau, "Forest and Society in New Brunswick: The Political Economy of the Forest Industries, 1918-1939", Ph.D. thesis, UNB, 1994, pp. 458-77.

13 On the structural changes in the newsprint industry during the late 1920s, see G. Piédalue, "Les Groupes financières et la guerre du papier au Canada, 1920-1930", *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française*, 30 (1976), pp. 223-58; R.W. Hay, "Mergers and Expansion of Productive Capacity in the Canadian Pulp and Paper Industry, 1926-1932", *Atlantic Canada Economics Association Papers*, 14 (1985), pp. 115-26; J.C. Weldon, "Consolidation in Canadian Industry, 1900-1948", in L.A. Skeoch, ed., *Restrictive Trade Practices in Canada* (Toronto, 1966), pp. 228-79; Parenteau and Sandberg, "Conservation and the Gospel of Economic Nationalism".

14 On the national level, competing self-interests among pulpwood producers were not the only issues during the debate. In the larger context of Canada-United States trade relations and the political economy of the pulp and paper industry there were other equally important factors to be weighed in the balance. The pulpwood question was only one of the issues facing the Canadian government during the post-World War I restructuring of the North American economy. Liberal Prime Minister W.L. MacKenzie King was unwilling to risk a trade war over an issue of such dubious popularity. With the movement of coveted American capital into the Canadian forest industries — highlighted by the decision of the giant International Paper Company in 1925 to develop its Canadian forest and hydro-electric power resources — the issue of a national pulpwood embargo or export tax was rendered irrelevant.

political cartoons had figured prominently in the overall arsenal of Barnjum's pro-embargo arguments. In the early years, *Saturday Night* provided an outlet for his articles, under such sensational titles as "Canada Becoming a Desert Wilderness", "Some Startling Forest Facts: What Must Be Done to Save a Great Industry", and "Canada is Simply Fiddling While Rome is Burning".¹⁵ Barnjum also spent a considerable portion of his personal fortune disseminating alarmist pamphlets on pending forest scarcities in Canada. Moreover, he published a book of essays espousing the pro-embargo cause. Otto Schierbeck, who was Barnjum's forester at the time, authored one of the essays, arguing that the lure of pulpwood exports "induces the farmer to cut his wood-lot, thereby destroying the numerous small groves which are essential for the regulation of the water table and the prevention of floods".¹⁶ Nationalist outlets for Barnjum's ideas were, however, drying up. His last article in *Saturday Night* appeared on 3 May 1924, and by 1928 the magazine no longer provided a forum for those who remained concerned about American control of the Canadian economy.¹⁷

In Nova Scotia, by contrast, the Conservative *Halifax Herald's* cartoonist, Donald McRitchie, proved an able jester for Barnjum's cause. The anti-American message proved a particularly popular theme. A barrage of anti-American cartoons appeared in the spring of 1926. In "Stripping Our Virgin Forests", McRitchie showed Nova Scotia pulpwood fuelling the American rather than the Nova Scotian economy (Figure One). In "The People Follow Their Natural Resources", he tapped into a prevailing anxiety of Nova Scotians, drawing a direct causal relationship between pulpwood exports and outmigration (Figure Two).¹⁸ In the case of Crown lands, referring specifically to the 620,000-acre Big Lease held on Cape Breton Island by the Boston-based Oxford Paper Company, McRitchie pictured Nova Scotia as a sleeping Samson whose forests were stripped by the American Delila (Figure Three).

15 *Saturday Night*, 16 September, 25 February, 18 March 1922. Barnjum's pamphlets were distributed widely to politicians and reprinted in various newspapers and magazines.

16 O. Schierbeck, "Embargo Necessary", in F. J. D. Barnjum, *Barnjum \$2,000 Prize Essays* (Montreal, 1923), p. 31.

17 Wolfe, *A Saturday Night Scrapbook*, p. 106.

18 Conrad, "The Art of Regional Protest". This played on the growing fears of depopulation in Nova Scotia. See, for example, David Frank, "The 1920s: Class and Region, Resistance and Accommodation", in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto, 1993), pp. 233-71. Similar fears of raw materials and people leaving the country were expressed on the national level. See Wolfe, *A Saturday Night Scrapbook*, p. 87.

Figure One

"Stripping Our Virgin Forests", *Halifax Herald*, 12 March 1926.



Figure Two

“The People Follow Their Natural Resources”, *Halifax Herald*, 16 April 1926.



