

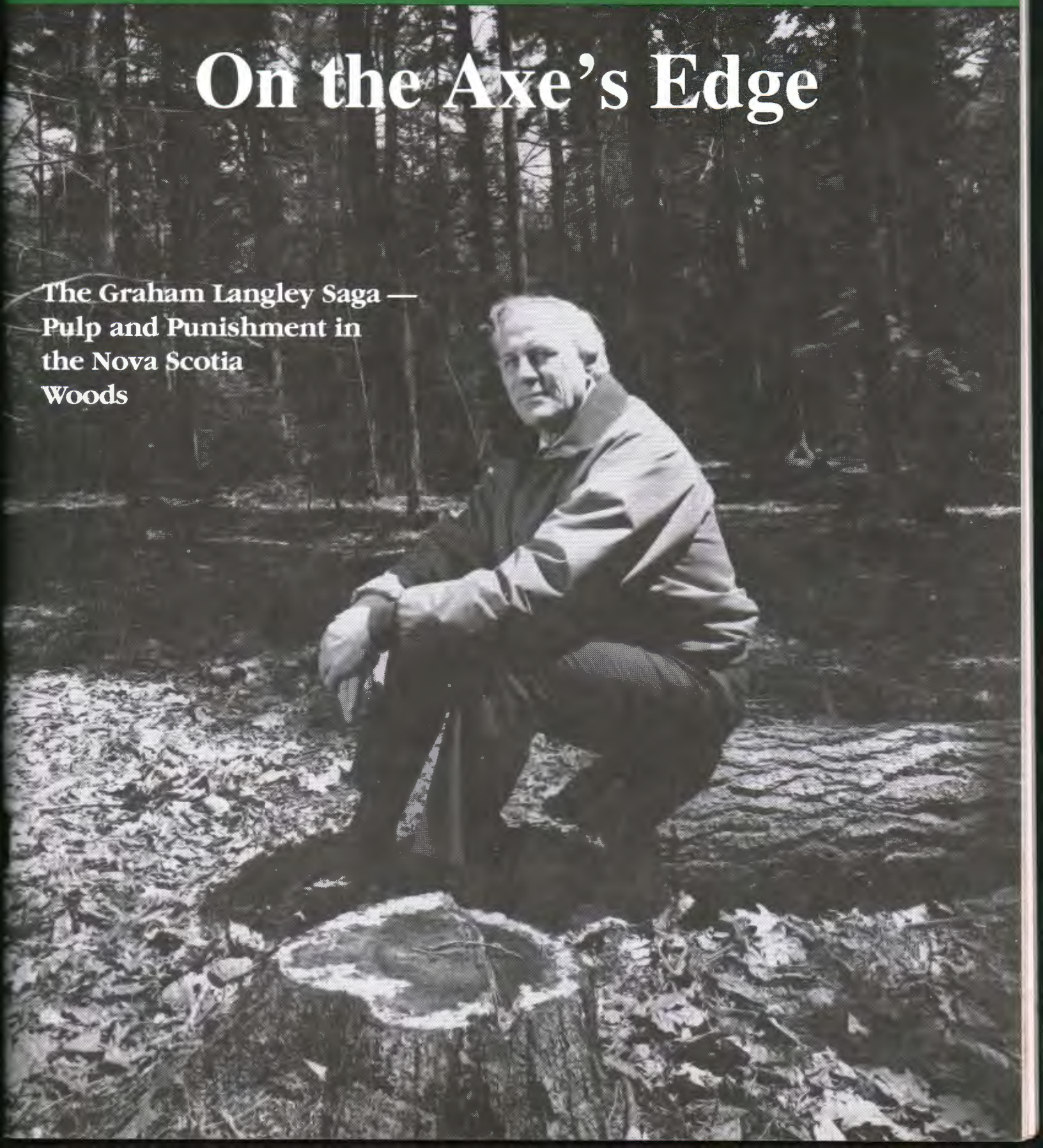
New Maritimes

May/June, 1993

\$2.95

On the Axe's Edge

**The Graham Langley Saga —
Pulp and Punishment in
the Nova Scotia
Woods**



Air Your Briefs



Out of the Depths: The Trial of Marilyn Millward

For the Prosecution: Exhibit A

I've been a *New Maritimes* subscriber since before it existed. It's a good magazine, and I count on it for information and analysis from the point of view of marginalized communities seeking their rightful place in the economy and society of the Maritime Provinces. Therefore, I was surprised and upset that you printed Marilyn Millward's review of Isabelle Knockwood's *Out of the Depths*. [See "The Demons of Memory" in the March/April, 1993 issue.]

The Indian residential schools were a shameful example of injustice, an attempt to kill off the First Nations' cultures. Finally, some of the graduates have healed, understood, and found a voice to testify about what was done to them. Those who would push their voices back into silence use a predictable set of techniques. They:

- question the accuracy of the child's perceptions or the adult's memory;
- claim exaggeration, distortion, selective telling or outright untruth;
- accuse the person speaking out of mental illness or a pointless desire for revenge;
- patronize, as in, "But I know you're sincere";
- claim times were different, it was all perfectly acceptable then, and it's unfair to apply hindsight to the situation;
- say that it's all in the past and there is something wrong with someone who can't "let bygones be bygones";
- search for anything that might be construed as a contradiction and use it to discredit the whole account;
- search for anything that describes an exception to the rule and dwell on it;
- belittle oral history as "subjective" and inferior to "objective" written accounts while overlooking the fact that access to writing, publishing, and ar-

chiving has been denied to marginalized people;

- shout "bias" and "one-sided" but stay silent when the "official" side of the story is presented;
- use words with negative, belittling connotations, such as "notion" instead of "observation" or "experience";
- claim the experience was no different from what all of us went through, but we're just tougher;
- portray injustice as individual suffering from which each of us has the individual responsibility to heal.

I did not expect to open a copy of *New Maritimes* and see a classic display of all these methods of silencing an account of oppression. I hope that, unlike the reviewer, readers will not put the book down and say, "Amen, let it be," but rather, "This is a terrible injustice. What can we do to correct it?"

I think the editors of *New Maritimes* owe Isabelle Knockwood and the other survivors of the Shubenacadie Residential School an apology, or, better yet, an article or interview where they can express their own point of view.

**Anne Bishop,
Halifax, N.S.**

For the Prosecution: Exhibit B

As a white person, I was embarrassed to read Marilyn Millward's review of *Out of the Depths*. As a subscriber to *New Maritimes*, I was appalled that the magazine chose to print this review. It, in my opinion, is an endless run of stereotypes. It starts with a story of the author weeping during a reading of her work. This is presented in a disparaging way. (Stereotype No. 1: "Women are too emotional.")

Throughout the review, the accu-

racy of the stories and memories are constantly under question. (Stereotype No. 2: "Indians are liars. You can't trust what they say.") The reviewer actually dares to compare her school experience as being similar to that of a Micmac child in a residential school. (Stereotype No. 3: "Why are those Natives always complaining about the past? They aren't the only ones who had it tough.") The reviewer questions the importance of family ties in Micmac culture. (Stereotype No. 4: "Indians don't look after their kids right.") And, to top it all off, the reviewer actually repeatedly offers self-righteous advice to Knockwood about how she should proceed with her recovery work. (Stereotype No. 5: "White, middle-class academics know the answer.") This advice generally runs the line that Knockwood should forget about her childhood and put it all behind her. (Stereotype No. 6: "Why can't the downtrodden just shape up, pull themselves together, and get on with things?")

I would suggest that Millward could benefit from a self-examination of her own recovery work and that she should rapidly proceed with the elimination of the racism she so blatantly carts around.

Isabelle Knockwood has honoured us by writing this work. It is a gift from her and the other contributors. They have opened themselves up and shared their experiences so that we may all learn and grow from them and so that, as a society, we may move forward. She deserves the respect and honour due to anyone who brings such a gift.

**Mary Ann Coleman
Sussex, N.B.**

For the Prosecution: Exhibit C

I am writing in response to Marilyn

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New Maritimes

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May/June, 1993
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New Maritimes

Issue No. 90

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...continued from page 2

Millward's review of Isabelle Knockwood's *Out of the Depths*. I'm surprised that a publication such as *New Maritimes* would have a white academic, obviously unsympathetic to the book and its aims, review such a complex and compelling cross-cultural text. The patronizing tone of the review is inappropriate for two reasons.

First, this is the first full-length prose work by a Micmac writer to be published in the region. It represents, therefore, a voice, or voices, that have not been heard before, and it must be listened to with respect. It must be *listened to* and understood in its own terms. I can't imagine anyone reviewing a Black writer's account of growing up Black in Nova Scotia and saying, as Millward implicitly does in her review of Knockwood, "Dear me, yes, times were tough for all back then and perhaps this author" — Maxine Tynes? George Elliott

Clarke? — "is exaggerating their suffering, and isn't it time they grew up like me and put it all behind them?"

Second, this account of residence life will take its place alongside other accounts now being written and spoken about across the country. These accounts document similar abuses at other schools — physical suffering and hardship, but more importantly, cultural abuse, beginning with the loss of native language and ending with the loss of native identity. As these accounts have surfaced, the religious groups which ran these schools have been defensive, but some of them have also offered public apologies, admitting, in fact, that the abuses were real, and were substantial.

You would never know this from Millward's review. She overtly and covertly questions the truthfulness of, not only Knockwood's own story, but also those of her informants. Pseudo-psy-

chologizing and moralizing replace analysis as Millward attempts to genteely skewer the book as a one-sided account, as an untrustworthy creation of memory, as a flawed healing journey for Knockwood. The dynamics and aesthetics of oral history and survivor discourse do not appear to be understood by this reviewer, who offers us such banalities as, "It is true that this book is 'good' wherever the reader may open it, if such bad memories and sad stories can be called good."

As a response from the dominant white culture, this will not do. It's not good enough, and it's not the "new Maritimes" I believe many of us want. If we don't listen to and learn from voices such as Knockwood's, then we'll perpetuate the racism that she uncovers and exposes to the light of day.

**Donna E. Smyth,
Ardoise, N.S.**

For the Defence: Address to the Jury

Initially, the request to review Isabelle Knockwood's book, *Out of the Depths*, caused me pause because I was aware of the sensitive nature of its subject. These were no idle qualms, as the invective nature of the response to the review reveals. It seems that being a "white academic" should have somehow disqualified me from reviewing it, even though I have thoroughly researched the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School from the documentation. Or does the idea that this book represents a voice that must merely be "listened to" suggest that no one has the right to review it at all? What happens to the notion — if I may use that word — of intellectual discourse if we are only to listen and not to respond?

Out of the Depths was surely not an easy book for Knockwood to write. It was also painful to read, and certainly difficult to review. It would have been

simple to write instead a one-sided letter of praise, because it *is* a "good," long-overdue, book, one I would have wished to have available when writing my MA thesis on the Shubenacadie school. As I said in the review, it is an effective and affecting book that immerses the reader in an alien institutional culture and generates feelings of both sorrow and shock. It would have been easy, indeed, to write a "yes-review: of this book: it is an important piece of oral history, an invaluable telling of a tale that reel upon archival reel will never tell. The very point of this book is to reveal the other side, to tell native history from a native viewpoint. Yet admitting there is an "other" side allows the idea, as mentioned in the review, that there might be different stories yet untold. From this point of view, it was disappointing to learn from the author that she was not only impa-

tient with, but dismissed, most memories of the school that were not negative. The review only attempted to bring some balance to the history, not to say "yes, but" but to say "yes, and."

It is simply not true that I am unsympathetic to aboriginal people or their residential school experiences. One has only to read my account, "Clean Behind the Ears?" in the March/April, 1992 issue of *New Maritimes* to know this. Neither do I lack sympathy for the book or its aims. Having studied and collected oral history, I recognize its worth as well as its pitfalls, and, having chosen residential school history as a continuing academic pursuit, I welcomed this book and was offered the opportunity to review it. I am astonished that its positive side has so completely been overlooked. Choosing to read only the negative side of the review is like documenting only the negative side of the residential school

experience: most readers will have difficulty both with one-sided books and one-sided reviews. Yet somehow the expectation seems to be that the review should have been wholly positive and that it should not have asked any questions at all because this is an important piece of work by a new Micmac writer.

The review was not meant to insult, discredit, or patronize. Questions of "truth" reflect the difficulty any historian finds in coming to terms with, not only memory, but documents as well, for memory contradicts memory, document disputes document, and sometimes each denies the other. There is no question that memory is an individual thing, and that perception is too. This is not to say that any oral recollection or relevant piece of paper should be dismissed, but instead to suggest that while each is certainly true to itself, together they might clash and cause questions. And why is it, then, that questions cannot be asked? Critics who mistakenly read in the review the idea that I would want to silence someone else's voice are now asking that mine be silenced and suggesting that my experiences are irrelevant. Perhaps I have my own childhood, even my own adulthood, with which to come to terms. It might be considered too that there were white orphanages and white reformatories, and that pain and injustice, and cruelty and dishonour, have never been exclusive to, or absent from, any one race.

What strikes me about my critics as most bewildering — besides their complete misreading and misunderstanding of this review — is their idea that I have somehow attacked Micmac traditional customs, values and ways of life. I am not, as has actually been suggested by a Micmac critic, a student of James Keegstra, nor am I related (even by religion) to any nuns or priests. Instead, I am a serious student of native educational history and also a former teacher-learner in both band-controlled and integrated schools. This is from choice, interest, and a life-long, perhaps misguided, calling. My critics might be interested to know that at other times I have been called other things, "Indian lover" prominent among them. It is not easy to reconcile this long-held image of who I am with the arrows now flying.

