

REVIEW ESSAYS/NOTES CRITIQUES

Nature, Ideology, Parks and Policy in Atlantic Canada

MOST OF US HAVE PROBABLY NOT thought much about how Canada's national parks came to be established and why they are located where they are and why they have the size and shape that they do. Why, for example, did the originally proposed 500 to 1,000-square-mile Terra Nova Park in Newfoundland eventually shrink to 250 and then 150 square miles? Nor are we likely to have thought much about park management practices. We may fish for trout in a park, but not be aware that the river or lake into which we cast our fly is one of those which had all its wildlife destroyed by the poison Rotenone in the 1950s when Canada's Parks Branch purified waters so that they could then be restocked with "useful" and exotic species such as trout. For the most part, we are only likely to be aware of the human history of the parks to which our attention is drawn by markers, exhibits and guide books. This history probably won't discuss the removal of those people who formerly inhabited the park area or analyse the conflicts over the use of resources which have resulted from the creation of the park.

For those interested in understanding more about the history of Canada's national parks system, Alan MacEachern's *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935-1970* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), is essential reading. This fine book deals with the creation of the four Atlantic Canadian national parks — Cape Breton Highlands National Park in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island National Park, Fundy National Park in New Brunswick and Terra Nova National Park in Newfoundland during the period 1935-1970. As MacEachern acknowledges, in many ways his book offers a basic piece of environmental history "in the . . . sense of exploring humans' relationship to nature", or, more properly, "environmental policy-making" since his main focus is on the activities of the National Parks Branch (then Parks Canada and now Parks Canada Agency) in the Atlantic region in this period (p. 14). For those who imagine that national parks are just bits of nature which have been set aside and protected because they contain something special, MacEachern offers the comment that "national parks are never found remnants of untouched, self-contained nature. They are unnaturally bordered plots of land selected by people for a variety of reasons, one being the perceived quality of their nature" (p. 74). In his discussion of the evolution of park policy generally, and in his examination of the establishment and development of the four parks specifically, MacEachern provides a rich and insightful, as well as detailed, account of the ideological, political and policy factors which shaped the park selection and development process.

Parks have a long history and have been created for a variety of purposes. The National Reserve for caribou which was created on Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula by the Deer Reserve Act of 1929 was intended to try and help prevent the

extinction of Newfoundland's greatly diminished but once vast herds of caribou, the argument being that these animals were a great national asset because of their use both for food and their attraction for sports hunters.¹ The nature sanctuaries proposed for Labrador by William Wood in 1911 were intended to protect animals which were regarded as having potential value as an attraction for zoophilists.² Provincial parks have been established in an attempt both to preserve important natural areas and animal species and to provide places for recreation at minimal cost. They have also been used as tools for regional development.³

Parks must be understood in context. They are intimately related to society and economy, class and conflict in the same way that Raymond Williams has shown us that the city and the country are related.⁴ The varied and changing form and function of parks tells us a great deal about ideas about nature, its value and its protection, and how these ideas change over time. Parks have been created for a variety of purposes and according to a range of models, and ideas about parks also change over time as do park management practices. Alan MacEachern's study is valuable because he documents the way shifting ideas and fashions find expression in the selection of particular areas to be parks, and in the actual content of the park and in management practices. In a sense MacEachern is working in a well-established research tradition — the theme of the human construction of space, place and landscape, and, indeed of Nature. He seeks to describe the making of the eastern part of Canadian parks system, looking at the where and why of this making. MacEachern's study is strongly influenced by work which emphasizes the socially or culturally constructed nature of Nature.⁵

MacEachern's work is in part about the construction and to some extent the subsequent consumption of those tourist places we know as National Parks. It is also about what may be called the iconography of landscape. That parks — or at least *certain* parks — are national icons, is a theme which emerges strongly from MacEachern's book. It is this which accounts for the Parks Branch's concern with maintaining what they considered to be acceptable standards in terms of the selection of areas to be turned into parks when they turned their attention eastward in the 1930s. But even here we can see another theme of this book — conflict over values as a result of different interests within the Parks Branch and between federal officials, provincial

1 See my essay "Tourism Development, Conservation, and Conflict: Game Laws for Caribou Protection in Newfoundland", first published in 1980 and included in James Overton, *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Culture and Development in Newfoundland* (St. John's, 1996), pp. 191-204.