Figure Three

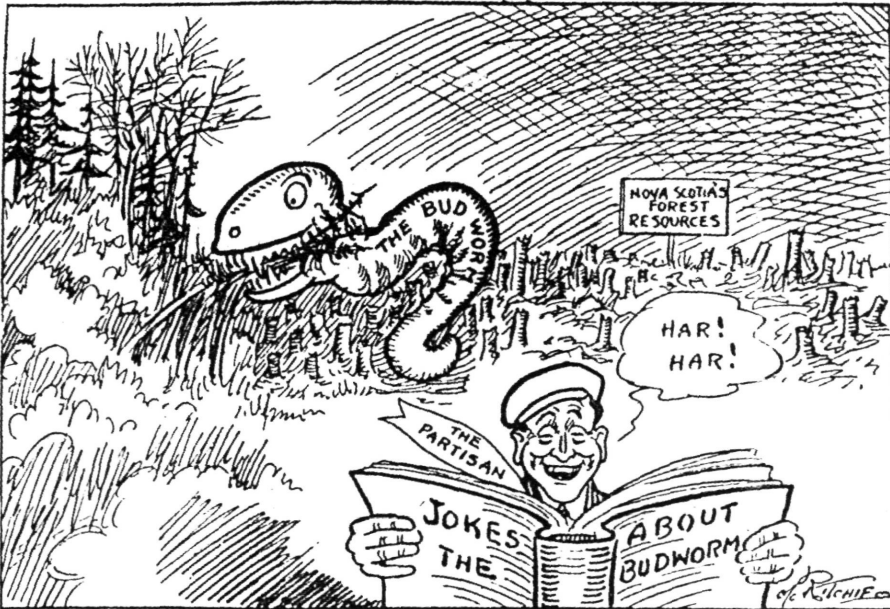
“Stripping Him of His Strength”, *Halifax Herald*, 17 March 1926.



The control of timber lands by American absentee pulp and paper companies was also used to explain the degradation of the forest. It was argued that the idle forests hoarded by the large American corporations were prone to become over-mature (for commercial purposes) and fall victim to fires and insect attacks. In "A Deadly Forest Menace", McRitchie chastized the Government for neglecting the seriousness of the spruce budworm infestations in Nova Scotia's forests (Figure Four). He also criticized the forest companies for their cutting methods, which resulted in the devastation of lands, and for their failure to take adequate precautions to ensure future forest regeneration.¹⁹ In "Keep Them Tied Up Forever", McRitchie advocated stern measures to cope with carelessness and indifference in forest management (Figure Five). The export embargo was at the heart of such measures, as it would, supporters argued, force absentee owners either to sell or to operate their extensive forest lands more carefully.²⁰

Figure Four

"A Deadly Forest Menace", *Halifax Herald*, 20 April 1926.



19 For more detail, see Sandberg, "The Big Lease", pp. 77-8; P. Webster, "Pining for Trees: The History of Dissent Against Forest Destruction in Nova Scotia, 1749-1991", M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1991, pp. 164-72.

20 Sandberg, "The Big Lease", p. 78.

Figure Five

"Keep Them Tied Up Forever!" *Halifax Herald*, 20 April 1926.



Though not expressed in any cartoons, the pro-embargo forces also argued that the embargo was a potential boon to the province's small woodlot owners. In 1930, Hall argued that the embargo (Bill 151) would affect only the 272 landowners with holdings over 1,000 acres [405 ha], who possessed 30 per cent of all forest lands, thereby raising the value of the forest properties of small woodlot owners and providing them with a more diverse and competitive pulpwood market.²¹ According to Hall, the embargo would force large operators "to restrict their cut and buy from smaller owners for export. This will increase the market for the farmers".²² He identified the Ontario example as a precedent for the proposed Nova Scotia embargo, and further claimed that the Ontario legislation "was highly lauded by all forestry experts throughout the whole Dominion".²³

Any criticism of the embargo the Barnjum faction labelled as false propaganda. This could sometimes take on a war-like scenario as, for example, in "His Last Stand" where McRitchie showed U.S. Paper interests blindly flinging their grenades in all directions at the first suggestion of effective conservation legislation (Figure Six). Many of the pro-embargo messages came together in "Woodman Spare that Tree", in which the powerful foreign pulp and paper interests were seen manipulating their local supporters in their misguided efforts to defeat forest conservation [Bill 151] and home manufacture (Figure Seven).