Even so, the mention of Keegstra is useful because it offers the idea that the residential school system might be con-

sidered an aboriginal Holocaust, since, undeniably, the government aimed to destroy the native way of life. This further suggests that to speak or write anything that appears to defend these institutions is somehow to deny the magnitude of the personal sacrifice the schools demanded and the cultural destruction they attempted. It also means that the issue is not merely sensitive, but so emotional that it is impossible for residential school survivors to tolerate any objective consideration of this piece of history: there is no such thing as emotional objectivity. This puts book reviewers in the awkward position of feeling that if they don't have something nice to say they had better not say anything at all, bringing us back to the question of silence.

"We speak, you listen" was the theme of a conference on aboriginal education held in Saskatoon in 1967, offering the useful idea that native people have been listening in silence for too long and that now it is the white man's turn. There is much to be heard and learned, making this about-face appropriate to a certain extent. But, again, there is the question of intellectual discourse and the idea that everyone deserves to be heard. If now we are only to listen, how are learning and understanding to take place? Years of silence have created an angry attitude that treats as targets people who are interested in learning but want it to be a two-way process. What progress is there in making it just another one-way street in a different direction? Years of listening have created the kind of rage that separates people, that results in resentment and makes understanding impossible. And if we don't

understand each other, what happens to your children and mine?

There is no question, and this should have emerged from the review, that *Out of the Depths* is a book that had to be written, deserves to be read, and will take its place beside other personal accounts of other residential schools. It could have benefitted from the addition of those cast-aside memories which were not used because they didn't underline the tale of injustice the book aimed to reveal. It might have been improved by an editor who found discrepancies before the reader did, allowing the author to have dealt with them: a few words, for example, explaining how and why institutional culture overrode traditional culture would have both helped the reader and enhanced the work.

I did want to hear the author speak, but then apparently violated the privilege of the talking stick which requires that a listener must *neither agree nor disagree* with someone who has spoken. I am not sure how to review a book with such restrictions, and am sorry to have inadvertently caused hurt and furthered misunderstandings. However, through this controversy it has become harder still to comprehend what is supposed to be gained by the passing of pain back and forth. Instead, much seems to be lost, revealing that revenge is not remedy. So the bottom line still must be the same, the hope that healing and peace are possible for the author through the sharing of her story.

Marilyn Millward
Dartmouth, N.S.

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Focus

On the Axe's Edge

The Graham Langley Saga — Pulp and Punishment in the Nova Scotia Woods

by Peter Clancy

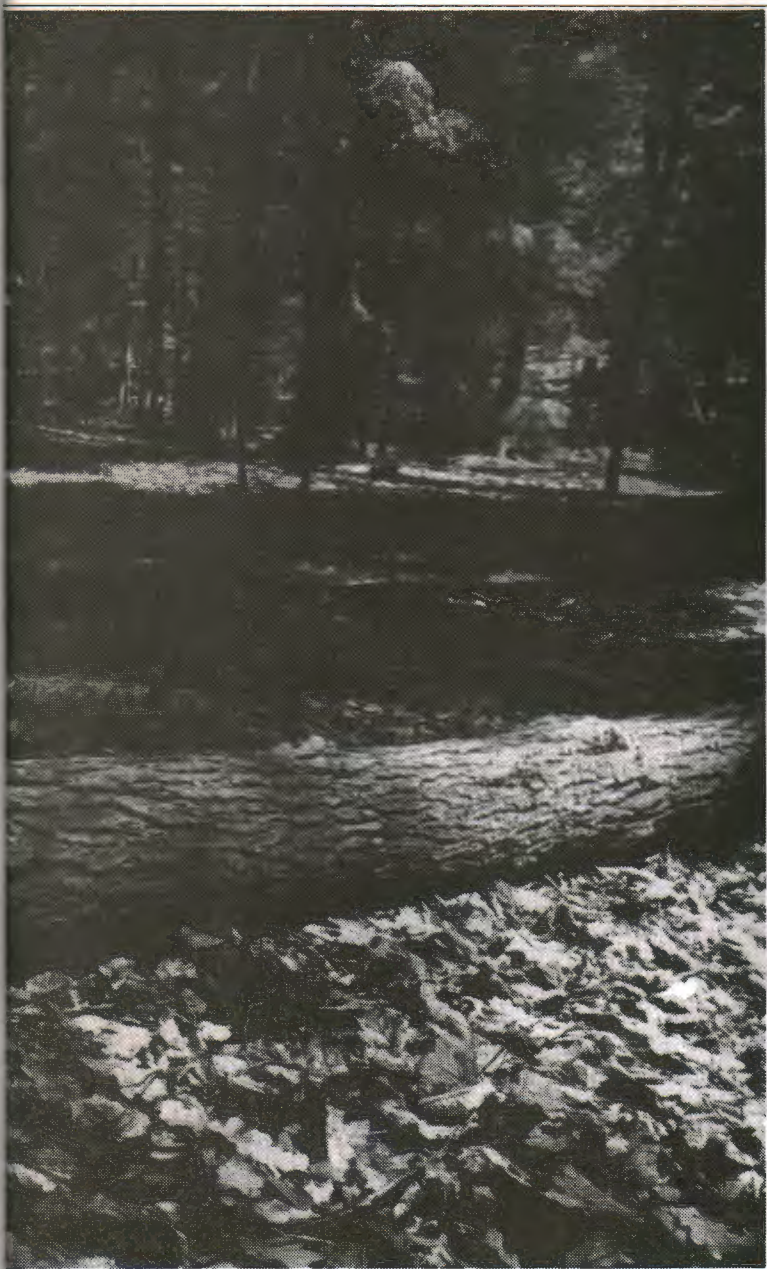


Michael Creagen

Graham Langley went out on a limb Nova Scotia's small pulpwood producers. He got the axe.

Two years ago, we reported in *New Maritimes* on a dramatic forest policy confrontation in Nova Scotia. [See "Crossroads in the Forest," by Peter Clancy, in our May/June, 1991 issue.] This pitted the provincial Primary Forest Products Marketing Board against the pulp and paper industry and a sizeable share of the logging contractors who cut pulpwood for the three large mills in the province: Stora Forest Industries of Port

Hawkesbury, Pictou County-based Scott Paper, and the Bowater-Mersey operation located near Liverpool in Queens County. At the request of the provincial government, the Board was then formulating a new procedure for organizing and certifying small producer supplier groups in order to enable them to achieve a larger share of the market and better prices for their wood. Bowater orchestrated the industry's opposition to the plan by publicizing a draft of the



proposed procedure and predicting catastrophic consequences if it was adopted. The struggle culminated in May, 1992, when the newly appointed Minister of Natural Resources, John Leefe — he is, incidentally, the longstanding MLA for Queens County, where the Bowater operation is an economic lynchpin — announced that the Board's proposal had been rejected by government.

This belated announcement signalled the victory of the industry's campaign described in our earlier story. Although it marked a crucial milestone in the evolution of Nova Scotia's forest policy, the attention of those involved in the province's forestry, both in rural Nova Scotia and in Halifax, has since been drawn to another drama the end of which has yet to be written. In one respect, this story was an outgrowth of the earlier marketing controversy, but it also raises a host of important new questions.

This is the tale of how the provincial government fired the Chair of the Marketing Board in the midst of this major conflict. On October 8, 1991, Chuck MacNeil, John Leefe's predecessor as Minister of Natural Resources, called Board Chair Graham Langley to his office and demanded his immediate resignation. Langley was, by his own account, thunderstruck at this ultimatum. Although he had previously met and corresponded regularly with the Minister, he had seen no sign of the government's displeasure with him. Before the October 8th meeting, the Minister had shown little concern with the normal level of criticism that the activities of the Board has habitually attracted from industry lobbies ever since its inception over twenty years ago.

Of course, Langley realized that the draft organizing and marketing procedure the Board had worked on for the previous two-and-a-half years was encountering political difficulties: although Donald Cameron had indicated support for the draft plan at the February, 1991 Conservative leadership convention, there had seemed to be a complete change of heart by the spring of that year. Before the convention, MacNeil had indicated to Langley and other Board members that the new draft procedure would be high on the Cabinet's agenda. Yet, just a month later he had reversed his position.

The Board was also embroiled at the time in a lengthy dispute over budgets and expenses with one of the certified supplier groups which was financed by a commodity levy the Board administered. In the spring of 1991, this group charged that Langley held a "bias" against it. But such differences weren't uncommon in the regulatory policy field. Agricultural marketing boards occasionally face such charges from groups they regulate. The relations between an agency and its clientele are traditionally handled by the procedures of a board, and by the courts if necessary, without involving ministers and bureaucrats.

By Langley's recollection, Chuck MacNeil was terse and pointed at the October 8th meeting. He wanted the resignation in writing, but the reasons he wanted it were unclear to Langley. MacNeil talked of a report compiled by the Board's civil-service solicitor, Marian Tyson, in which it was alleged that Langley had interfered in a Board proceeding from which he had already voluntarily withdrawn, and that his intervention had compromised the Board's decision in that case. Though he read selected

passages from Tyson's report, MacNeil would neither allow Langley to read it in full nor furnish him with a copy of the document on which his job and even his career appeared to hang. There was, however, a *quid pro quo*: if Langley tendered his resignation, another government job would be found for him for the remaining three years of his seven-year term with the Board. But without that letter of resignation, MacNeil indicated he was prepared to obtain a Cabinet order to simply rescind Langley's appointment. After some weeks of intense reflection, Langley submitted his resignation. This closed a most revealing chapter in the history of forest policy in Nova Scotia.

Langley's forced resignation quickly fueled the rumour mill in rural Nova Scotia, though it was months before any official word about it emanated from the government in Halifax. There was no press release or newspaper account of this coup. (The Department of Natural Resources was similarly silent about the fact that a "special" Board was quietly appointed late in the fall to re-hear and rule on just one application, from the group that had charged Langley with "bias," before being dissolved.) However, in private conversations across the province, Langley's demise was the subject of wide discussion, a lament to some and a satisfaction to others. Many small woodlot owners and producers felt they had lost a very good friend and ally in government. They had supported the new draft procedure as a key to reform and renewal in the private wood sector. On the other hand, the business crowd assembled at a November meeting of the Nova Scotia Forest Products Association, an organization including the corporate mill owners, paused for a "moment of silence for Graham Langley," all to the general merriment of most of those involved. One mill official then urged his colleagues to press their advantage by lobbying the government to reduce the powers of the Board: the mills wanted to downgrade the Chair's position to part-time status as a further step toward neutralizing an agency the industry has consistently opposed since its creation in 1972.

Overshadowed by the Westray controversy and fishery closures, the issue of Langley's removal hasn't received the media attention it deserves. The provincial daily press has been slow to seize on the issue. Aside from the political columnists of the *Halifax Daily News* and the pages of *Frank* magazine, the Langley affair has been pretty much neglected by the media. The main source of information about the case has been the person who has paid the greatest cost, Graham Langley himself.

In an effort to gain access to the Tyson report, that Chuck MacNeil cited in October, 1991 when demanding his resignation, Langley filed an application under the province's Freedom of Information Act. In May of 1992 the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources announced that this request had been refused. He based this denial on a number of provisions of the Act, but of particular significance was Section V, which allows ministerial discretion in shielding records that might contain information of a personal nature. The irony of using such a provision in this case, where the *subject* of the file is seeking access, is overwhelming, and it highlights both the Act's deficiencies and the Kafkaesque nature of Langley's case.

Langley next turned to the appeal provisions in the

Freedom of Information Act and applied to the Trial Division of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court in June of 1992 for an order obliging the government to release the Tyson file to him. It was at this point that the Langley case passed into the public domain, and it has been only since then that any "official" public discussion of it has begun. Since Graham Langley is one of the few people willing to talk publicly about the issue, many of the particulars of the matter are known only from his detailed affidavit (a written declaration made under oath), and from his lawyer's arguments filed with the Court at that time. In the ensuing months, the provincial government has, in its statements, ignored the substance of Langley's case, relying instead on a procedural defence involving the strict statutory terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

The period since last June has been witness to complicated legal procedures that have entailed extended delays. Part of this process has been a battle over legal documents. In response to Langley's affidavit, the Attorney-General's Department filed one for Marian Tyson. Last August 23rd, two days before the case was scheduled to be heard, Langley's lawyer served notice that Tyson

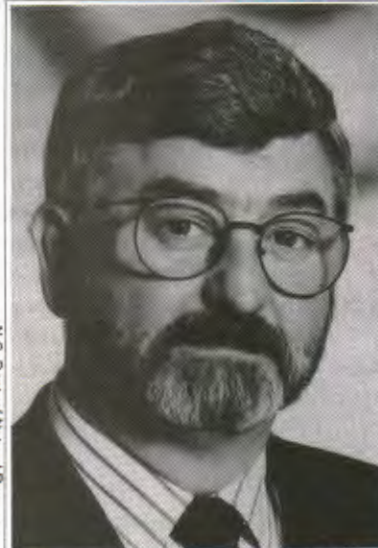
would be called for cross-examination. The next day, counsel for the Attorney-General applied to the court to have Langley's affidavit, as well as two others from former Board members in support of him, removed from evidence on the grounds that they were "frivolous, vexatious and irrelevant" to the case. This preliminary issue created a trial within a trial.