2 William Woods, *Animal Sanctuaries in Labrador* (Ottawa, 1911), pp. 25-26 made an early and powerful argument for the creation of sanctuaries in Labrador which went beyond promoting the interests of sports fishing and game hunting to include "the people, from zoologists to tourists, who are drawn to such places by the attraction of seeing animal life in its own surroundings".

3 Overton, *Making a World of Difference*, pp. 206-9.

4 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York, 1973) and "Between Country and City", in Simon Pugh ed., *Reading Landscape: Country — City — Capital* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 7-18.

5 Here his work links with and builds upon earlier work such as Ian McKay's *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal, 1994). Some of the essays on tourism in Newfoundland which were collected together in my book *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Development and Culture in Newfoundland* (St. John's, 1996) also explore these themes.

actors, both state and non-state, and Parks Branch people. What MacEachern does in a masterful way is to read the physical landscape of the parks system as part of society. The landscape, trees, field, rocks and rivers (and people and their artefacts in the landscape) all carry conscious and unconscious, positive and negative, associations for viewers and decision-makers, park planners not excepted.

In order to understand some of the problems which the creation of the four Atlantic Provinces parks generated, it is necessary to have some understanding of the history of Canada's parks before the attentions of the Parks Branch turned east. What was the Parks Branch philosophy of national parks? What aesthetic conventions informed the creation of parks? What political and economic constraints shaped park policy?

MacEachern emphasizes the fact that from the start national parks had a dual purpose and the Parks Branch a dual mandate. The parks were "always to be parks, and to be unchanged" (p. 155) — that is they were to be maintained — but they were also to be made use of. The task of the Parks Branch was to marry preservation and use. The story of how this dual mandate was interpreted and how "use" and "preservation" were interpreted over time is a central feature of MacEachern's book.

From the start, park creation had to be justified. If parks were to be created, they would have to be presented as the solution to a serious and pressing problem. Nature was not being protected for its own sake, but because it had new human uses. James Harkin, appointed Commissioner for Parks in 1911, took up the task of lobbying for his new ward. This led him to make much of the usefulness of parks, interpreted largely in economic terms. A glance at Canada's parks shows that they have had a range of uses, for timber, mining and hydroelectric power, as laboratories and even as work relief camps where 'undesirables' might safely be put to work.⁶ They have also been used to protect and preserve important natural landscapes. But one of the main uses of parks was and is for tourism and recreation, and it is these activities which have provided the financial and psychological justification for park creation. For Harkin, the solution to demonstrating the value of parks lay in connecting them with tourism. Through the use of "economic multipliers multiplied by multipliers, he was able to offer exuberant statements on the economic value of scenery" (p. 30). If wheatfields were worth just under \$5 an acre, scenery was worth almost \$14. Selling scenery, he argued, was what parks were about.⁷

By the 1930s the idea that Canada should have a national park system which was representative of all parts of the country had been established. The East could have national parks. The Maritime provinces were also pressing for park development to counter the effects of the Great Depression. They would be large-scale public works projects as well as a stimulus to tourism. However, when it came to evaluating eastern landscapes with a view to establishing parks, there is much evidence to suggest that those looking for park sites were inclined to see these landscapes through eyes which had been trained in traditional Western park values.

6 Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946* (Saskatoon and Calgary, 1995).

7 The use of cost-benefit analysis to support arguments for preservation is common, but it is also problematic, as I argued some years ago in "The Magician's Bargain: Some Thoughts on Hydroelectric and Similar Development Schemes", *Antipode*, 8, 3 (1976), pp. 16-25.