Figure Six

"His Last Stand", *Halifax Herald*, 9 April 1926.



²¹ *Halifax Herald*, 19 April 1930.

²² *Halifax Herald*, 18 April 1930.

²³ "Memorandum Regarding Bill 151", RG 20, vol. 749, no. 5, PANS. The success of the Ontario "embargo" has, however, been called into question. See Thomas Roach, "Farm Woodlots and Pulpwood Exports from Eastern Canada, 1900-1930", in Harold Steen, ed., *History of Sustained Yield Forestry* (Santa Cruz, CA, 1984), pp. 202-10.

Figure Seven

"Woodman Spare that Tree", *Halifax Herald*, 21 April 1930.



The appointment of the Royal Commission in 1923 had galvanized the economic interests that stood to lose from pulpwood export restrictions. Prominent among this group were American pulp and paper companies dependent on Canadian wood and the many local land agents, exporters and pulpwood dealers, who had organized the Canadian Pulpwood Association (CPA) in response to the embargo threat. The leadership of the CPA represented well the nature of the membership. The President was Angus McLean, a pulp and paper mill owner with interests in New Brunswick and the United States. The Vice President was Ralph Bell, a dealer in timber lands and pulpwood, who also managed and supervised the holdings of the Nova Scotia Timber Lands Company and the Cedar Lake Timber Lands Company; the Nova Scotia Timber Lands Company was owned by the S.D. Warren Company of Maine, the largest land owner in Digby and Yarmouth counties, and one of the largest in the province. Lacking the entrenched political influence of the pro-embargo forces, these interests nevertheless launched a devastating campaign in the media, that included a series of entertaining parables and cartoons issued by the CPA.

"The Medicine Man", a pamphlet written by Ralph P. Bell, effectively illustrates the approach taken by the anti-embargo forces in lampooning their adversaries. In the story, the medicine man (Frank Barnjum) and his assistant (Edward Beck, Secretary of the CPPA) attempted to sell the idea of pulpwood restrictions as a 'cure all'. "The medicine man's hearers watch him with great admiration", Bell wrote, as he explained how "one simple nostrum", a pulpwood embargo, could save the forest and ensure the expansion of the pulp and paper industry, without infringing upon the interests of the thousands of farmers and other small producers that depend on the export market (Figure Eight). However, doubts began to surface when the simple but shrewd folk realized the contradictions inherent in this one simple solution (Figure Nine). When it became clear to the crowd that his "loud claims and direful prophecies have no basis save in the addled brain of an interested pleader", the medicine man made a hasty exit (Figure Ten).²⁴

Figure Eight

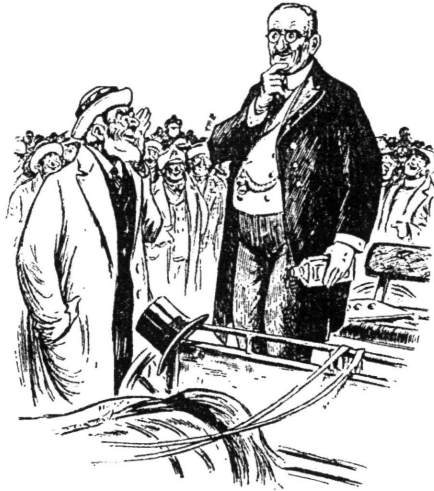
"The Medicine Man", Ralph P. Bell, "The Medicine Man". CPA pamphlet, ca. 1925, RG 39, vol. 599, file E-7, NAC.



*"I have here a sovereign specific—it is my own discovery—
no matter what the pain, it will cure you."*

24 Ralph P. Bell, "The Medicine Man", CPA pamphlet, ca. 1925, in Records of the Dominion Forest Service, RG39, vol. 599, file E-7, National Archives of Canada [NAC].

Figure Nine*



*"You'd best talk low, doc, or mebbe them
new mills might overhear you and change
their minds."*

Figure Ten*



*But the medicine man does not wait . . . he urges his steed forward in his
sager haste to escape from persistent questions that need a definite answer.*

*Source: "The Medicine Man", Ralph P. Bell, "The Medicine Man". CPA pamphlet, ca. 1925, RG 39, vol. 599, file E-7, NAC.