The case was soon further complicated: just two hours before the court was due to sit on August 25th, Judge Walter Goodfellow

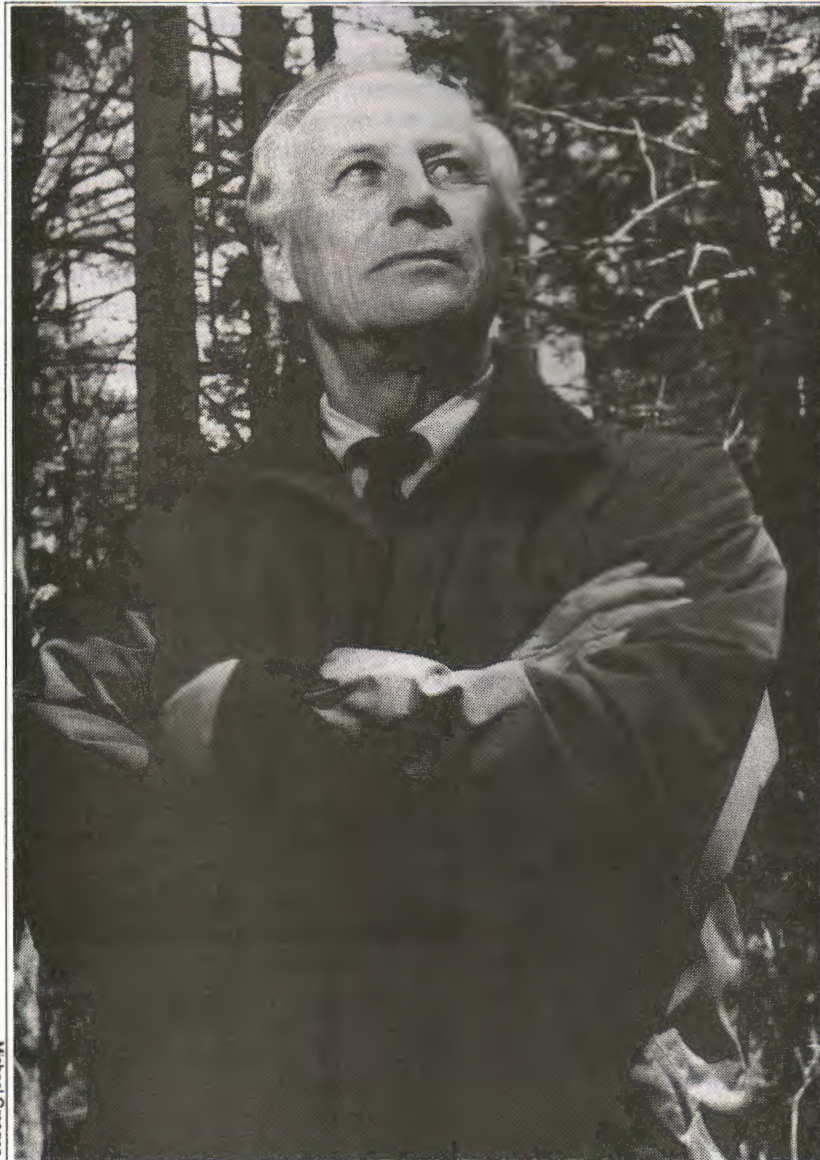
announced his withdrawal from the case, citing a conflict of interest based on two points — that Marian Tyson had articulated with his former law firm during his tenure there and that he had represented her husband in a subsequent legal matter. (Tyson's husband, Bob MacGregor, is senior Director of Operations for the Department of Natural Resources.) And so Langley's court date was postponed for an additional five months, until late January of this year, when Chief Justice Constance Glube finally heard the case. There, she struck Langley's June affidavits from evidence, adding that they were more appropriate to a suit for unlawful dismissal than to the Freedom of Information appeal being considered, but she also opened the way for him to submit a new affidavit. (This has since been done.) She offered a solution to the dispute: she proposed to review the Tyson report herself, remove any personal references that might violate third-party privacy, and then release the balance to Langley. This was accepted by Langley's counsel but refused by the Attorney-General's. And so, the litigation continues: Langley's next court date is set for May 25th, which is, interestingly enough, the very day Donald Cameron has chosen to hold the long-awaited provincial election.

With no further administrative remedies available and his legal options narrowing, Graham Langley may never know the exact nature of the report which cost him his job. But, inadvertently and at huge personal cost, he has

N.S. Dept. of Natural Resources



Former Resources Minister MacNeil.



Michael Craegen

Langley wants to get to the bottom of why he lost his job.

opened the door as never before to the inner tensions which beset pulpwood politics in Nova Scotia. The picture that emerges is a troubling one. One aspect, of course, is the shabby treatment the provincial government has meted out to one of its senior officials. This offers a fascinating lesson, sure to be widely studied by Langley's peers, about the terms of public service in the Cameron era of "new politics." But equally important is the picture of secret reports, back-channel influence, and questionable administrative practices. What makes this more than a simple tale of bureaucratic gamesmanship is the unsettling evidence that a legitimate administrative and regulatory process can so readily be derailed, and how extreme forms of discipline can be imposed under political pressure.

The case of Graham Langley should not be allowed to slip quietly from sight. If his allegations are true, then the government owes Langley, and the Nova Scotia public, a fully documented explanation. If there is another side to the story, then the Cameron government should present it openly to clear the air, regardless of the fate of the Progressive Conservatives in the approaching May 25th election. [This issue will be in the process of printing and binding on the 25th: eds.] If Cameron goes down to defeat, he will still have the option of doing the proper thing in the days prior to the transfer of power. For their part, the Liberals have promised to release Tyson's report if elected while NDP have called for an enquiry into the events surrounding Langley's resignation.

In order to better understand the complicated string of events that led to Langley's forced resignation, some brief background is necessary. In 1972, the government of Nova Scotia established the Pulpwood Marketing Board. For years, small woodlot owners had called for creation of a body that would enable private producers to join together in associations to collectively negotiate contracts which covered prices and quantities for pulpwood sold to the province's three large processing mills. The mills, of course, were adamantly opposed to such a measure, and lobbied against the Board, both individually and through the Nova Scotia Forest Products Association. The Liberal regime of Gerald Regan created the Board only reluctantly, and his government never really vigorously supported its work. Over the next decade, the pulp mills challenged the Board's work at every step, launching lengthy and expensive court actions. As a result, eight years passed before the first private supplier group, which provided wood to the Stora mill at Port Hawkesbury, was certified and signed a delivery contract. After another group was certified for Scott Maritimes in 1982, a second round of court challenges were initiated by a number of logging contractors closely tied to that company.

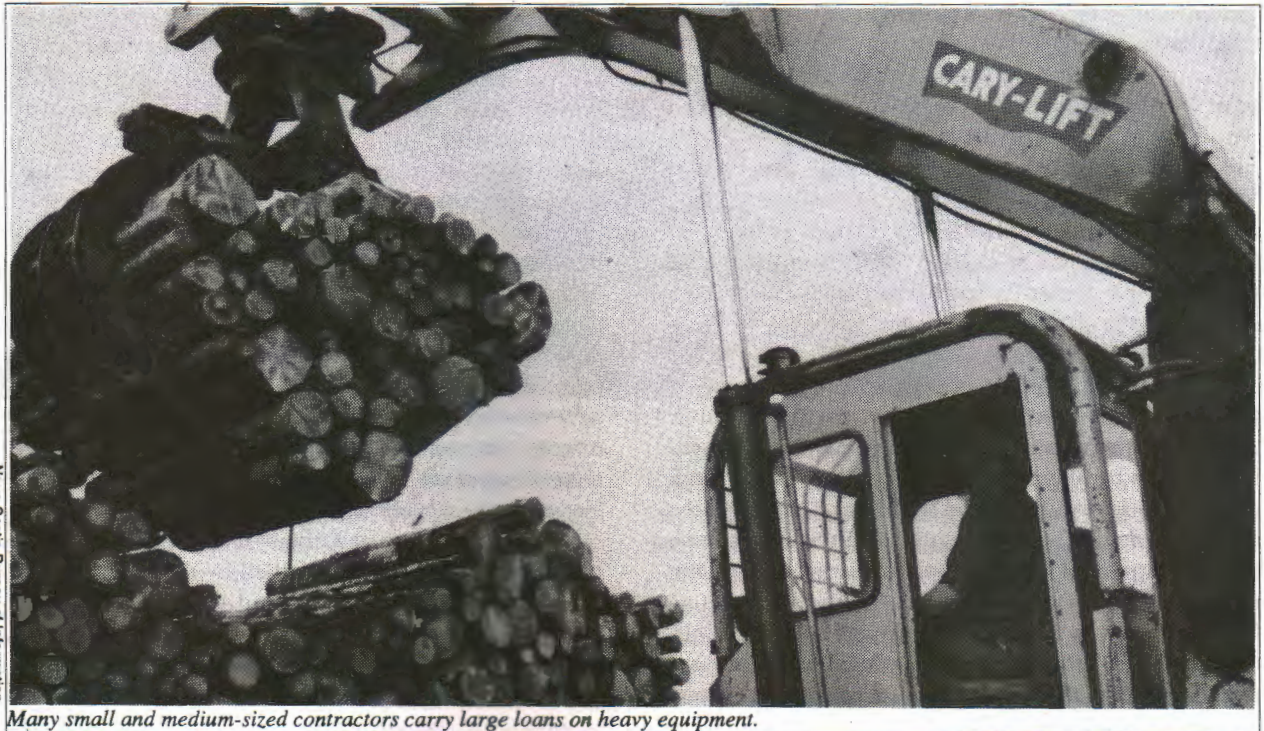
In 1986, the government announced a new policy on forestry in the province, and the concerns of small woodlot owners and producers were front and centre in it. This policy, still nominally in force today, called for measures to ensure small producers a higher price for their wood and a larger share of the market. It called for a review of the Pulpwood Marketing Act. It also upgraded the position of

Board Chair from part-time to full-time status. In 1987, the man who approved the policy, Lands and Forests Minister Ken Streach, appointed Graham Langley as the new Chair of the re-named Primary Forest Products Marketing Board and encouraged him to vigorously pursue its new mandate.

There was clearly much to do. Because of the low level of organization among producers, pulpwood prices in Nova Scotia were considerably lower than in other comparable jurisdictions. For example, in New Brunswick, where woodlot owners are much more organized than in Nova Scotia, 1989 pulpwood prices averaged \$73 per cord; in Nova Scotia, Stora was offering just \$67, while Scott was paying \$56, and Bowater, which has long been in the forefront of industry opposition to collective contracts, was paying just \$48.50.

Langley and the Board of six appointed members had several roles to play. First were its normal operations where delivery contracts already existed: it continued to collect a levy on each cord of privately produced pulpwood, and the funds so raised went to support certified supplier groups. Second, the Board launched a review of its policy framework and made recommendations to the Minister for change. The important provision for binding arbitration, implemented in 1989, originated through this process. When it was introduced over furious opposition from the pulp mills, the new Minister of Lands and Forests was Chuck MacNeil.

The Board also recommended other changes. Despite the successful formation of a third supplier group in 1982 — one consisting of sawmills which sold wood chips to Scott — the process of organizing primary producers seemed to have ground to a halt: no producer groups had since been certified. (An effort in the mid-1980s by saw millers in western Nova Scotia who sell chips to Bowater-Mersey, had been withdrawn before it reached the public hearing stage, partly, at least, because Bowater had threatened the saw millers with the loss of their market.) There was a feeling on the Board, bolstered now by the government's new forest policy, that it was time to review the process by which wood supplier groups were organized and certified. The Primary Forest Products Marketing Act, in fact, empowered Langley's Board to stipulate a formal procedure for this very purpose. So in 1988 the Board engaged a consultant, David Curtis, to study the matter. As a forester with extensive woodlot association experience in New Brunswick and a law degree to boot, Curtis was well placed for the job. In his report, he offered a two-part proposal for reform that included binding arbitration in cases of breakdowns in negotiations for pulp supply contracts and a procedure that would make it easier to organize and certify regional groups of suppliers. As it was, if the pulp companies felt discussions with a particular group of suppliers wasn't going their way, they could simply stop dealing with them and look elsewhere for their supplies of wood. Recalling the history of past efforts to organize woodlot owners, Curtis urged the provincial government to let the companies know that it doesn't want "legitimate policy initiatives continually dragged through the courts, and that it wants industry to deal... with the new marketing agencies in a professional and business-like



Many small and medium-sized contractors carry large loans on heavy equipment.

manner." His report provided a model which broadly guided the Board in its efforts over the next two years. Those efforts culminated in Graham Langley's forced resignation.

The story of the Board's effort to draft a new procedure for organizing and certifying woodlot owner groups was described in some detail in our earlier story. The Curtis Report was circulated for comment among forest organizations in August of 1988. Board members began working on their proposal for a new organizing procedure, and by the fall of 1989 they had produced a document that all Board members felt was ready for circulation to a wider audience. This document, known as "Draft Seven" — earlier versions had been largely restricted to circulation among the Board members themselves — was circulated among forest organizations for comment at the end of 1989. A public controversy broke out in February 1990, when Bowater-Mersey wrote all of its private suppliers condemning the Board's proposal. In a highly selective and unbalanced description, Bowater suggested that under the proposed system, small suppliers would lose their "right" to freely sell wood and that Bowater could not guarantee a continuing market should a new supplier group be established. (This threat was similar to the one the company used against the saw millers who tried to organize in the mid-1980s.) Bowater urged private suppliers to protest this "bureaucratic power grab" by contacting government ministers.

The result was confusion and even panic in the primary wood industry. It began in western Nova Scotia and spread gradually across the province. Graham Langley spent much of the spring of 1990 attending meetings with woodlot groups and municipalities, explaining government policy and the Board's aims, and distributing com-

plete copies of Draft Seven. That autumn, the Board held five open meetings across the province to discuss the Draft Seven proposal, and in January of 1991 Chuck MacNeil held his own public hearings into the matter. Clearly, opinion was divided within the forestry sector, both on the principle of organized marketing itself and on the details of the Draft Seven proposal.