Nature, Ideology, Parks and Policy in Atlantic Canada 111

In looking east the question of suitable areas being available was crucial. According to the established model, a park had to be: (1) large (200 square miles minimum), (2) virgin wilderness, untouched since European contact, and (3) beautiful “in the national parks sense” — containing sublime mountain scenery (p. 39). The move east brought with it challenges and eventually modifications to the “single idea” of what a park should be which had dominated Canadian national park thinking since 1885 (p. 45). The Parks Branch was now to make national aesthetic judgements as it set aside and maintained places that were “both the most beautiful and most typical representations of different parts of Canada” (p. 40). But when it came to actually establishing parks in the Atlantic region, MacEachern shows how difficult the selection process was in practice. There were doubts and disagreements within the Parks branch. For example, Harkin thought that Cape Breton might not measure up to national park standards scenery-wise and that, because of this, the proposed park would damage the prestige of Canadian national parks. But increasingly decisions about parks were being made at a higher level by this time and Harkin’s views did not prevail.

What areas were identified as potential park sites, how these areas were prioritized, what was included in parks, what was excluded, what was to be allowed to remain in the parks and what was to be moved tells us a great deal about aesthetic judgement and park philosophy and about politics. But as the case of Cape Breton Highlands National Park (first surveyed in 1934) shows, there was a great deal of disagreement and even conflict over these matters. Was the coastline to be included or excluded? What were the “scenic attractions” which might be included in the park? Were there enough of them? Was there a lake that was large and attractive enough to be included in the park? If the coastline was to be included what would happen to the small fishing settlements on that coastline? The conflicts were not just within the Parks Branch. They also involved provincial governments. This was, in part, because in 1929 the Parks Branch had borrowed from the United States the idea that provinces should provide the land for parks, that is, hand over the land free from all encumbrances. This means that the Parks Branch would not have to purchase land, as the provinces would do this as a condition of a park being established. The provinces would have to deal with the costs and problems of expropriation.

In Cape Breton the coastline became the key to the park vision, and the Cabot Trail (opened in 1932) the park’s main feature. The park would be seen primarily from the perspective of the tourist as automobile driver. However, the creation of the park had to await the election of a new Liberal government federally, because Prime Minister R.B. Bennett was “intensely anti-parks” (p. 43) as well as antagonistic towards J.B. Harkin. During Bennett’s period in office the Parks Branch lost a significant number of employees. It was not until 1936 that the legislation establishing the park was passed.

The story of the Cape Breton communities in the park area tells us a great deal about Parks philosophy. The original proposal for the park from local park boosters had excluded northern peninsula coastal communities. In considering site selection for the park a key issue for the Parks Branch was the existence of “alienated land” since this would have to be purchased by the province and, if costly, it might limit the willingness of the province to go ahead with the park (p. 53). Such land was avoided as much as possible. However, the Parks Branch survey of the proposed park area did

include the coast as an essential part of the park. Some communities where farms were well-developed were to be left out of the park, but another community was to be included in the park “as is” and one community, consisting of poor fishermen’s “cottages”, was to be removed. But here there was also internal disagreement. Some parks officials were loathe to include communities within the park because of the potential for a variety of administrative and other problems. In turn, the actual setting up of the park involved modification of the original proposal and legislation. The park was reshaped apparently at the whim of specific park officials. A community intended for inclusion was now excluded, the site chosen to be the centre for tourist development was moved and a large area was excluded from the park because it was thought to be redundant. But what was not changed was the plan to eliminate the community of Cap Rouge.

If there was little awareness of the proposed park generally in Nova Scotia by the time that the provincial government authorized the expropriation of land in early 1936, there was even less awareness in the immediate area. This was, it seems, in part the result of a deliberate but misguided effort to avoid trouble as land was expropriated and people moved. Thus, residents did not learn until 1937 that settled land would be expropriated for the park. During the expropriation there were some conflicts over land value. Some people were happy to leave, but others resisted, often because they were not offered what they considered to be the full value of their property during expropriation. In a few cases the battle against the park continued for many years until eventually the resistance was worn down. It was the Maine-based Oxford Paper Company which did the best out of the expropriation. It made over half a million dollars on land which it had leased from the Nova Scotia government.