Such stories and cartoons contained the essential elements of the anti-restriction appeal and painted those favouring restriction as disingenuous monopolists. The cartoons “The Melon”, “The Embargo Situation” and “If Elected”, were used to present the argument that pulpwood restrictions would violate the property rights of farmers, settlers and other land owners (Figures Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen).²⁵ These cartoons suggested that economic nationalism and conservation were being used as smoke screens by greedy Canadian paper makers to enrich themselves at the expense of small producers.

Figure Eleven

“The Melon”, James Thompson, “The Proposed Pulpwood Embargo: A Brief Talk on the Subject”, CPA pamphlet, March 1925, RG 39, vol. 599, file E-7, NAC.



THE MELON

Enriching the wealthy few at the expense of 50,000 hard-working settlers.

²⁵ Cartoons from James Thompson, “The Proposed Pulpwood Embargo: A Brief Talk on the Subject”, CPA pamphlet, March 1925, in Records of the Dominion Forest Service, RG 39, vol. 599, file E-7, NAC.

Figure Twelve

"The Embargo Situation", James Thompson, "The Proposed Pulpwood Embargo: A Brief Talk on the Subject", CPA pamphlet, March 1925, RG 39, vol. 599, file E-7, NAC.



THE EMBARGO SITUATION

Ventriloquist: "And now, my little man, what are your views on the subject of forest conservation in Canada?"

Dummy: "Canada's salvation depends upon a pulpwood embargo."

Ventriloquist: "Spoken like a patriot. You haven't any axe to grind, have you, Johnnie?"

Dummy: "Not at all, sir. I'm heartbroken over conservation. My pulp and paper mill is merely a hobby."

Figure Thirteen

“If Elected”, *Halifax Chronicle*, Provincial election campaign, 1925.



In Nova Scotia, Bill 151 was criticized on similar grounds. The Bill, it was alleged, would lead to regional monopolies being "in the saddle", and, once in charge, they would quickly act to depress pulpwood prices.²⁶ The bill was also criticized because it violated property rights. Here the rhetoric was colourful and very telling: because woodlot owners could not sell to whom they wanted, the Bill legalized public theft; it was a case of "classes against masses" and "an outrageous infringement of private rights".²⁷ One argument even appealed to the communal interests of the larger exporters and the small woodlot owners, suggesting that Bill 151 threatened the status, indeed the existence, of the larger operators and exporters, without whom the small operators would have no market.²⁸

In "Waste Energy", the anti-embargoists countered the claim that pulpwood restrictions would contribute to the cause of conservation, arguing that 90 per cent of forest depletion in Canada resulted from fire and other natural causes (Figure Fourteen). Of the remaining 10 per cent, it was further argued, only a relatively minor portion was exported as pulpwood. Adding to the critique, Ralph Bell pointed out in one of his fictional conversations with an embargoist, "if we bring mills to Canada they are going to operate on the very wood you are talking about saving".²⁹ As the debate progressed, then, the anti-embargoists claimed that the embargo threatened national industrialization, lowered the value of forest lands, hurt sales of forest lands, exploited small producers and did nothing for forest conservation.

There were several features common to the cartoons employed by both the pro- and anti-embargo supporters. One was the portrayal of the two factions of the bourgeoisie as fat capitalists, dressed in dark suits and hats and with glowing diamond stickpins.³⁰ This is abundantly clear in McRitchie's cartoons in favour of the embargo. Similarly, in the "Medicine Man" and "If Elected", Frank Barnjum, though of slight built, was portrayed as a fat capitalist, or, as in "The Embargo Situation", a fat capitalist's spokesperson.³¹ Another common feature is found in the portrayal of victims. In "If Elected", Barnjum's victims, the small woodlot owners in Queens and Shelburne Counties, were based on American cartoonist Frederick Oppen's figure "The Common People" or "John Public", which first appeared in *The Arena* in 1905.³² In other cartoons, Nova Scotia or the Nova Scotia forest was personified as victim. The cartoons, in short, contained villains

26 *Halifax Chronicle*, 21 April 1930.

27 *Halifax Herald*, 24 April 1930.

28 *Halifax Herald*, 24 April 1930.

29 Cartoon and quotation from Ralph P. Bell, "A Sensible Policy - That is Real Forest Conservation", CPA pamphlet, ca. 1924, in Records of the Dominion Forest Service, RG39, vol. 599, file E-7, NAC.

30 The use of the diamond stickpin was pioneered by the American cartoonist Thomas Nast in the 1870s. Hess and Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art*, p. 95.