The large mills chose to wage their battle against Draft Seven not through the courts, but rather through their logging and trucking contractors. Most of these small and medium-sized operators work outside of existing supplier groups: they work instead directly with the companies. Often they cut on corporation-owned land or on Crown land leased to the big mills. The truckers depend on the companies for their delivery orders. Normally carrying large loans to pay for expensive equipment — loans which can only be serviced as long as that equipment is working for profit — these small businessmen are extremely vulnerable to a loss of business or a sudden slowdown emanating from the offices of the large mills. So when Bowater's Assistant Woodlands Manager advised them to protest the Board's draft proposal, the message to suppliers was unmistakable, and this was clearly evident at both sets of hearings. While company representatives seldom spoke at these sessions, they always attended and monitored the proceedings, thereby heightening the anxiety of many in the audience. Only the most courageous or independent contractor could risk a favorable public word for Draft Seven.

Woodlot owners and small private producers had a mixed reaction to Draft Seven. This sector is both under-organized and over-organized, a legacy of the political battles of the 1970s. Perhaps no more than 6,000 of an estimated 30,000 woodlot owners in Nova Scotia are members of any organization, and even these are divided between two supplier groups, two general-interest woodlot organizations, various county-level groups, and eighteen

group-venture management associations. Most of these organizations were ambivalent toward Draft Seven. The only categorical opponents among them was the supplier group for Stora — known as Forest Fibre — which viewed the new draft as a serious threat. This opposition was strongly conditioned by a separate dispute between Forest Fibre and the Board. (Details of this clash will be discussed below.) Members of several group ventures came out in favour of Draft Seven or some similar new procedure for organizing producers, as did many individual woodlot owners speaking on their own behalf.

In any public hearings, it is essential to understand the background, and the primary interests, of each intervener. In the forestry sector, there is never any single "public opinion," but rather multiple conflicting interests obscured by the often overlapping roles of woodlot owner, landowner, primary producer, and contractor. Consequently, any assessment of the hearings on Draft Seven can't be judged simply on a reading of recorded proceedings, but must also be considered in light of these complicating factors. Chuck MacNeil appeared to well appreciate this, both during and after his January hearings. In fact, so even-tempered was the Minister that a group of Pictou County contractors and politicians were moved to charge *him* of having a pre-conceived bias in favour of Draft Seven. Inevitably the issue spilled over into the February, 1991 Conservative leadership contest, where considerable confusion attended the positions of the various candidates. As late as his convention address, Donald Cameron voiced his support for a new organizing procedure.

The Cameron era of government began in March, 1991. It appeared that both Natural Resources Minister MacNeil and the Premier supported *some* version of the Board's proposal, though not necessarily every single provision outlined in Draft Seven. However, the government seemed to change its mind in the months that followed, and the question didn't go before Cabinet during the spring. Ob-

viously, any new organizing procedure would be controversial. Six of the seven Board members supported the procedure outlined in Draft Seven — only the pulp mills' representative to the Board dissented. The Board's consultations had taken place in an extended and open fashion and had stressed that it was proposing a *procedure* rather than imposing a *structure*. Draft Seven made clear that no new supplier group would be established unless a two-thirds majority of the affected woodlot owners approved it by secret ballot. Yet there was no denying that, if effective, the new procedure would significantly change the way private wood was marketed in Nova Scotia. In the end, the Board's vocal and well-organized critics appear to have successfully shaped the public debate with their free-market rhetoric. The new proposal's supporters were more fragmented, ill-organized and, in many cases, silenced by the invisible discipline of corporate power.

Perhaps the Cameron Cabinet simply decided to sidestep a tough decision bequeathed by the Buchanan regime. Perhaps it decided that regulated commodity marketing was out of step with its new Maritime Economic Union initiative. Perhaps Elmer MacKay, the province's chief federal Cabinet Minister and a vocal critic of the proposal, was linking the defeat of this policy to other important federal programmes for the province such as a new Canada-Nova Scotia Forestry Agreement. (MacKay justified his high-profile interventions by claiming to speak "as a woodlot owner.") Whatever the reasons for government's new-found policy of opposition to the proposed organizing procedure, clearly more than a single policy decision was at stake here — otherwise Cabinet could simply have amended the problematical terms of the draft procedure. What was at stake here was the future direction of forestry in the province. Two competing visions had collided — one based on enhancing the rights of, and returns to, the small private woodlot owner, the other based on perpetuating the existing, corporate-dominated

pattern of harvesting and marketing. Probably the Cameron government was discovering in the spring of 1991 just how deep was the gulf between these two visions. The combined forces of the pulp and paper complex have always been formidable, and now they were going on the offensive once again. And while the Cameron government wrestled privately with the dilemma of how to respond to the Board's policy proposal, another series of events were set in motion which would dominate Board politics during the summer of 1991.

Even as Graham Langley and his Primary Forest Products Marketing Board considered a new organizing procedure, it continued to fulfill its ongoing responsibilities under the Primary Forest Products Marketing Act. In regulating relations between existing sup-



A victorious Donald Cameron at the Tory leadership convention in February, 1991. In the months that followed, the government had a change of heart toward the Board's proposal.



Pulpwood at the mill: the combined forces of the pulp and paper complex are formidable, and they were on the offensive again.

plier groups and certain buyers, some thorny issues arose. For example, in 1988 the Board was obliged to deal with a dispute between the Central Supply Division, which had a contract to supply the Scott mill, and its parent group, the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators Association. In another case, the Board provided funds to a group of woodlot owners in the central part of the province interested in the possibility of becoming certified as a supplier group. In eastern Nova Scotia, an issue arose concerning the budget accountability of another supplier group, the Nova Scotia Landowners and Forest Fibre Producers Association — hereafter “Forest Fibre” — which has held a supplier contract with Stora since 1980.

The Marketing Act empowers the Board to financially support each certified supplier group to enable it to perform its marketing function. (These funds come from a levy the Board collects on each cord of privately sold pulpwood.) Early in 1988, the Board began to monitor the size of Forest Fibre’s budget. It commissioned a study which showed that Forest Fibre’s budget significantly exceeded those of other supplier groups in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. It also noted the high costs of staff salaries, newsletter publication, marketing trips abroad, and legal fees, as well as the persistence of a very large cash surplus. The Board was also concerned that some expenditures might be for purposes outside the strict marketing intent of Forest Fibre’s per-cord levy. The reaction of Forest Fibre’s leadership was to consider the Board’s interest in its affairs and all ensuing enquiries as unfriendly acts. Over the following two years it waged a critical campaign — through its newsletter and occasionally the media — which impugned the motives and questioned the legitimacy of the Board and also accused Graham Langley of pursuing a vendetta. Finally, in September, 1989, after more than a year of being unable to reach a negotiated settlement and still lacking any satisfactory accounting of Forest Fibre’s budget, the Board decided to reduce its levy to a level the Board judged to be more in keeping with the group’s marketing function. It passed an order to reduce Forest Fibre’s levy by more than one-third, from 95¢ per cord to 60¢, thus reducing the group’s annual revenues from \$300,000 to \$180,000. Forest Fibre portrayed this as an unjustified and dangerous intrusion by the state into the business of a private association and convened a special membership meeting in which just over 100 participants voted 90 percent in favour of a motion calling on the Board to reverse its decision.

In 1990 Forest Fibre opened a new line of attack which raised the ante considerably. It complained to the Board that Langley held a bias against the group which precluded the possibility of a fair hearing in his presence. The main ground for this allegation was a reported telephone interview of Langley by Forest Fibre’s publicist, Kingsley Brown, in which Langley likened the atmosphere at the group’s special meeting to that of “a wrestling match.” Forest Fibre’s lawyer indicated that unless Langley withdrew from the proceedings when it applied for a restoration of the per-cord levy to 95¢, it would launch a court action seeking his disqualification.

This opened a new phase in the conflict. A routine matter of administrative supervision was now being transformed into a frontal challenge on both the Board’s powers and Langley’s competence. By describing the dispute as one person’s vendetta, Forest Fibre’s tactic had the potential of dividing the Board, personalizing the conflict, and obscuring the fact that the levy decision had been taken by the Board as a whole. It had another consequence: the Board’s lawyer, Marian Tyson, began to play a greater-than-normal role in advising its lay members about the legal aspects of the bias accusation.

Langley finally decided to put the matter before his colleagues at a Board meeting in July, 1991. He stated that while he did not consider himself biased as alleged, and although he had grave misgivings about creating a precedent, he would take other Board members’ advice on the Forest Fibre issue. In his absence, they passed a motion recording their confidence in Langley and their rejection of Forest Fibre’s bias charge. They then suggested that he step aside for this one re-application only, to expedite a decision and to keep the Board out of court (once again) at a time when major new policies were pending. Earlier the Board’s Vice-Chair, Glen Williams, had announced he would step aside from the hearing because his accounting firm counted Forest Fibre among its clients. This meant that the Board would hear the case at its August 15th meeting with its strength reduced from seven to five, and with both normal chairpersons absent. As interim Chair the Board chose Jack Dunlop, the pulp and paper industry’s representative on the Board and the Woodlands Manager for Bowater-Mersey.

The Board also dealt with one other crucial matter at its July meeting. Langley described recent meetings he and the Board’s solicitor had attended at the request of some Forest Fibre members. Here, a number of serious irregu-

larities were alleged in Forest Fibre's operations. These included the misallocation of pulpwood delivery quotas through the sale of quota, kickbacks, cut-price purchases and later resale. These accusations echoed other reports the Board had received about Forest Fibre several years earlier. On its solicitor's advice, the Board decided at its July meeting to refer all documentation about these accusations to the commercial crime section of the RCMP. Following the meeting, Langley briefed the Minister on the Forest Fibre affair and drafted a letter to the RCMP, which the Board endorsed at its August meeting. (No charges arose from the subsequent RCMP investigation.)

The events cited in Chuck MacNeil's ultimatum to Langley occurred between mid-August and late September of 1991. After hearing Forest Fibre's presentation on August 15th, the Board, temporarily reduced to five members and with Jack Dunlop in the Chair, decided to partially restore its levy, to 80¢ per cord. However, this was not before noting several serious breaches of its own by-laws by Forest Fibre: the Board was told by Forest Fibre's Executive Director Charles Williams that no accurate membership list was maintained, that annual membership dues were not comprehensively collected, and that no Quota Allocation Committee functioned within the organization.

When Langley saw the documentation of the Board's August 15th decision to raise Forest Fibre's levy to 80¢, he noticed some textual deficiencies in it and advised both the Board's solicitor and Jack Dunlop of this fact. By Langley's account, they discussed the matter with him and agreed to flesh out the Board's draft decision. (There was no suggestion of altering the substance of the decision.) At the Board's September 26th meeting, with Langley again withdrawing, Forest Fibre's levy increase to 80¢ was confirmed, with the additional funding conditional only on Forest Fibre presenting a detailed budget proposal outlining its use of the additional funds.

The issue now finally appeared to be settled. However, one further meeting was held on the matter without Langley's knowledge. On October 1st, Acting Chair Jack Dunlop convened a telephone conference call among the five Board members and the Board's solicitor to rescind the September 26th decision. (This meant that Forest Fibre's levy would now be back to 60¢.) The minutes of that meeting show that Jack Dunlop suggested that certain changes had been made to the decision between the August and September drafts. Furthermore, because "certain conversations took place between the two meetings, [it] could be perceived that the Board was influenced." In its telephone meeting, the Board rescinded its September decision and asked the Attorney-General to appoint an interim Board to hear the Forest Fibre application anew.

The following week, Chuck MacNeil called Graham Langley to his office and sought his resignation, citing various irregularities in connection with the Forest Fibre application and declaring his loss of confidence in him.

Many signs suggest that authorities within the provincial government, together with personnel at the Board, were acting in a desperate rush

in late September, 1991 to bury a number of awkward controversies. Langley's alleged "interventions" with Board members on the Forest Fibre issue can be interpreted in several ways. Langley denies he discussed the issue with any person, and for any purpose, other than those described above. He contends that his intervention occurred shortly after the August Board meeting, and that it addressed the technical issue of compiling a full and complete textual decision. He may well have felt that, in the absence of the regular Chair and Vice-Chair, Board members inadvertently overlooked routine recording requirements.

Langley also points out that both Jack Dunlop and Marian Tyson had responded positively to the points he raised after the August meeting. Rather than abruptly ringing off with a warning for him to stay clear of the issue, they followed up on his initiative with several subsequent conversations. Langley contends that as a result of his observations, but without his direct involvement, they rewrote a single-page draft into a seventeen-page document that included reasons for the Board's decision on Forest Fibre. It was only six weeks later that Dunlop and Tyson expressed concern, during the October 1st conference call, of unwarranted "interference."

Could they have been referring to something else, such as contacts between Langley and other Board members? What might this have involved? Of what might such "contacts" have consisted? Langley denies he discussed the Forest Fibre application with any of his other colleagues on the Board. He certainly didn't intervene with the intention of shaping their views or changing their decision. He readily admits that he was in regular contact with all Board members by telephone and by mail on the variety of issues channelled through him as Chief Executive Officer of the Board. Some matters concerned the administration of contracts—including, naturally enough, the Forest Fibre contract. Others dealt with woodlot owners' contracts to the Board. Langley makes a distinction between discussion of Forest Fibre's application and dealing with other matters that might have involved that organization specifically, and wood marketing in eastern Nova Scotia generally.