Once the land was assembled, the task of transforming it into a park was started. The first step was to create a reserve by effectively policing the area to prevent hunting, fishing and other use. Then work was started to transform the reserve into a park. The main focus of activity in this connection was the improvement of the Cabot Trail, the park’s “signature attraction” (p. 64). Road construction became a major source of employment. But development in some areas had to wait for expropriation to be completed. The golf course — such courses had come to be considered as absolutely essential in National Parks — was not started until 1938, but its development was swift, in part to ensure that work was available for those whose land had been expropriated. With the building of the golf course and the Cabot Trail, the Parks Branch considered its work to be largely complete. It remained for private interests to move into the area and provide accommodation. Difficulties here led the Nova Scotia government to take some limited initiative in this connection in the early 1940s.

With some variation related to specific circumstances, local politics and changes in Parks Branch policies and perspectives, this story was repeated in the creation of the other three Atlantic parks examined by MacEachern. The park in Prince Edward Island was a far cry from the original park model. It was a small park, encompassing a narrow strip of land along the Island’s north shore which was quite different from the national park ideal “in terms of size, wildness, and sublimity” (p. 74). How did such a park come to be? Here, the Depression with its disastrous impact on the Island’s economy provided the backdrop for calls for a national park to be created not long after a Liberal government was elected in 1935. Such a park would provide a

focal attraction for the province's growing tourism industry at a time when fishing and farming were in trouble. More particularly, it would provide the province with an opportunity to get the federal government to pay for road improvements. There might be some costs for the province associated with obtaining the land for the park, but a small outlay would produce great dividends.

The decision to construct a park was made by the federal government and the province without Parks Branch involvement. The work of defining the park came later, and, as with other parks, this was a very political process, as another site most favoured by the province already existed.

As usual the Parks Branch paid little attention to the issue of present land use, because the responsibility for assembling the land for the park lay with the provincial government. The expropriation proved problematic. A provincial act establishing the machinery for this was passed in 1936, which prevented landowners from recourse to the courts. For the most part, expropriation proceeded without the individuals being informed. After the land had been turned over to Canada, with some residents still in place, a movement of opposition emerged. This eventually petered out, though not without increased compensation for some of those who were expropriated.

As elsewhere, the creation of the park involved imposing a vision on the landscape and the people of the area. As elsewhere, there was conflict over this as berry pickers, Irish moss harvesters and others found established patterns of activity outlawed by the park. Here, irony is a major theme. The creation of the park would involve eclipsing most evidence of human activity in the area. Farm land would be purchased and buildings removed along with the people who used them. Trees would be planted, although the white birch, fir and spruce which were to take over the fields provided far different cover from that which was originally cleared from the area by settlers. Elsewhere, farm land would be erased, but not allowed to revert to nature. Rather it would be replaced with a golf course. Golf course construction was labour-intensive, as was road construction. The park proved a great attraction, attendance growing from 2,500 in 1937 to 35,000 in 1939.

In New Brunswick the Parks Branch's most favoured site for the first park was passed over. After several surveys in the 1930s, the Parks Branch concluded that Mount Champlain in central New Brunswick was the best possible site for a park, followed by sites at Point Lepreau and in Albert County on the Bay of Fundy. The New Brunswick government was unhappy with this suggestion and after further surveys the matter was dropped. For a park to be chosen, all parties, the federal and provincial governments and the Parks Branch, had to be in agreement.

The outbreak of war had a significant impact on Canada's parks. Budgets were slashed and expansion of the system became unrealistic. When reconstruction was put on the political agenda later in the war, the question of a park for New Brunswick was again raised. But as soon as moves were made in the direction of choosing a site for a park the political fighting over the location of the park which had characterized the province in the 1930s began again. In the end it was partisan politics which decided that the Albert County site would become the park. The Parks Branch first choice for a park site at Mount Champlain was in a riding that "stubbornly continued to vote Conservative" (p. 108), while the Albert site was in Liberal country. In a decision that largely by-passed the Parks Branch selection process, in 1947 80 square miles of land in Albert County was transferred to the federal government for the park.