31 The capitalist could also be depicted as an ethnic stereotype, as in "Waste Energy", where he appears as a tall bespectacled Jewish businessman with whiskers.

32 Hess and Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art*, p. 39.

Figure Fourteen

"Waste Energy", James Thompson, "The Proposed Pulpwood Embargo: A Brief Talk on the Subject", CPA pamphlet, March 1925, RG 39, vol. 599, file E-7, NAC.



Why waste time on the harmless little fellow when a big danger threatens Canada's forest wealth?

and victims, where the villains were businessmen of either American or Canadian origin.

Ultimately, the embargo issue ceased to be important as large corporations entered the Nova Scotia pulp and paper industry and as provincial political structures changed to accommodate an ever more powerful and more influential class of business leaders. In 1928, a Nova Scotia expatriate, Isaac Walton Killam, and the Montreal-based Royal Securities Corporation (one of the largest financial institutions in Canada) opened the Mersey Paper Company's pulp and newsprint mill in Liverpool, Queens County. Mersey immediately repeated a message that had been conveyed by other companies during the national embargo debate, that it had "no desire to be in politics", as it had "hosts of friends from both parties and [wished] to avoid giving offence to any".³³ Accommodated by a generous supply of hydro-electric power from the provincial government, and possessing ample pulpwood from its own freeholds and Crown leases, the company had very little need for an embargo. When the embargo was defeated, a company representative thus declared smugly: "So far as the Mersey Company is concerned, their supply of pulpwood for their present development [is] fully assured. They [can] take it either from their own fee simple lands or from acres held under Government cutting licences, or as they are presently doing, buying it from farmers and operators".³⁴

Mersey Paper and other corporations that were coming to dominate the Canadian forest industries needed no permanent political allies, only permanent economic supports; these could best be met by a bureaucratized state, free from internal political interference.³⁵ These new corporations offered stable forest industry development on a scale never before seen in Nova Scotia, with all of the economic benefits so eagerly sought by provincial governments. In return, they demanded

33 *Halifax Herald*, 12 April 1930.

34 *Halifax Herald*, 19 April 1930. For an elaboration on this point, see Parenteau, "The Woods Transformed".

35 With a bureraocratized state we here mean a situation where the state, independent of what political party is in power, supplies long-term and stable support for private corporations. The nature of such support is developed by a professional civil service employed on a permanent basis. In the period after the embargo, the Nova Scotia state now took on more responsibilities to attract and serve international pulp and paper capital. The Department of Lands and Forests began to build up a bureaucracy of professional foresters, and buy back, survey and police Crown lands (which later were used to attract two new pulp and paper companies to the province). Measures were taken to stop the practice of using political office to advance personal business interests. In the late 1950s and 1960s, the bureaucratic state even 'stepped on Mersey's toes' to accommodate the two new pulp and paper companies in the province. See Ralph Johnson, *Forests of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1986); for evidence of a similar situation in New Brunswick, see D. Stanley, *Louis Robichaud: A Decade of Power* (Halifax 1984). In 1936, a Civil Service Act was passed and a Civil Service Commission established to administer a merit system of appointment to the civil service. Anthony Thomson, "From Civil Servants to Government Employees: The Nova Scotia Government Employees Association, 1967-1973", in Michael Earle, ed., *Workers and the State in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Fredericton, 1989), p. 218. On the Canadian transition from patronage to bureaucracy, see Reg Whitaker, "From Patronage to Bureaucracy: Democratic Politics in Transition", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 22, 2 (1987), pp. 55-71.

investment security — that they be protected from partisan efforts to redistribute forest resources or to implement other measures that threatened their enterprises. This could best be achieved by standing above local politics and issuing reminders, or even threats, regarding the importance of observing the sanctity of capital investment to any governments that needed them.³⁶ The legal counsel for the American-owned Hollingsworth and Whitney Company, the largest owner of pulpwood lands in the province, for example, publicly predicted that if Nova Scotia placed export restrictions “on the statute books, no bank will advance money to an operator because of the uncertainty”.³⁷ An unnamed American financier concurred with this opinion when he warned the *Halifax Herald* that the passage of Bill 151 “is notice to the foreign investor in no unmistakeable terms that there is neither safety nor sanctity in a Canadian contract as security for the loan of money”.³⁸ Considering that Nova Scotia was in dire economic straits at the time and also in danger of being by-passed in the pulp and paper development binge of the late 1920s, such warnings to respect the sanctity of capital investment had a powerful impact on development-hungry politicians.³⁹ The message was clear: financial capitalists in the pulp and paper sector needed to be courted and supported with infrastructure and other state subsidies, not threatened with restrictions.