One of these other matters may well have been the complaints against Forest Fibre referred by the Board, on legal advice, to the RCMP. It would be proper and necessary for the Board to distinguish between a concrete dispute over budgets and repeated allegations of a criminal nature. The Board could hardly ignore such allegations, but it was still faced with the "old business" of Forest Fibre's application in connection with the per-cord levy. Was the very mention of Forest Fibre regarding matters outside the application's scope being construed as "unwarranted interference"? If so, this would seem an unreasonably rigid standard. Is it unreasonable for the Chair to read transcripts of a meeting and the text of a decision taken there, and to then refer to these in his continuing work at the Board? He could hardly ignore a duly ratified decision of his Board. When these points are considered together, the alleged "interference," the nature of which has never been fully spelled out, is far from clear, and it seems to be a very thin reed on which to end a senior

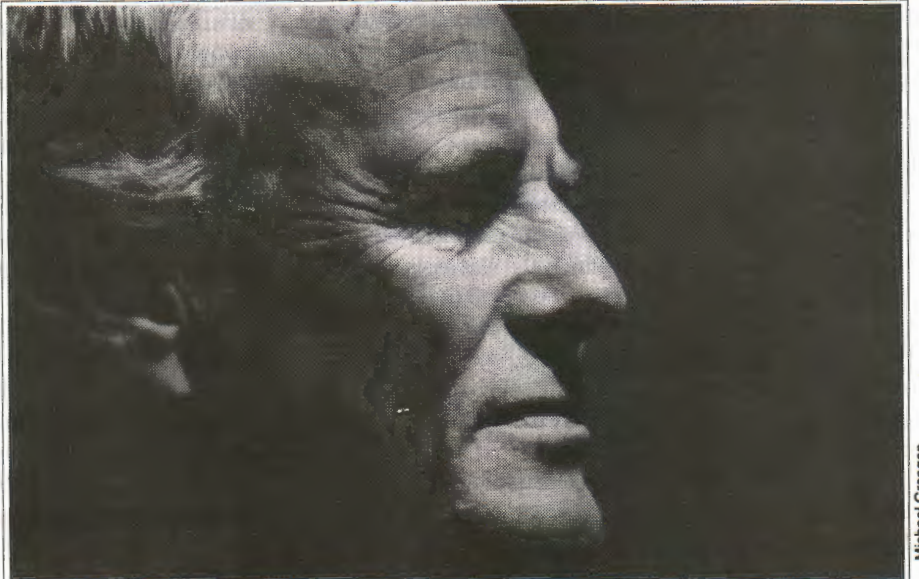
career. But it did provide a pretext for staging a sudden leadership coup at the Board.

The very fact that the Forest Fibre controversy would not fade away may have posed a broader policy problem for the government. At its August meeting with officers of Forest Fibre, the Board had unearthed a number of administrative irregularities in its operations. Langley was not about to ignore these once the group's application was settled. Transcripts from the August meeting clearly showed that Forest Fibre was in breach of its own by-laws by not maintaining a membership list and by not having a functioning quota committee to allocate and monitor pulpwood delivery volumes among its members. (The allocation of the quota lies at the heart of any marketing group. An openly elected, publicly accountable quota committee is the best guarantee of fairness, and the best guard against abuse.) All in all, the portrait that emerges of Forest Fibre is one of a group with definite organizational deficiencies.

In early September, during the period between the two Board meetings, Langley prepared a memorandum outlining these problems, which he shared with the woodlot owner members of the Board. Could this be what Dunlop and Tyson later referred to as "interference"? At the end of the September 26th meeting, after the text of the decision for an 80¢ levy had been finalized, Tyson raised the question of influence by Langley. When Board members were asked if they had a problem with his role, nobody indicated any such problem. Yet less than a week later this was raised again during the conference call, when it was cited as a procedural reason to overturn the Board's decision.

The questions of who took these concerns to government, and when they did so, remain to be answered. Did Jack Dunlop, as Acting Chair, complain about Langley to Chuck MacNeil without letting Langley know about it? Did Marian Tyson complain to her departmental superior, the Deputy Minister of the Department of the Attorney-General? Which department took the lead in weighing Langley's future? And how did the Premier's office become involved? Certain signs point to a near-panic response following the September 26th Board meeting. In one perhaps revealing passage of the minutes of the October 1st conference call, a motion requests the Attorney-General (rather than the Minister of Natural Resources, to whom the Board reports) to appoint an interim Board to hear the Forest Fibre application anew.

In the urgency to wipe the slate clean, at least one crucial consideration was overlooked. The October 1st conference call occurred the day *after* the terms of three Board Members had expired. Since the Board is defined by law as "seven members," the hastily-staged conference call meeting was probably an illegal proceeding at which



Langley's vision was one of a better deal for small pulpwood producers.

Michael Creagen

only two Board members were *bona fide*. Is it possible that due process and legal procedures were interpreted to meet the convenience of the powerful?

One final point begs clarification: how widely were these very sensitive events known outside the Board's membership? The Board was designed to be informally representative in character, its members being selected "with experience" in the pulp and paper industry, the sawmill industry, and the woodlot owning sector, together with three "independents." Under normal circumstances, it isn't uncommon for members to receive, and even to solicit, outside opinions. But while a particular application is under consideration, the conventions of confidentiality would certainly apply. With such great emphasis being placed on Langley's propriety in the process, it is important to know how other Board members behaved. Was Forest Fibre made aware of the course of the deliberations *before* October 1st, when the Board directed that the group's lawyer be officially informed of the change of decision? By Langley's account, Chuck MacNeil referred repeatedly to pressure from Forest Fibre. (Many of its members resided in MacNeil's Guysborough constituency.) He told Langley on October 9th that an early settlement was important because Forest Fibre was threatening court action. At a subsequent meeting on October 23rd, MacNeil stated that Forest Fibre had agreed to withhold legal action or public comment *if* Langley's resignation was tendered by the end of the month. Just who, it might well be asked, was driving this agenda, and to what end?

Neither of two recent government statements on the Langley case comes close to addressing these concerns. The first, a highly revealing letter signed by the Attorney-General's public relations officer, responded to criticism by columnist Parker Barss Donham in the *Halifax Daily News* on February 16, 1993. The letter denied that the Department had made any procedural objections in the Langley case, and also repudiated Donham's contention that the action had cost taxpayers a substantial sum of money. (The letter asserted a total "disbursement on the file" of only \$50). It further stated that Tyson's report to

MacNeil could not be edited by Justice Glube because it is protected by solicitor-client privilege. Donham's follow-up column effectively demolished the fiction of "cost-free" government litigation and aptly described the government's willingness to smother "citizen-litigants" with costly and time-consuming actions, all at considerable public expense. The "solicitor-client" rationale is equally strange: the fact that it was put forward suggests that Tyson's "client" was not the Board to which she was assigned, but rather the Minister of a Department other than her own, or perhaps even the Cabinet as a whole. In this looking-glass world, lines of professional legal advice, bureaucratic supervision, and political accountability seem to have been hopelessly confused in a way that must surely make conscientious civil servants shudder.

The government's second recent comment on the case took the form of a letter, dated March 9, 1993, from former Natural Resources Minister Chuck MacNeil to Graham Langley. Here for the first time he sets out publicly his reasons for sacking Langley:

It is simply not acceptable for a member to withdraw from a case in response to an allegation of bias and then discuss the case with the remaining members.

This conduct alone justifies your removal, but it occurred in the context of a number of complaints or concerns from industry and owners alike that you were not a fair and impartial chairman of the Board.

This is followed by several references to the political issues discussed earlier in this article, but with the clear implication that Langley's errors and misjudgments alone were responsible for souring pulpwood marketing relationships. MacNeil's portrait of the affair is, to say the least, heavily shaded, selective, and after-the-fact.

Across Nova Scotia, people involved in forestry have been watching the Langley case closely. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of duplicated copies

of his affidavit have been circulated and discussed. Many people who have never met Graham Langley admire his courage in tilting against the forestry power structure.

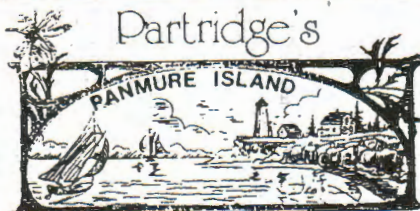
In his term as Chair of the Primary Forest Products Marketing Board, Graham Langley vigorously served the cause of Nova Scotia's woodlot owners. While he may have made tactical errors, his commitment to the Board's mandate, to the Pulpwood Marketing Act, and to the government's 1986 Forest Policy were resolute. He was open and accountable when faced with controversial decisions, inviting public debate and never tiring of discussing the cause of woodlot owners. This is in sharp contrast to the closet intrigue and almost conspiratorial manoeuvres that destroyed his career at the Board. The burden of explanation now rests squarely on the public officials who forced his resignation and who continue to refuse to answer for their actions.

Postscript

Late in 1991, Chuck MacNeil appointed an interim Board to hear the Forest Fibre's application. After deciding to raise the levy from 60¢ to 90¢ per cord, it was disbanded. On July 1, 1992, Natural Resources Minister John Leefe appointed a new Primary Forest Products Marketing Board for a three-year term. The position of Chair, held by Halifax accountant Harold Crosby, is now part-time. Only two members of the Langley Board continue to serve, among them Jack Dunlop. Chuck MacNeil became Minister of Finance in a Cabinet shuffle in the spring of 1992.

Nova Scotians will go to the polls on May 25th. On May 26th, the political fate of Donald Cameron and Chuck MacNeil will be known. On May 26th, Graham Langley's fate will still be before the courts. •

Peter Clancy, who is currently conducting sabbatical research in the United Kingdom, works in the Political Science Department at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish. He has researched pulpwood marketing in Nova Scotia and is the author of a historical study on the matter entitled Battling for Market Control.



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The Ocean Ranger:

Lessons of Disaster

It's been more than a decade since the *Ocean Ranger* oil-drilling rig sank off the coast of Newfoundland, claiming 84 lives. Investigations have placed responsibility for the disaster squarely at the doorstep of corporate neglect. The subsequent treatment and experiences of family members of those who perished could hold some lessons for the loved ones of those claimed by last year's Westray tragedy. And, unless government and business change the way they operate in this region, the *Ocean Ranger* experience will almost certainly hold some lessons for families yet to be bereaved in future large-scale workplace disasters.

Eleven years after the *Ocean Ranger* disaster took the life of her 23-year-old son Gregory, Patricia Hickey of St. John's still questions the way she handled the battle for compensation which she pursued all the way to the United States. "I know now that I should have just shelved it and let them squirm for a bit," she says.

But when the "them" involved is an American multinational oil company, it's not so easy to make them squirm. The concern involved was ODECO, the Ocean Drilling and Exploration Company of Canada. It was they who owned the *Ocean Ranger*, at the time the world's largest semi-submersible drilling rig. When it sank on the night of February 14-15, 1982, it was under contract to Mobil Oil of Canada, and three separate subsequent enquiries into the disaster had the same thing to say about the role of the oil companies; they'd failed to provide proper safety equipment, they'd failed to provide proper survival suits, and, most damning of all, they'd failed to provide adequate training to their personnel. The rig also had an "unnecessarily complicated ballast system" which was fingered as one of the main causes of the disaster. The night the rig was lost, there were two ballast control operators aboard, neither of whom had received any formal training for the job. Nobody on board properly understood the workings of the system, so once she began to list, calamity was almost inevitable.

If the two companies were seen to be negligent, they were not seen to be *criminally* negligent: no charges were

Mary Campbell and Susan Dodd

ever laid against either of them in connection with the sinking. The only court actions they faced were those launched by families of the 84 victims. Of these, 69 were Canadians, 54 of whom were Newfoundlanders.

The responsibility for making Mobil and ODECO "squirm," as Patricia Hickey puts it — for making the disaster touch them in any meaningful way — rested with the families. At the time, Leo Barry, now a Newfoundland Supreme Court judge, was one of the lawyers who cobbled together an out-of-court settlement for a group of Newfoundland families. His thinking at the time was, he says, "If companies and individuals are not sued when they've done things wrong then they don't change their behavior.

In retrospect, however, the settlement process seems to have taken a greater toll on the families than it ever did on the companies. For the families of the men who had been employed by ODECO, the troubles began with the company's method of informing them of the disaster: it simply didn't. Patricia Hickey went to work as usual on February 15th, and there she was advised to go home and listen to the radio. Only then did she hear of Gregory's death. An ODECO representative finally phoned her at ten o'clock that night, more than eighteen hours after the *Ocean Ranger* sank.

Margaret Blackmore, whose husband was on the rig, was advised to contact

ODECO by a friend who'd heard about the sinking on the radio. She was told, "We don't know what's going on out there, but we'll let you know." The next she heard from them, she says, was after the funeral, when two company representatives arrived with a cheque. She refused to accept it.

"ODECO," says Memorial University sociologist Doug House, "was disgusting. They just seemed to wash their hands of it and sit back to wait and see what happened." Patricia Hickey describes how she felt this way: "It's a terribly big thing. You're so vulnerable and need someone to do it all for you, and you're in a complete muddle. We were waiting so long, hoping to get our son's body. We never did. The only thing that was on our mind at first was the body. It was sacrilegious to even think about money."

Wives and parents in this state of mind are forced to enter into a process that one mother likened to "haggling over a car." In an effort to settle out of court, an offer is made to the oil company and it responds with a counter-offer. One lawyer who worked for Mobil at the time and asked not to be named, says that for the company it was all a matter of "strategy, of deciding when to give what offer."

Joyce and Edward Dodd of Berwick, Nova Scotia, whose son 24-year-old Jim perished in the disaster, were among the first of the families to settle. They reached an out-of-court settlement with Mobil shortly before Christmas in 1983. Mobil, as the legal documents stated, wished to "satisfy the legal claims of Thomas Edward Dodd... and settle and

adjust their differences amicably, without admitting liability." On the advice of their lawyer, the Dodds had made an offer to Mobil of \$45,000 which Mobil, "amicably and without admitting liability," responded to with an offer of \$25,000. The Dodds accepted.

At the other end of the "value-of-a-loved-one" scale was Patricia Ryan who, along with Patricia Hickey, won the right to pursue her case in the American courts because the companies involved were based in the United States. There, such settlements are consistently higher than in Canada. Like Jim Dodd, her son Craig was also a single man without dependants. Her settlement, which she is more than happy to reveal because she's "sick and tired of everyone thinking I'm a millionaire," was U.S. \$250,000.