The creation of the park involved less conflict than elsewhere. The New Brunswick government went about dealing with landowners in a more reasonable and generous way than in the two earlier parks. The Parks Branch set about removing “all signs of human presence” in keeping with its standard practice (p. 119). Houses, barns and churches were vacated, bulldozed and burned. But people at one site within the park were allowed to continue using their cottages until the early 1950s. Also, work was available for local people in the construction of park facilities. These facilities provided a version of what MacEachern calls “suburbia” — cottages of the Swiss chalet type with all modern conveniences, a warm-water swimming pool, bathing houses, and an arena for concerts. Elsewhere there was the usual golf course, a tennis court, a ballfield and a club house containing a snack bar, a sports shop and a handicraft shop. There would be hotels and campgrounds, gift shops and restaurants and even a handicraft school. In Fundy this “village” was intended to be *the* focus of visitor’s experience, in what seems to be rather like a scaled-down version of the holiday camps which became popular from the late 1930s on in Britain.

As in Prince Edward Island, where the park was “more about paving than preservation”, at least initially (p. 78), in Newfoundland, the creation of Terra Nova was influenced by the province’s desire to maximize the federal government’s role in financing the construction of the Trans Canada Highway (TCH), a part of which would run through the park.

When Terra Nova was created in the 1950s, the Parks Branch “experienced decreasing autonomy owing to political interference and ministerial control” (p. 127). The increasingly nature-minded Parks Branch wanted the Newfoundland site to be typical of the province. It would embrace sea-coast country, the habitat of indigenous wildlife, forests and fisheries, and it would have scenic values. A suggested site on Bonavista Bay seemed acceptable and, importantly, the site was on the route of the TCH and reasonably close to St. John’s. At an early stage special conditions were proposed. Fishermen would be allowed to maintain camps on the park seashore, timber and wood cutting permits would be available for locals, the Terra Nova River would remain open to log runs that began outside the park area and the river was to be considered for possible hydroelectric development to serve both park and community. These represented significant concessions.

Premier J.R. Smallwood, aided by Jack Pickersgill, Newfoundland’s representative in the federal cabinet (both representing constituencies in the Bonavista Bay area), drove a hard bargain with the federal government over the park. The creation of the park would make the federal government responsible for constructing that section of the TCH which ran through the park. Beyond this Smallwood wanted to be allowed to exploit the timber resources of the park area in the event that a third paper mill was opened on the Island. This proved to be a major battle ground. The Parks Branch did not want an “emasculated’ second-rate park” (p. 135), but Smallwood believed that without the pulpwood contained within the park his dream of a third paper mill would come to naught. In the end an agreement was made which allowed for the cutting of mature and over-mature timber up to the yearly growth of the park’s forests in the event of a third mill being developed. This would be managed by the Parks Branch, but what is notable is the degree to which the Branch was “removed” from the negotiation of the deal with Smallwood (p. 139).

Throughout the negotiation for the park, the Newfoundland government’s position

was that the park should contain “no marketable natural resources whatsoever” (p. 140). This led to the park’s size being trimmed from an original 500 to 1,000 square miles, then to 250 and then 150.⁸ Although the park was “designed to be typical of Newfoundland scenery”, Terra Nova contained “no river systems, no noteworthy salmon streams, no caribou country” (p. 141). Moreover, in transferring land for the park the provincial government stipulated that a portion of that land might be withdrawn in the future if required for hydro development.

The creation of the national parks involved another challenge as well. Once boundaries were established, former inhabitants removed, golf courses, campgrounds and nature trails created and an attempt made to persuade local residents, provincial politicians, potential investors in service industries, and others that park development was a good thing, the parks had to be sold as attractions to the tourists who are targeted as potential visitors. For this purpose an image for the park had to be constructed. Because of this, it is necessary to think about the process by which promotional themes were chosen and developed and particular segments (in class or ethnic terms) of the population were targeted for advertising. What features, what history is appropriated, created, emphasized and perhaps distorted, what suppressed, forgotten or downplayed?