The emergence of Mersey, which soon became the major consumer of pulpwood in the province, basically rendered the embargo irrelevant. It thus left a vacuum which Nova Scotia cartoonists found difficult to fill, as evidenced by their treatment of the forest sector in the 1930s. After the intensive debate in 1930, few cartoons related to the forest industry appeared in the two major Halifax newspapers. Those that did appear were, at first, ambiguous and confused. In the provincial election campaign of 1933, McRitchie, in “Businesslike Provincial Politics”, showed the Mersey company supplied with a steady stream of pulpwood, an attempt to give credit to the Conservative government for the presence of the company, though it was clearly not a function of a non-existent embargo (Figure Fifteen). In the *Liberal Chronicle*, on the other hand, its newly-employed cartoonist, Robert Chambers, depicted, in “Will It Come To This?”, a little boy reprimanded by a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer for cutting a Christmas tree on his father’s property (Figure Sixteen). Here Chambers clearly pushed the stipulations of Bill 151 too far, for the amended legislation applied only to woodlots over 1000 acres, but by that time, it was, in any case, a buried bill. These two cartoons reflect the ambiguity of the times. Both McRitchie and Chambers based their messages on illusions: the illusion that Mersey was in Nova Scotia because of the embargo and the illusion that Bill 151 would restrict the cutting of wood on private wood lots. The cartoons were anachronistic hold-overs

36 For an elaboration on this point, see Parenteau, “Forest and Society in New Brunswick”, pp. 458-77. See also James Hiller, “The Politics of Newsprint: The Newfoundland Newsprint Industry, 1915-1939”, *Acadiensis*, XIX, 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 3-39.

37 *Halifax Herald*, 24 April 1930.

38 *Halifax Chronicle*, 24 April 1930.

39 On the economic difficulties of Nova Scotia in the 1920s, see Frank, “The 1920s”.

from old partisan contests which their creators still sought to exploit.

Figure Fifteen

“Businesslike Provincial Policies”, *Halifax Herald*, 31 July 1933.

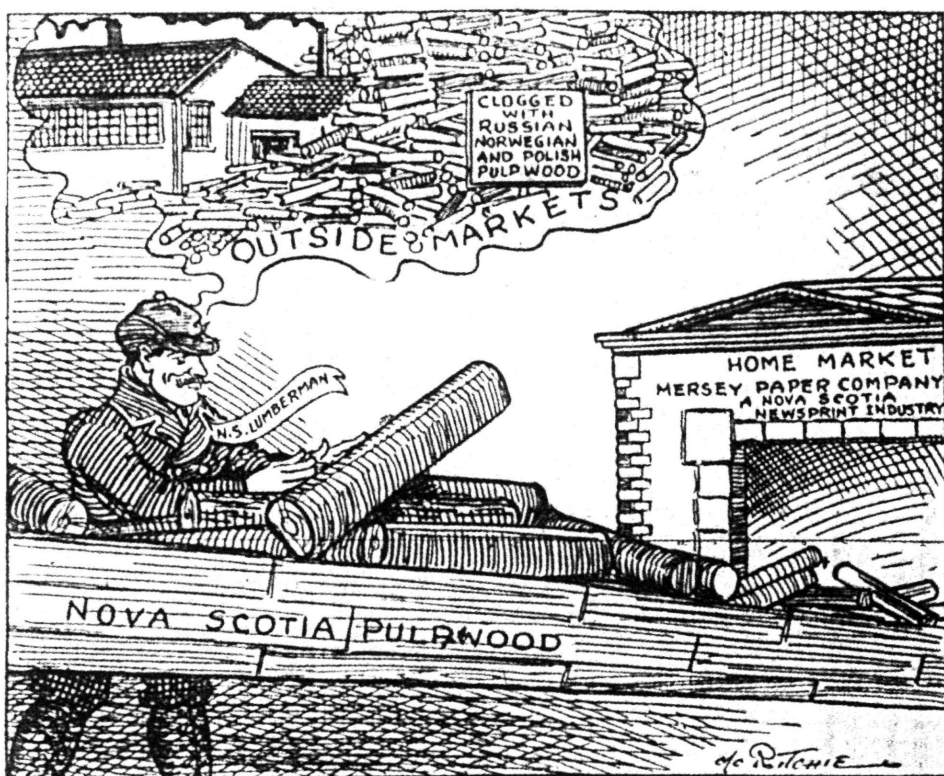


Figure Sixteen

"Will It Come to This?", *Halifax Chronicle*, 22 August 1933.