Such discrepancies between settlements is just one of the problems with a process which, says one mother succinctly, "stinks." One of these problems is obvious: money can never compensate for the loss of a human life. Says Margaret Blackmore, whose husband died on the *Ocean Ranger*, "No amount of money can repay me for what I've been through. My eleven-year-old has just started asking questions: 'What was my father like?' Sometimes I find him crying alone because he has no dad to go fishing and stuff."

While you can't put a dollar value on human life, you can put one on "loss of income," which was the basis for the wives' settlements. For companies that were rather casual about things like personnel training and safety equipment, Mobil and ODECO were very strict when it came to determining the worth of their former employees. Says Louise Locke, who lost her husband, "I was married with two kids, nine months and four years... I can remember sitting with lawyers for three or four hours answering questions. 'Did you socialize very much?' 'Was he a drinker?' 'Did he like beer?' 'How much did he spend on work clothes?'... Those lawyers got to know us pretty well through this process."

And the women got to know the lawyers pretty well too. Says Patricia Hickey: "I have no love for our legal system. The lawyers here did wonderfully — at our expense. It was kind of a spin-off for them" Adds Louise Locke, who says her own lawyer was "really exceptional": "A lot of us were never involved with lawyers. We were just

starting out, with young kids. Everything was thrown at us so fast that it's only a year or so later that you realize what you've done."

Families were suddenly faced with answering a number of tough questions. Should they settle in Canada or take their cases to the United States? (Canadian lawyers advised staying home while their American counterparts were for going south.) Should they accept the companies' first offers, or hold out for more? How could they best invest the money or, in legalese, "structure the settlement"? Margaret Blackmore says many people weren't equipped to make such decisions. They should have "had money managers, people who could have given us good concrete examples of how the different options would work. I know some folks now who are not in very good financial shape: \$300,000 doesn't go very far, not over ten years, with children."

Cynthia Parsons-Walker, whose husband was one of those killed, says she thinks the Newfoundland lawyers involved might have been out of their league: "I just don't feel the lawyers had enough experience. They sought the advice of American experts and then didn't take it. It came down to a contest between who you trusted — the Americans, who were brash and arrogant, saying 'Stay with us and we'll win,' or the ones from Newfoundland. Naturally, you trusted your own."

Leo Barry takes exception to such assessments. "If we were so incompetent," he asks, "why was the settlement — in comparison to other settlements in Canada — almost double?" He claims that the tendency to blame the local lawyers is part of Newfoundland's "general inferiority complex" and says that anyone who had asked for assistance would have been directed to financial advisors. "I don't recall anyone asking for direction," he says.

One very common complaint was that of a lack of time. Cynthia Parsons-Walker says, reflecting on her own experience, "Looking back, I think I made the wrong decision. We were offered a package with different options and were told to go home and decide. We had 24 or 48 hours, whatever. It wasn't enough... I know we did better than they ever did before in Canada, but I felt at the end it was too quick. It was a barrage — 'This is the best you will do. You really have to take it.'" Knowing the meter was

running — and that lawyers must be paid — was an additional strain in an already pressure-cooker situation. For some mothers with children, the pressure to give in was too strong. Says Louise Locke: "The thing was, with most families... we couldn't hold out forever. If I could have held out longer, I would have gone on. But I was with young kids, I lived in an apartment and a car that my husband had kept on the road."

Leo Barry is not so certain that the pace of the proceedings were too fast. "I can see people thinking things were moving too quickly," he admits, "but once things are in motion you might as well get it done quickly."

There was yet another pressure to be borne — that of appearing mercenary. Cle Newhook is the former Executive Director of the *Ocean Ranger* Foundation, an organization set up to offer moral, legal and psychological support to family members of those who perished in the tragedy. Says Newhook, "Some of the women have been afraid to publish information about their settlements. There is this sense, you know, of people thinking they got rich off the backs of their dead husbands." One term that comes to mind is "blood money," and Patricia Hickey says she has heard it whispered: "That's what a lot of people called it, that's exactly what they said it was."

Despite all the pressures, Hickey and Ryan chose to press their case to its drawn-out end, even though it meant, at one point being unsuccessfully sued by ODECO for breach of contract. Now, years later, Patricia Hickey still has no doubts about why they did what they did: "We pursued it because, to this day, I know they were negligent and I couldn't see them walking away with no upset to their plans, and also because these disasters are going to keep happening. Out there, safety was totally ignored, just overlooked. There was a total lack of concern for ordinary human beings."

Patricia Ryan is even more blunt: "I fell out with the lawyers around here. They said we should settle, but I thought 'No way.' My son lost his life and I think ODECO are murderers and I think murderers should pay." And yet, when asked if she believed their actions had affected ODECO, Patricia Hickey replies without hesitation, "Not one bit. I don't think it left its mark on them in any way, shape

or form. We were a nuisance, a nuisance that made not one iota of difference. I think there's a lot of things still unresolved. When the press calls me on the anniversary to ask how I feel, I say, 'Rotten.' I feel rotten ten years after, I'll feel rotten 20 and 30 and 40 years after."

Margaret Blackmore expresses similar sentiments. "I want this company to pay. I don't ever want to see this happen again. They were negligent, that's clear. But they haven't been hurt, and really, they probably haven't changed. When there's money to be made, nothing matters, not safety, not environment, nothing. Money is important, I know, but so are other things."

As the last remaining families began to finalize their settlements, the Ocean Ranger Foundation sought to broaden its mandate from that of an organization designed solely to assist the victims of the February, 1982 disaster to one that would deal with more general issues of occupational health and safety in the region. In the months that followed the disaster, funding was provided by both government and a badly-embarrassed oil industry. But as the memories of 1982 receded into the past, financial support became ever harder to come by. Sadly, by the latter part of the decade, the Ocean Ranger Foundation was a thing of the past.

Patricia Hickey says her whole experience with the Ocean Ranger was "the learning process of my life." And according to Douglas House it was that for most of the families involved: "These women had an incredibly compressed learning experience... They had hoped to use [what they had learned] in case of future disasters, to make it easier for others. Once the settlements were over, the government pulled the plug on the Ocean Ranger Foundation. It could have been there for Westray."

While there is no structured organization to provide advice to the Westray families in any official capacity, most of the women we talked with are following events in Nova Scotia. Their advice to the families of the Westray disaster is best summed up in the words of Patricia Hickey, who says, "They should stick together, that's my first hope for them, that they should stick together." •

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Reflections of a Family Member

by Susan Dodd

While doing research for this article, I was often asked, "Why are you doing this?" Other Ocean Ranger family members didn't ask me this, however — they didn't need to: they are all too familiar with the chaos of being thrown into legal wrangling with multinational corporations.

I was a teenager when my brother was killed on the Ocean Ranger, and so I wasn't really a party to my parents' negotiations with Mobil. Only when I began this research did I realize we had been one of the first families to settle. My initial interest in the settlements arose when I realized that my parents worry because they didn't hold out longer in solidarity with families who did and that neither of them even remember much of the negotiations leading to the settlement. It took me some time before I really accepted that our society had allowed responsibility for punishing Mobil and ODECO to fall solely on families incapacitated by grief.

Canada's settlement system is designed to repay families for the loss of what they could expect to receive from their child's, spouse's, or parent's income, had they lived to age 65. I could accept this as a sane approach to "compensating" families for loss of life if there was a corresponding system of punishing corporate wrongdoing. But in the case of the *Ocean Ranger* our governments didn't punish anyone, despite the fact that ODECO was found culpable by one Canadian and two American enquiries.

The families of the *Ocean Ranger's* crew were left to set their own goals: they had to decide whether their settlement was to represent a "fair compensation," or if instead they were to reach toward some measure of social justice. As Leo Barry says, it's ultimately up to the clients to decide "how much you can change the world in any particular situation."

In the case of the *Ocean Ranger*, the settlement process was a contest of will and nerve between terribly unequal parties. What's more, it was a contest between parties with fundamentally different concepts of the goods at stake: international corporations exist by, in, and for the dollar, while grieving families must learn to stomach the application of financial expressions to their loss. The more that grieving people focus on money as "compensation" for their loss rather than as punishment for wrongdoing, the less likely they are to steel themselves to "bartering" over the price of premature death. Add to this the blinding emotion, the complexity of the legal industry, and the social pressures to recover quickly — to "get on with life" — and you have a negotiation process heavily favouring the corporate monolith.

There is no measuring a settlement's relative worth to the competing parties. What can an organization like ODECO know, in its corporate soul, of the worth of a son, husband or father? On the other hand, while \$250,000 sounds like a nice lump sum to most families, what is it to ODECO which, in the year of the disaster, was listed by *Business Week* as holding assets worth \$1.295 billion?

A related concern for many of the people I spoke with was the possibility that ODECO's insurance coverage may have let it actually make money through the loss of the *Ocean Ranger* and its crew. ODECO and Mobil were both insured against their settlement losses. Just how did their insurance returns weigh against their financial losses? Said one lawyer who has worked with Mobil, "I don't know, but you'll never get that information." As well, the very week of the sinking, *Business Week* reported that oil rigs and other drilling equipment were in oversupply and that "price discounting" was "proliferating." I'm no business expert, but it seems to me that a period of proliferate price discounting might be an ideal time to exchange hardware for insurance dollars.

The mere possibility of access to the American judicial system raised Canadian settlements because courts south of the border tend to award punitive damages more frequently and in higher amounts than any other Western country. In Canada, as one lawyer put it, "You pretty much have to prove that injury was inflicted intentionally." The weighing of these international legal possibilities bore heavily on all negotiating parties, and ultimately contributed

...continued on page 29

1/George Elliott Clarke
 The Death and Rebirth of Africadian Nationalism

Remember Africville, a National Film Board video production by Shelagh Mackenzie, 1991; 34 minutes; \$26.95.

A fatal
 showdown
 between a rural,
 conservative
 religious culture
 and the urban,
 liberal welfare
 state is constantly
 re-enacted

THIS PAEAN TO THE LOST Afro-Nova Scotian community of Africville is a cinematic entry in a catalogue of cultural works seeking to rehabilitate the memory of the Black-settled, Bedford Basin-located, Halifax village bulldozed into rubble and memorabilia between 1964 and 1970. The film depicts the experiences of some of the 400 Africvillers who were relocated to inner-city public housing, and also provides the reflections of some of their relocators. Moreover, it subtly displays the rise of modern Afro-Nova Scotian — or, to use my word, “Africadian” — nationalism from the ruins of Africville.

In the liner notes accompanying the video, Halifax writer Charles Saunders states that “a 120-year heritage doesn’t vanish at the stroke of a pen or the crash of a wrecking ball. Africville’s people and their descendants have refused to allow the memory of their community to die.” By permitting exiled Africvillers to recall their former estate, Mackenzie’s film revives the community’s rural beauty, spirituality, and home feeling — qualities which were assailed by bureaucrats and politicians wanting either to rid Halifax of a so-called “segregated ghetto” or to hijack precious waterfront property for industrial use. Mackenzie spotlights her strategy by using Halifax lawyer Gus Wedderburn’s comment, “I didn’t see the flowers,” as a refrain to stress the romantic aspects of a village damned, again and again, as “a slum” before it was finally condemned to die. The film’s title hints at the myth-making power of memory, which is, itself, the implicit site of Africville: it is no longer a place, but the consciousness of a people.

Mackenzie uses memory to conjure nostalgia but, also, critical hindsight. *Remember Africville* is thus an anthology of second thoughts and revisions that often conflict but which also contribute to the re-membering

of a dis-membered community. Archival footage, home movies, and still photos, in both colour and in black-and-white, are spliced together with excerpts from a 1989 conference whose participants review the decisions and circumstances that led to the expulsion of the Africvillers. The film serves up the oral and visual confessions of the removed and their removers.

In this way, *Remember Africville* juxtaposes citizen impotence and city-state power. Specifically, it bares the bankruptcy of a regressive nationalism unable to counter a liberal gospel of progress, a progress in which the poor, and especially the Black poor, are necessarily retrograde. Africville becomes a ghost town where the fatal showdown between a rural, conservative religious culture and the urban, liberal welfare state is constantly re-enacted.

Enlivened by apt sounds and images — of African Baptist saints marching joyfully to the placid waters of Bedford Basin to be buried in the likeness of Christ, of women posing for a trusted camera, of homes and gardens bursting into rainbow bloom, of moaning trains and pealing bells, of, in general, the various social rituals and exchanges that produce a collectivity — the film’s memories resurrect an Africville its enemies sought to forget. A textured vision of a living, breathing community arises. The long-gone “slum by the dump” (which the City of Halifax dumped insultingly beside Africville in the 1950s), is born again as a vibrant village with its own post office, school, church, and stores. Yet, the bucolic recollections of the martyrs — the witnesses — of Africville are always counterpointed by sharp interrogations of the relocation and its managers.

Carrie Toussaint, a participant in the 1989 forum, pointedly asks repentant officials, “Did you use Africville for a test? Were [residents] guinea pigs for something new — integration?” Her query is set against the context of the City’s failure to provide such necessities as running water, paved roads,



Despite paying taxes, Africville residents were denied such amenities as running water and sewers.

and sewers, in spite of the fact that Africvillers paid taxes to the City of Halifax.

Gus Wedderburn expresses dismay at the thought of "my brothers scavenging on the dump." However, Eddie Carvery, an exile, insists that the dump was a "blessing" from which such items as "windows, boards, nails, furniture, metals, and bottles" could be salvaged and sold. Even so, Wedderburn is permitted the last word: he tells of a family that suffered lead poisoning one Christmas as a result of burning discarded car batteries for heat. By juxtaposing opposing opinions, Mackenzie constructs a moving vision of Africville.