The final step in the creation of Cape Breton park in the 1930s was to give it “a single meaning”, that is, to identify a theme and create an identity for the Park and then promote it as “an intrinsically Scottish place” (p. 68). Scottishness had emerged as a major tourist promotion theme in Nova Scotia in the 1930s. It was now taken up as the theme for the park. MacEachern does a magnificent job of describing the construction of the park’s image to conform to the Highland theme. But this is also a story of the suppression of the history and culture which did not fit this theme. The dominant English and important French cultures of the area were sidelined as the Highland cattle, bagpipes and other paraphernalia of what MacEachern, following Ian McKay, calls “tartanism triumphant” took over.⁹

As far as the Parks Branch was concerned Prince Edward Island could not be a park on the Western model. Development would have to centre around the Island’s most distinctive feature. It would be for beaches and bathing. This would be a seaside resort because, in the view of Parks Branch officials, “the Island’s nature was insufficient to carry itself” (p. 82). In Prince Edward Island the park was largely developed for the masses, that is those middle-class families who were already being drawn to the area because of its association with Lucy Maud Montgomery’s book *Anne of Green Gables*. To this end the whitewashed farmhouse which inspired the book was acquired for the park, and it was soon having its gables painted green by the Parks Branch. Elsewhere the park would cater to wealthy visitors — the “best type of people” (p. 84).

In Fundy, the cultural past of the area, where it was not obliterated, was simply ignored. At the same time it was felt that the wildness of the Park lands needed to be

8 It would have been useful if the book had provided a series of maps to show both the sites which were considered for parks, as well as how the shape of the parks changed during the negotiations over their establishment.

9 Ian McKay, “Tartanism Triumphant: The Construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954”, *Acadiensis*, XXI, 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 5-47.

tamed, there being a fear that the forests if allowed to grow unchecked would become “a jungle” and interfere with the use of the Park for “recreational purposes” (p. 113). Roads were straightened, hillocks flattened, ugly and misshapen trees cut down, streams moved, bogs filled in, stones removed, 15,000 cubic meters of topsoil deposited, and much grass planted.

Since the beginning, Canadian parks had been developed with a view to attracting certain types of visitors. Remote from the country’s main population centres, the parks were not intended to have mass appeal. Those who came to the parks would largely be the wealthy. Over time this idea was modified somewhat. The creation of parks in the East made them more accessible. And the actual development of the Atlantic region parks revealed that they were intended for a different social stratum than those in the West. But even so, the parks were not receptive to certain classes of visitors, as MacEachern shows in his discussion of the question of allowing Jews to stay at Dalvay House in Prince Edward Island National Park during the 1940s and his account of the discouragement of Martin Luther King, Jr., the black American civil right leader, from staying in Fundy Park in the early 1960s.

By the time of Terra Nova the Parks Branch was committed to a less intrusive approach to development than had been the case at Fundy. Economy too, in the 1950s, dictated that simplicity was desirable. Here there would be no golf course or heated swimming pool or other amenities, in spite of lobbying for these.¹⁰ Clearly such a park would appeal to a different group of users than some of the earlier parks.

One of the most valuable aspects of MacEachern’s book is that it demonstrates just how problematic is the notion that parks are about saving or preserving nature in any simple, obvious sense. To argue that parks exist to preserve nature is to raise a number of problems. Is it true that historically this was the case? If so, how was preservation thought of, and how was it put into practice? What was being preserved, by what methods, for what reasons? In trying to answer these questions it becomes clear that the idea that parks were (are?) areas which have been set aside and where nature is freed from human influence is far from accurate. MacEachern’s discussion of preservation in the eastern parks in the period from the mid-1930s on illustrates this general point admirably.

Those responsible for the new eastern parks seem to have shown only a little interest in wildlife, during either the identification and planning stages of park establishment or in the subsequent development of the parks. This seems to have been because, in wildlife terms, park officials saw these parks as failing to satisfy “the national park idea” which was based on the early western parks. Wolves and mountain lions, buffalo, elk and bear were “real nature” (p. 192), but foxes, skunks, mice, birds, insects and amphibians were definitely not. Wildlife was valued through the lens of what was thought to be a lure for tourists.