Partisan politics and exploitation of the province's lumber resource intersected yet again in the provincial election of 1937. A major issue in that election, the so-called "Woodpecker election", was the revelation that a Minister in the Liberal Government, W.A. Anderson, had cut wood illegally on Crown lands. The Liberals countered that the Conservatives had let Crown leases for a pittance during their reign from 1925 to 1933, and claimed that some Conservatives had also cut Crown wood illegally. Prior to the election, Robert Chambers had been lured from the *Chronicle* to the *Herald* by the prospect of a much higher salary, replacing Donald McRitchie, whose old style of partisan-based cartooning had fallen out of fashion. The much younger (and more adaptable) Chambers had a field day in this campaign, trying to make as much political capital from the "crown land grabber" as possible, and showing a woodpecker pecking away at Anderson's chair in the local legislature (Figure Seventeen).⁴⁰ The *Chronicle* countered by recycling old Chambers cartoons from the 1933 election.

Figure Seventeen

"What Else Is In the Closet", *Halifax Herald*, 28 May 1937.



40 See also "The Lost C(h)ord", *Halifax Herald*, 16 June 1937.

But the partisan elements of the cartoons surrounding the Woodpecker election were not the important ones. They were anachronisms and part of an era that had drawn to a close. Nevertheless, there were several things that were new and noteworthy about the Woodpecker issue. First, the Liberal Government, which won the election, forced Anderson to resign and imposed fines on him, actions typical of a bureaucratic rather than a partisan state. Secondly, the issue did not touch the Mersey Paper Company, but, rather, involved the old sawlog and pulpwood procurement sector, the history of which was closely tied to Crown timber licences assigned on a patronage basis. Finally, after the election, Robert Chambers had to settle into the role of apologist and promoter for the new social order, his cartoons turning into symbols in support of corporate privilege. His employer almost immediately asked him to produce cartoons in support of the new age of corporate continentalist growth, and the social consensus that went along with it. Margaret Conrad has ably pointed to the emergence of the new era, drawing attention to the *Herald's* Bill of Rights for Nova Scotia, which promoted all the aspects of the modern welfare and corporate state. Now, the modern corporation became a symbol of progress. In his third of a series of cartoons outlining this 17-plank platform, Chambers provided an apt picture of the new era "of sound and legitimate business [the Mersey Company]" prevailing over the old generation of exploiters, grabbers and racketeers (Barnjum, Bell and Anderson) (Figure Eighteen).⁴¹ Chambers here painted the new emerging corporation in a positive light, epitomized by clean and large modern factory buildings, with active smoke-stacks signifying industrial activity and growth. At the same time, Canadian daily newspapers advertised themselves appropriately as "couriers of progress" which "report quickly and impartially the development of new products and services which individually and collectively bring about higher standards of living".⁴²

41 Conrad covers the same point in "The Art of Regional Protest" and "The Battle of the Cartoonists". For an interesting parallel development in the regional literature, see Thomas Raddall's novel *The Wings of Night* (London, 1961) where Barnjum is villified and Mersey idealized. This point is made in L. Anders Sandberg, "The Forest Landscape in Maritime and Swedish Literature: A Comparative Analysis", in Paul Simpson-Housely and Glen Norcliffe, eds., *A Few Acres of Snow: Literary and Artistic Images of Canada* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 115-16.

42 *Halifax Herald*, 10 July 1937. The Nova Scotia newspaper industry followed this trend. The two warring newspapers in Halifax, for example, became less political in the partisan sense, and eventually merged in 1948. W. Marsh, *Red Line: The Chronicle-Herald and The Mail-Star, 1875-1954* (Halifax, 1986). For the wider picture, see Paul Rutherford, *The Making of the Canadian Media* (Toronto, 1978).

Figure Eighteen

"Our Bill of Rights For All Nova Scotians", *Halifax Herald*, 3 July 1937.