There is a villain in this who-done-it, however, namely, John Edward Lloyd, who was mayor of Halifax from 1960 to 1963. In a salvaged interview, Lloyd asserts that "Africville, obviously, must be redeveloped." If that utterance can't be considered Africville's death sentence, there's no such doubt about Lloyd's following words:

Sometimes, some people need to be shown that certain things are not in their own best interests and not in the best interests of their children... Certainly, you don't coerce people against their will. But should there be violations of minimum [housing] standards, then you have no alternative but to enforce the law.

Lloyd's comments display the Machiavelian paternalism which constitutes the cus-

tomary response of white authority to what was once bluntly termed the "Negro Problem." Moreover, Lloyd's use of the suggestive word "redeveloped" inadvertently reveals the City's schizophrenic approach to the relocation. In their classic 1974 study (revised in 1987), *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community*, Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis Magill point out that the relocation was a product of mixed motives. Though the City mouthed liberal-welfare platitudes to justify its plan, it was very interested in reclaiming Africville's land for industrial infrastructure. While relocation lurched along, knocking down Africville homes like dominoes, the City's desire for land for the construction of access roads to the A. Murray McKay Bridge took priority over the ballyhooed need to better Africvillers' lives. Hence, Clairmont and McGill assert, the relocation was ultimately a failure:

The relocatees were to be major beneficiaries through compensation, welfare payments, and rehabilitative retraining programmes. The major problem with the relocation was that, although rooted in liberal-welfare rhetoric, it failed to achieve its manifest goals.

Lloyd's comments also highlight the arbitrary nature of the relocation. The characterization by Lloyd and others of Africville as a social problem helped make the expulsion

The relocation lurched along, knocking down Africville homes like dominoes

Their bold, plain-spoken opposition to the loss of their homes and way of life gives this work much of its emotional power

of its citizens an acceptable "final solution." Indeed, Clairmont and Magill observe that in 1966, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia described Africville as a "social problem created by whites, because time after time, year after year, municipal councils had ignored the problem." Thus, according to Clairmont and Magill, once relocation became the City's desired solution, its implementation was inevitably undemocratic because "there was no meaningful collective [decision-making] participation by Africville residents." Africvillers were simply expected to go — and to go quietly.

But, not all Africvillers went quietly. In her film, Mackenzie pits her subjects' eloquent anger against the sonorous drone of bureaucracy. Joseph P. Skinner, a community leader, argues cogently for the right of Africvillers to "redevelop" their property themselves:

When you own a piece of property, you're not a second-class citizen. When your



The Spirit of Africville

"When you own a piece of property, you're not a second-class citizen."

land is being taken away from you and you ain't offered nothin', then you become a peasant.

Skinner's redevelopment thesis deconstructs Lloyd's formulation. Other residents also emerge as forceful critics; the sorrow-stricken Leon Steed ("I'm tellin' you the God's truth!"), the irrepressible Ruth Johnson (whose vocal resistance continues), the strong-willed Daisy Carvery, and the impassioned Ralph Jones, deacon of the imperilled Seaview United Baptist Church ("This is the testin' time!"). Their bold, plain-spoken opposition to the loss of their homes and way of life gives *Remember Africville* much of its emotional power.

Current critics — and criticisms — of the relocation abound. Mackenzie's film features many speakers who denounced the project at the 1989 conference. Notes Reverend D. D. Skeir: "That was prime land: that was important land." Irvine Carvery, head of the Africville Genealogical Society (AGS), asserts, "Someone decided that the land of Africville would better serve the City as industrial land." In the end, Mackenzie's *de facto* documentary affirms the critique of the relocation expressed in Clairmont and Magill by one Africville woman:

The City didn't do anything to improve Africville. All the City did was to try to get it, and they did, in the end. They just did it, too, because we were coloured. If they had been white people down there, the City would have been in there assisting them to build new homes, putting in water and sewers and building the place up.

While the woman's statement fails to note that poor whites would have been treated in the same manner as Africvillers, her perception that race coloured the issue is justified. Racism had

always threatened the existence of Africville. For one thing, negative perceptions of Africadians are woven into the tartan of Nova Scotian society. For instance, famed Bluenose author Thomas Chandler Haliburton's use of Black English and Black characters in his Sam Slick sketches are classics of racial stereotypes. In a Nova Scotian travel sketch published in 1828, Joseph Howe, "the tribune of Nova Scotia," comments good-naturedly that one is sure to meet, in a walk around Bedford Basin, "a goodly bevy of sable beauties, with their unsophisticated feet, and their woolly heads, adorned, not with 'the likeness of a kingly crown,' but with tubs and baskets of fair dimensions, from which, like so many dingy Pomonas, they have been pouring strawberries down the throats of citizens." Howe goes on to criticize the "fashion" for reviling "these poor devils — man, woman, and child, for lazyness, and for the heinous sin of not immediately accustoming themselves to a climate half a dozen degrees colder than it was where they were born." Howe bids his readers to "have a little patience, good people, and let the old leaven of ignorance and idleness work out of these gentlemen of color." Clairmont and Magill underline the persistence of racism in our time:

The groundwork for the subordination of the blacks... in Nova Scotia was laid by the early existence of a slave society. Insidious social-psychological concomitants of institutionalized oppression included attitudes of white superiority, which remain deeply rooted.

These attitudes belied the benevolence of liberal-welfare rhetoric that pictured the relocation as the liberation of Africville's residents from a pastoral ghetto. In truth, Africvillers fell from being proud, rural home-



A visit by City officials prior to relocation: "Someone decided that the land of Africville would better serve the City as industrial land."

The Spirit of Africville

Africvillers fell from being proud, rural homeowners to being welfare-dependant tenants in asphalt hells

owners to being welfare-dependant tenants in asphalt hells, from running their own affairs to suffering the *dictats* of social workers.

While racism is one explanation for the City's refusal to extend services to the Black enclave on its northern coast, another is its historical insistence on viewing the North End and the shores of Bedford Basin as its peninsular industrial zone, a place where workers, immigrants, social outcasts, and coloured peoples could be housed, warehoused, and unhoused, as needed. From this perspective, then, Africville constituted an unacceptably green oasis amid a grey, industrial desert. In fact, according to Clairmont and Magill, at various times in its history Africville suffered on its borders, "A large oil plant/storage complex, a bone-mill plant manufacturing fertilizer... a cotton factory and a rolling mill/nail factory... a slaughterhouse and a port facility handling coal." They also report that the aforementioned industries were encircled by a "tar factory, a shoe plant... another slaughterhouse, sev-

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eral stone-crushing industries, and a foundry." In later years, these early enterprises were replaced by a new slaughterhouse, another stone-crushing plant, the provincial Department of Highways work plant and supply depot, the City's Infectious Diseases Hospital and prison, train tracks slitting through the community, and, as final insults, an open-air garbage dump and incinerator.

Mackenzie's film, by focussing on Edenic images of Africville's gardens and folkways (accompanied by acoustic guitar and harmonica notes), accents the community's precarious position as a residential green strip in territory regarded by the City as an industrial zone. Indeed, in 1947, Council "approved the designation of Africville as industrial land," note Clairmont and Magill. As recently as 1991, the year in which *Remember Africville* was released, the AGS engaged in a pitched battle with Halifax City Council to protect the Africville memorial—Seaview Memorial Park—from planned encroachments by a Canadian National Railway service road. Though the AGS won that skirmish, the battle illustrates the persistent municipal tendency to view the Africville area as a colony of industry. To this day, Seaview Park—the ghost of Africville—remains the only green space on the Halifax side of Bedford Basin.

While racism and City policies were external causes for the death of Africville, Africvillers and other Africadians did little, it seems, to slow or to try to stop the relocation. Indeed, *Remember Africville* highlights an insightful 1989 comment offered by Alan Borovoy, head of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (and, during the 1960s, an

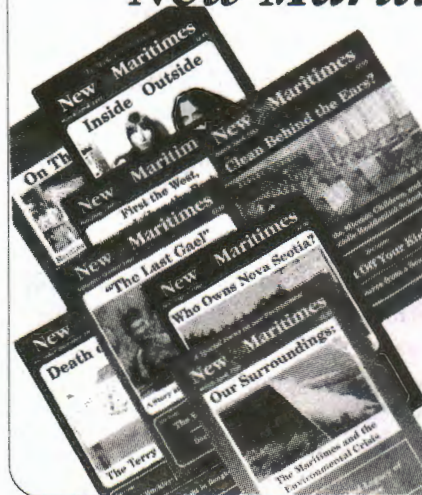
advisor to the Halifax Human Rights Advisory Committee, a group which sought to mediate between Africvillers and the City): "Pressure without reason is irresponsible, but reason without pressure is ineffectual." Hence, relocation occurred, in part, because Africvillers lacked any organization which could "exert pressure on their behalf."

Borovoy's revelation illuminates the obscured, implicit subject of *Remember Africville*: the death and rebirth of Africadian nationalism. While Mackenzie must be commended for recreating the image of Africville (and for unmasking the Nixonian politics of urban development), her primary subject can only be inferred after a careful reading of the images and narrative that compose the film. Interestingly, its very title, *Remember Africville*, echoes the slogan of a more pronounced nationalism, *Je me souviens*.

Indeed, Africadians remember Africville because this lost place represented our innocence. Being a microcosm of Africadia, its existence affirmed our mad belief that we could maintain the strange faith of our forebears—the Black Loyalists and Black Refugees—against the divisive incursions of technological, liberal capitalism, the most dynamic and vulgarly progressive ideology of our common era, a materialist creed utterly destructive of local cultures, particularly those rooted in rural and conservative religious traditions.

The destruction of Africville marked the ignoble and total defeat of classical Africadian nationalism—a silent, brooding, glimmering nationalism that represented not the crav-

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Along the railway tracks that sliced through the community.

ing for a nation, but rather the yearning for a space — a green space — in which the free self could be realized. In her article, "Acadia Rising: the MFU and the New Nationalism" (see *New Maritimes*, January/February, 1992), Sue Calhoun describes a classical Acadian nationalism "that some considered elitist but that few dared to criticize openly." If *l'Acadie* was dominated by, as Calhoun's reading of author Michel Roy suggests, "An elite made up of clergy and professionals" which "opposed any form of popular movement that arose in Acadian society," a similarly regressive conservatism paralyzed Africadian society. In his decidedly negative 1970 history, *The Blacks in Canada*, Robin Winks argues that a few families dominated the African Baptist Association (ABA) — the central institution of Africadia — creating "an aristocracy of the faith, and often [holding] the Church to more than ordinarily frozen and conservative theological traditions." The refusal to engage in more than token resistance to acts of discrimination, coupled with the failure to evolve a theology that could counter the threat posed by modernity, left Africadia defenceless before the gospel of progress which, by its very nature, could not accept the continued existence of Africville.

Yet, Africadian religious nationalism had not always been backward-looking. When our forebears arrived in Nova Scotia *en masse* in 1783, they were inspired by a proud theology which led them to first escape the slaveholding Southern colonies, to next join

the Crown in its effort to stop the libertarian revolt which would foster the United States, and then to agitate for passage to British North America to avoid the possibility of being enslaved after the Yankee triumph. This same radical religious impulse led half the 3,500 Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia to leave in 1792 to help establish the West African nation of Sierra Leone. In his excellent 1976 account, *The Black Loyalists*, James Walker describes the separatist theology of his subjects:

As they regarded the more formalized white churches which had segregated them, they noticed that God did not seem to speak to those older churches in quite the same way as he did to them, the blacks. Inevitably, this produced a feeling of being closer to God, of being, in fact, a chosen people, an elite group of Christians whom God regularly visited and whose role it was to preserve the truth of the moment of salvation.

Interestingly, in the introduction to his annotated 1976 re-issue of Reverend Peter E. McKerrow's original 1895 edition of *A Brief History of the Coloured Baptists of Nova Scotia*, Frank Boyd reports that, when McKerrow urged the dissolution of the ABA in favour of union with the white Maritime Baptist Convention, his proposal was trounced: "African Baptists wanted to maintain their identity through continued separa-

Africadia was left defenceless before the gospel of a progress which could not accept the continued existence of Africville

The clergy
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to, others could
have also seized
territory

tism." Clairmont and Magill stress that the Church provided "the basis for whatever genuine black subculture developed" and was "the base for unity and contact among the isolated black communities." In Africville, too, the Church fostered group identity. Clairmont and Magill state that Seaview United Baptist Church was "as old as the community itself and embodied much of Africville's sense of historical continuity."

Hence, the fall of Africville sparked a spiritual and cultural identity crisis for Africadians. (Intriguingly, Calhoun notes that "a secularization of Acadian society... resulted in a collective Acadian identity crisis.") The impotence of classical Africadian nationalism in the modern age was starkly revealed by the confrontation between the bulldozers of "progress" and the frail, wooden walls of Seaview United Baptist Church (organized in 1849, states McKerrow, as "Campbell Road Church"). The literal collapse of the old Church was a signal, especially to the younger generation, that new values had to be asserted to preserve the collectivity against the corrosive effects of secularization and liberal individualism.

The rout of the old, Africadian faith cannot be stressed too much. Not only did the

1960s clergy lose one of the first churches established by "the father of the faith," Rev. Richard Preston, an escaped Virginia slave who came to Nova Scotia after the War of 1812 and organized the ABA in 1854: it also lost the jewel of the hard-won land-base of Africadia. Indeed, the clergy ceded Africville, with hardly a whimper, to its enemies. Worse still, had other Nova Scotian municipalities wanted to, they could have also seized territory, using the same arguments used to eliminate Africville: calls for integration, better housing, improved access to municipal services, along with the lack of proper land titles, could have been pointed to (and in some cases could still be pointed to) to justify the uprooting of every Black homeland in Nova Scotia — from the strategic watershed locale of the Prestons to Tracadie and Greenville. (Since the 1960s, many Black communities — the Prestons, Sunnyville-Lincolnville and the Vale Road, to name but a few — have experienced developmental pressures.) Rev. D. D. Skeir, a young minister at the time of the relocation, notes the weakness of mid-1960s Africadia in this comment in *Remember Africville*: "[Blacks] were not sensitive enough to unite to fight this basic denial [of Africvillers' rights]." Yet, the



The Church embodied much of Africville's sense of historic continuity.