In the early years wildlife (the Dominion Wildlife Division was established in 1918 as a small agency within the Parks Branch) had a relatively low priority within a Parks

10 A golf course was eventually built at Terra Nova, adjacent to the eastern boundary of the park. In 1995 it received funding of \$600,000 from the province to construct a two-kilometre water and sewer line at a time when provincial parks were being privatized, supposedly in order to save money. See *Evening Telegram* (St. John’s), 20 October 1995.

Branch which was dominated by foresters, engineers and career bureaucrats. The Wildlife Division mounted a lengthy campaign within the Branch in the 1930s in an attempt to convince decision-makers that the killing of predators such as wolves and mountain lions should be abandoned in the interests of maintaining the health of prey populations. This campaign did have some effect, and in the late 1930s policy took a non-interventionist turn.

Traditionally parks had often been justified as sanctuaries where game could be allowed to survive and grow and then wander out of the protected area to be killed by hunters. Fish and game organizations came to support the establishment of sanctuaries, and this is reflected in lobbying efforts on their part for national park establishment in the Atlantic Region. But by the 1920s and 1930s parks were being promoted more in terms of tourism, and the sanctuary idea was downplayed or ignored. A park was above all about outstanding scenery. Wildlife, if needed, could be imported. The lack of interest in the issue of game angered the hunting and fishing interests who had supported the establishment of parks.

Wildlife policies from the late 1930s on were mildly interventionist. An attempt was made to reintroduce moose and beaver to the Cape Breton Highland National Park during the war, the argument being that these species had been native to the park before being wiped out by humans. Such efforts were justified as part of an attempt to restore the park to its pristine condition. A radical trend in parks management had emerged in the United States in the 1930s which argued that parks be returned to their original state by removing exotic species and reintroducing native ones. In Cape Breton the justification was that these particular species would be attractive to tourists.¹¹

By the early 1940s a hands-off but monitoring approach was in place. All species would be protected, even to the extent of preventing the killing of the skunks which were rooting up lawns and threatening the golf course in Prince Edward Island. Funding increases in the late 1940s allowed for a more active preservationist position, and a separate Canadian Wildlife Service was established. The Park branch was still responsible for wildlife in the parks but they were able to draw on better research for policy advice. Within the Wildlife Service an interest in ecology was gaining ground, and their version of this science was to significantly affect preservationist policies in the parks. This led to a shift in the nature of intervention. Rather than a hands-off approach, parks now sought to manage wildlife numbers. Nature would not be allowed to take its course, because parks were now seen as areas already disturbed by human activity. Population explosions might occur among protected animals and this might lead to damage to the forests or soil erosion. Fundy was one of the places where the new approach was first tried. It was thought that the moose population needed to be managed and culling was undertaken. But lack of accurate information was a problem. Supposedly climbing moose population in Cape Breton also led to the killing of some of these animals.

Preservation in the late 1940s and 1950s was “an active process”, as the Parks

11 It is interesting to speculate about what would have happened in Terra Nova if that park had been established in the 1930s. Would the moose and rabbits (both introduced species in Newfoundland) have been removed? What about less obvious insect and plant species?

Branch was dominated by “a managerial ethos” and “science” was used to justify its “attempt to improve on nature” (p. 190). Overall policies seem to have been shaped by “the political and pragmatic needs of the moment and the perceived value of the wildlife in question” (p. 200). If such people as wood cutters, hunters, farmers and fishers were not to have a place in parks, unless they returned to them for golf and recreation, so species identified as “pests” or animals defined as “surplus” were unwanted on the park voyage. Insects, porcupines and muskrats might be designated as “pests” and targeted for killing — “pests” being anything in the wrong place at the wrong time. Rotenone was used to purify rivers and lakes of fish and insects prior to restocking with useful species. The modification of habitats also reveals that some species were valued at the expense of others.

Once they were established, the Park Branch had to defend parks against the threat of encroachment. What is called the principle of inviolability was developed by the Branch in the 1920s in an effort to defend the integrity of parks. However, in the early 1920s Banff had already lost a chunk of its land to hydro development. Rather than keep the land in the park and allow the development to take place, the Parks Branch had opted for the carving off of part of the park.