3—This newspaper stands for sound and legitimate business and industry within this Province and fair returns to capital invested therein

In their history of Canadian political cartooning, Peter Desbarats and Terry Mosher argue that political cartoonists typically attack some form of privilege.⁴³ In the context of the Maritimes, Margaret Conrad has reinforced this point, describing the political cartoonists Donald McRitchie and Robert Chambers as regional protesters against Central Canada or as critics of local party politics in Nova Scotia.⁴⁴ Yet this is not the whole story about Canadian political cartoonists. The evidence from the Nova Scotia pulpwood debate supports Raymond Morris' argument that cartoonists can also be the jesters of the bourgeoisie, and cartoons can serve as weapons or symbols in support of business power, rhetorically attacking "privilege" while masking motives of self-promotion and self-interest.⁴⁵

Given their widespread use, political cartoons constituted important weapons of the "privileged" in the Canadian pulpwood embargo debate in the 1920s. In essence, the debate revolved around the basic question of how the vital forest resources of eastern Canada would be divided between two factions of the pulp and paper industry. The pro-embargoists were, for a time, successful in advocating their cause, using effective cartoons in an overall Canadian nationalist climate. When their efforts failed nationally, the battle continued in Nova Scotia, where the clamour for pulp and paper industry investment, the control of large areas of private forest lands by absentee American corporations and mounting pulpwood exports sustained the pro-embargo forces for another half decade. The populist appeals by the anti-embargoists were, however, effective in turning the rural population of the eastern provinces against export restrictions during the investigation of the 1923-24 Royal Commission, which, in turn, contributed to the defeat of the initiative on the national level.⁴⁶ In Nova Scotia, similar appeals were effective in turning the tide at a later stage. The cartoon images of both sides typically used the techniques of distortion and allegory to discredit their adversaries. Their appeals were also populist in claiming to speak for the common "man", the "national good" and the "virgin forest". In this sense, at least, they were critical of business and its role in endangering the forest environment and threatening the livelihood of small woodlot owners.

Ultimately, the defeat of the embargo reflected the advent of monopoly capital operating in a continental context, which replaced the earlier pattern of smaller capital competing in local settings. By the 1930s the embargo debate had become an anachronism. A continental form of industrialization based on monopoly capital was firmly in place in Canada, supported and serviced by bureaucratic rather than partisan governments. Political cartoonists rallied behind the industry,

43 Desbarats and Mosher, *The Hecklers*.

44 Conrad, "The Art of Regional Protest" and "The Battle of the Cartoonists".

45 Morris, *Behind the Jester's Mask*. For another analysis of political cartoons as reflective of changing constellations of societal power, see Richard Fitzgerald, "The Images of Power in American Political Cartoons", *Praxis*, 1, 2 (Winter 1976), pp. 1-27. Political cartoons were sometimes too, of course, used to idealize the political and economic elite. See, for example, A.G. Racey, *Canadian Men of Affairs in Cartoon* (Montreal, 1922).

46 For more details, see Parenteau and Sandberg, "Conservation and the Gospel of Economic Nationalism".

and their symbols conveyed a picture of all stakeholders of society pulling together to restore or maintain industrial prosperity during the Depression and then the Second World War.

In the post-War environment, political cartoonists would emerge in their modern guise as jesters of the bourgeoisie, mocking politicians in power while leaving business unscathed.⁴⁷ Common to both the Depression and the Second World War (and its immediate aftermath) as well as the new era of monopoly capital in the 1950s, however, was the absence of any critique of the treatment of the forest or small pulpwood producers. In the 1930s, forest conservation reached an unprecedented low and it has since not advanced much further. Pulpwood cutters and small woodlot owners in Nova Scotia have similarly faced a formidable opposition in a united continental and trans-continental capital supported by a bureaucratic state.⁴⁸

47 Indeed, a new pro-business group of political cartoonists emerged who spoke less for industrial factions, as in the embargo debate, and more for the collective welfare of business in light of growing government bureaucracy and spending, and increased state intervention. For a good example, see the political cartoons of Trevor Hutchings. T. Hutchings and R.L. Perry, *Some of Our Best Friends are in Business": An Irreverent but Sympathetic Study of an Endangered Species* (Toronto, 1978).

48 For the overall picture on forest conservation, see Gillis and Roach, *Lost Initiatives*; for Nova Scotia, see the contributions in Sandberg, ed., *Trouble in the Woods*; for New Brunswick, see B. Parenteau, "Pulp, Paper and Poverty", *New Maritimes*, VII, 4 (1989). pp. 20-6.