Almost as soon as Cape Breton Highlands was created, it came under threat from mining interests. Initially these threats were resisted; however, more than 13 square miles was removed from the park in 1956 for mineral development. In Fundy the New Brunswick government maintained its experimental Potato Station in the park and even expanded its operation until it was removed in 1974. Another threat to Cape Breton Highlands came from the Nova Scotia government, when it became interested in developing the Wreck Cove hydro project in 1956, a development which included the diversion of the headwaters of the Cheticamp River. A battle was fought over this project, during which the federal government turned down the province’s proposal to remove land from the park only to change its position shortly after. Ten square miles of land was removed from the park in 1958, but it was not until 15 years later that the project went ahead with its inevitable devastation of the Cheticamp River. It was precisely at this time that the Newfoundland government became interested in hydro development in central Newfoundland which, if undertaken, might well have affected Terra Nova park.

Recent policies at a national level have also had serious implications for the survival of national parks and the protection of the environment. National parks have been revealed to be under severe stress, having fallen into physical and ecological disrepair as a result of major funding cuts.¹² According to Parks Canada, \$1 billion would have to be spent over a five-year period in order to repair the damage to Canada’s park system. The seriousness of the situation is documented in the two-volume report “Unimpaired for Future Generations”? Conserving Ecological Integrity with Canada’s National Parks”.¹³

In the 1970s suggestions were already being made that Newfoundland’s state-run

12 Alanna Mitchell, “Our parks crumbling, chief says”, *Globe and Mail*, 22 January 2001, p. A7.

13 *Report of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada’s National Parks*, chaired by Jacques Gerin (Parks Canada Agency, 2000).

camping parks be privatized,¹⁴ there were pressures on some parks from developments, and there were difficulties relating to the establishment of national parks in the Atlantic Region, including the Mealey Mountains area of Labrador. However, these were relatively minor problems in the context of what seemed to be an emerging and growing commitment to protecting nature. Then came the neo-liberal 1980s and 1990s with the quest for deregulation in order to “make profit a holy word” in Newfoundland.¹⁵ The unthinkable has now happened. Most of the Newfoundland provincial parks system was privatized in two waves in the 1990s, ostensibly to save money.¹⁶ In 1995 and 1997 the provincial government offered 28 and 21 parks to private operators. A mere 13 parks now remain as provincial parks.

Even when parks are justified in terms of their value for tourism, or as genetic banks or in some other way, it is hard enough to make such justifications count in a world where power shapes government decisions and the big industries of oil, mining, forestry, etc. have the political and economic clout to shape government decisions on the environment. My work on the privatization of the Newfoundland parks system also shows that parks cannot be protected from the predatory actions of those involved in the tourist industry who want to reduce competition by eliminating state-run campgrounds or who would rather that public money be spent on state-funded tourist advertising campaigns and other business subsidies than parks.¹⁷ When even a relatively small lobby group like Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador can persuade the government to throw out the window a long-established commitment to “protect and preserve in perpetuity provincially significant representative and special natural landscapes and features of for the benefit of future generations”, things do not bode well for parks.¹⁸

All those interested in parks, and indeed in preservation and conservation more generally, should read MacEachern’s book. The kind of historical analysis of policy he offers helps us to understand the politics of this important area, and this is a necessary if not sufficient condition for effective action.

JAMES OVERTON

14 See my essay “The Battle of the Gravel Pits: Restructuring Provincial Parks Policy in Newfoundland”, in *Making a World of Difference* pp. 205-39. The original version of this essay was published in 1982.

15 I have commented on this in “Making Profit a Holy Word in Newfoundland: Economic Recovery and Deregulation” (paper presented at the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Atlantic Association of Sociological and Anthropologists, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 12-15 October 1995).

16 James Overton, “Official Acts of Vandalism: Privatizing Newfoundland’s Provincial Parks in the 1990s”, in Darrin McGrath, ed., *From Red Ochre to Black Gold* (St. John’s, 2001), pp. 76-121.

17 Overton, *Making a World of Difference*, pp. 205-39; Overton, “Official Acts of Vandalism”.

18 Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, *Provincial Parks Policy and Park Classification and Zoning System* (St. John’s, 1988), p. 5.