A boarded up home after the relocation: Africville might have thrived as a Black middle and working-class community.

Church itself must bear some of the blame for that apathy: the years of accommodationist rhetoric of ABA ministers helped prepare the way for the crucifixion of Africville.

Africville was lost because we Africadians refused to sufficiently value our right to exist. If we had held fast to our faith, if we had believed in our God, we would have laid our bodies before the bulldozers. Our leaders of the 1960s allowed themselves to be seduced into thinking of Africville as a slum rather than as a potentially strong Africadian community-neighbourhood in a prime location on peninsular Halifax. Had they been strong enough to resist the temptations of "progress," Africville might have become the spiritual capital of Acadia, the conscious annunciation of our existence.

In practical terms alone, Africville might have thrived as a Black middle-class and working-class section of Halifax. For all those arriving by train, in fact, the village was already the gateway to Halifax. It was even a postal address — "Africville, Nova Scotia." Moreover, Africville radically re-configured the socio-economic geography of Halifax: Africvillers enjoyed their water-side lifestyle in much the same way as did the white bourgeoisie of the North West Arm. Perhaps the village was also, at least in part, what literary critic John Fraser calls an "organic community," that is, a society which "satisfies the great majority of the people living in it, but does so because it is a model of a well psyche." The loss of Africville, then, deserves to be mourned.

Yet, there is a time to mourn and a time to cease mourning. Africville was crucified to pay for the sins of an apostate collective and a faithless leadership: mercifully, however, it took with it to its grave the weary nationalism that had ignored the merciless twentieth century for as long as it could until, finally, the bulldozers, flanked by social workers, arrived to introduce the Blacks and their Church to the benefits of modernity. Hence, the death of Africville necessitated its resurrection — in folk art (family photos, home movies, stories, songs), and especially in the neo-nationalism of the "militant" Black United Front of the early 1970s. Nova Scotia's own Black Consciousness Movement began, it seems, just as the last vestiges of Africville were being reduced to rubble. Speaking of *l'Acadie* in the 1960s, Calhoun observes that "unlike the elite nationalism which had been rooted in religion and culture, the new nationalism was rooted in a socio-economic analysis of Acadian society." Africadian nationalism experienced a similar metamorphosis. Insurgent intellectuals like Burnley "Rocky" Jones and partially radicalized pastors like Reverend Dr. W. P. Oliver began to articulate a new pride, a collective sense of identity, and the need to empower "the people." For instance, Oliver, in his 1986 introduction to George Borden's second volume of poems, *Footprints — Images and Reflections*, argues, "The author bears witness of an emerging intellectual reactionary format," which is itself part of "a new and novel reaction to dissatisfaction" on the part of

Africville was crucified to pay for the sins of an apostate collective and a faithless leadership

Africville was transformed into a cultural myth, the product of romanticism and nostalgia, a source for collective rituals

Other Africvilliana

While Acadians remember the *Grand Derangement* of 1755, so now do Africadians recognize a symbol of their displacement. In his 1988 work, *In Search of Evangeline: Birth and Evolution of the Evangeline Myth*, historian Carl A. Brasseaux notes that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow used a "paradise-lost motif" in his epic 1847 poem *Evangeline*, which romanticizes the Dispersal. Current treatments of Africville employ a similar romanticism. Clairmont and Magill produced a sociological classic in their *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community*, a work which attains moments of literariness. Frederick Ward's 1974 novel-in-Black English, *Riverlisp: Black Memories*, was inspired by his conversations with ex-Africville residents. Several moving poems on Africville (particularly "Dialogue #3: Old Man [to the Squatter]") also appear in Ward's 1983 collection, *The Curing Berry*. My 1983 poetic debut, *Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues*, contains two poems on Africville; my song, "Africville," written with Delvina Bernard of the *a capella* quartet Four the Moment, also dates from 1983. Charles Saunders has magnificently translated the feel of Africvillers' lives into his brief 1989 narrative, "A Visit to Africville," included in *Africville: A Spirit That Lives On*, published in 1989 by the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Singer-songwriter-musician Faith Nolan's 1986 debut album is titled, naturally, *Africville*, after her identically-titled opening song. Poet Maxine Tynes's 1990 volume of poems, *Woman Talking Woman*, features several poems on Africville (including "Africville Is My Name," which she partially recites in Mackenzie's film). David Woods' first book of poems, *Native Song*, also published in 1990, includes "Summons," a lyric dedicated to Africville. The two-volume compilation, *Traditional Lifetime Stories: A Collection of Black Memories*, published by the Black Cultural Centre of Nova Scotia, features recollections of several senior citizens of their lives and experiences in Africville. A nationally-toured exhibit of Africville memorabilia, *Africville: A Spirit That Lives On*, was organized and first mounted by the AGS, The Art Gallery of Mount Saint Vincent University, and associates in 1989. Playwright George Boyd has written an unproduced teleplay, "Consecrated Ground," a drama set in Africville. Ex-Africviller Ruth Johnson sings her song, "Africville, I Want to Go Home," in *Remember Africville*. Newfoundland-born film-maker Bill MacGillivray features an Africville exile in his acclaimed 1987 film, *Life Classes*. Mackenzie's *Remember Africville* and the 1992 coffee-table format text, *The Spirit of Africville*, edited by The Africville Genealogical Society, are two of the latest manifestations of the transfiguration of Africville from martyr to myth. Africville survives, *lives*, as metaphor. •

— George Elliott Clarke

Black Nova Scotians. Simultaneously, Africville itself was transformed into a cultural myth, the product of romanticism and nostalgia, a *pays* to mourn, a source for collective rituals, a focus for communal politics. The Africadian Cultural Renaissance and its conscious nationalism are the dry bones which have put on flesh and walked from the

dust of Africville. •

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Reflections...

.. continued from page 19

to settlements being reached in Canada that were one-and-a-half to two times higher than any previous such awards.

The two families who pursued and won the right to go to court in the United States negotiated settlements much higher than those received by those who stayed in the Canadian system. Thanks to them, the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* was etched a little deeper into corporate memory.

ODECO, described by *The Economist* as "one of the most experienced offshore rig designers and operators" in the world, did not need a royal commission to tell them that it would be safer if they *trained* their ballast control officers. No, ODECO wasn't ignorant or lazy, only greedy and aware that lives on Canada's east coast would probably come cheap. And our governments betrayed our trust in two ways; first, by allowing the companies to put 84 people in the perilous North Atlantic without insisting on adequate safety legislation being in place, and second, by letting ODECO and Mobil walk away with barely a slap on the wrist.

I'm not suggesting that governments can protect us from February's North Atlantic, only that they are betraying us by buying jobs with lives. Of course, governments *should* encourage corporations to come here with their new productive technologies, but only on condition that they bring their safety technologies with them as well.

Eleven years after the *Ocean Ranger* disaster, many families' strongest regrets arise from a belief that, somehow, they should have taken more responsibility for punishing corporate wrongdoing. All the family members I spoke with questioned the settlement process and expressed discomfort over their unclear roles. For their part, both Patricia Hickey and Patricia Ryan felt the need to explain that they had a moral rather than a pecuniary objective in pursuing their case to the American courts.

What, we *might* ask, did these drawn out enquiries accomplish in the end? Though enquiry processes may appear ineffective to those looking for "justice" to be done to these corporations, they do effectively protect society from the deepest revolutionary potential in each of us: our identification with our sleepy Western "democracy" is very deeply engrained, and it takes an almost existential wrench to shift this, even a little. The solidity of our citizen-identity with the legal and political institutions of our "democracy" shelters us from the horrors of bloody factionalism such as we see in Bosnia. Processes like government enquiries have *much* to do with this: enquiries and drawn-out court cases exhaust vengeance-energy, which, when clearly focussed, can loosen our social moorings. The death of a loved one at the "hands" of an identifiable entity excites our potential for revolt against society, and society simply must dissipate this energy. The enquiry and settlement processes that occur after lethal corporate wrongdoing redirect the vengeance-energy of suffering through a myriad of legal and emotional cul-se-sacs until it becomes sad and tired confusion.

We in the Maritimes and Newfoundland have a long history of preventable death through corporate enterprise. We are the richer cousins of those killed in the Bhopals of this world, and I guess we can take some consolation from the fact that at least here corporations honour their cheques for "blood money." And, of course, we do reserve our right of consumer boycott: you won't catch me at the ODECO checkout counter the next time I'm shopping for an oil rig.

Like the Westray disaster, the *Ocean Ranger* was not an aberration. Journalists thrive on documenting the brutal failure of multinationals to even approximate "good corporate citizenship" or "business ethics." With Westray, we can only pray that the threat of the grave criminal charges faced by Curragh and its officials will have an effect.

Fear of imprisonment may impress other corporate managers in Canada and elsewhere, and we can hope that the taint of betrayed trust will unseat dishonoured public officials. But even after the criminal charges and the elections, one question still remains: can any force resonate to the soul of corporate enterprise so that families can let their vengeance-energy float away and, with good conscience, focus on life? •

How to Buy Spats for a Chickadee

It's interesting to think for a moment about the word "deficit." I first got tuned in to it not as an accounting term but as a prize piece of academic newspeak in the university department where I worked. Ten years ago, if a student was doing poorly the faculty would hold a meeting, review the record, and then flunk him out. Goodbye, Charlie.

Nowadays things are different. We avoid stigmatizing labels by saying that the student has "deficits" — intellectual deficits, social deficits, or whatever. This is a much more positive approach because, used in this way, the word "deficit" has a constructive and hopeful connotation. It speaks of gaps or missing pieces that can easily be set right through a little *expenditure* of time, a little *investment* of teaching effort. The process goes something like this:

Prof. Goodguy: "Well, Charlie, we've decided that we can't give you a pass on your doctorate in nuclear physics because you have a deficit. It seems they forgot to teach you how to read and write in Grade III."

Charlie: "Bum-MER!"

Prof. Goodguy: "Yes, but this deficit can be remedied. Miss Perkins at Elmwood Elementary has recognized her oversight and has agreed to take you back and start all over again. You begin tomorrow."

Charlie: "Yo, thanks, Prof. Goodguy! I'll do it. See you in 25 years!"

Prof. Goodguy: "Goodbye, Charlie."

Unfortunately, the word "deficit" has taken on a meaning very different from the above over the past year or so. Now it sums up all the evils of a weak and corrupt society which has indulged in food, shelter and clothing for altogether

Hard Times

Commentary by Rick Williams

too long. Millions of people harbour the dangerous delusion that just because this is one of the richest countries in the world, blessed with abundant natural resources, high education levels, access to capital and technology, and very few earthquakes or volcanoes, they have a right to expect steady jobs with incomes above the subsistence level.

It has now become the duty of all politicians and editorial writers to disabuse the benighted masses of such silly notions. The principle weapon for this noble crusade — the antidote for a public mind poisoned by incorrect ideas and false expectations — is The Deficit.

The Deficit creeps into our houses at night and robs our children of their future. Left unchecked, The Deficit will soon reduce us to the status of a Third World nation. We will lose our medicare and our social programmes, and our standard of living will drop to the level it was before we had... er... um... The Deficit.

Why, you ask, do we have The Deficit? Well, it's obvious: we've been living beyond our means; we stayed too long at the fair and now we have to pay the piper; our Cadillac social programmes allow lazy people who don't want to work for a living to live high on the hog; the god-damned politicians are buying votes with tomorrow's grocery money; hard dose of reality; bite the bullet; the buck stops here; if you can't stand the heat, the tough get going; Bob's your uncle.

Okay, we've seen the light. Now, how do we get rid of The Deficit? It's simple! First, we rob our children of

their future. Next, we lower our standard of living to that of a Third World nation. Then, most important of all, we trash our medicare and social programmes. Once we've reduced the country to a traumatized mass of isolated and desperate paupers, blessed market forces will kick in. In no time, we'll have full employment with wages high enough for every worker to buy spats for a chickadee. Under a new preventive health care policy, only certified healthy people will have a right to services, thus preventing the need of spending money on sick people, who must have something wrong with them in the first place anyway.

And if it's good enough for health care, why not apply the same thinking to "family values"? Let's introduce a preventive childhood policy: kids will officially become subject to market forces at age three, thus liberating them from any nasty dependence on day-care centres or public schools. After all, it's about time they started to pay their own way. Once their productive lives are over at about the age of 28, and upon paying a mandatory user fee, workers will all be painstakingly cremated at a local profit centre. Not only will this compassionate and innovative policy provide relief from the terrible indignities of early middle age, it will also generate dozens of person-years of employment at no cost whatever to the public purse.

Yes, life after The Deficit will be wonderful. Business will thrive in a climate of no taxes, no regulations and no environmental controls. Sure, it will be a bit awkward to have to run to the market each time you have to hire a firefighter, a sociology professor, a homicide detective, or a weather forecaster, but what the heck, it all generates jobs and profits for the private sector. And,

most important of all, we'll finally get government off our backs. The feds will employ a grand total of eight people in Ottawa, all graduates of the Preston Manning School of Public Whining and Administration. Six will re-direct visiting heads of state to the local Chamber of Commerce, while the other two will be responsible for assuring the accuracy of the National Research Council's Official Time Signal every day at two o'clock (one o'clock on weekends, but none of this time-and-a-half foolishness). Provincial governments will be staffed entirely by volunteers and will be open on the first Tuesday of every month (unless that's a bingo night, in which case they'll get together at Tim Horton's for at least an hour on the following Friday morning).

I know this all sounds wonderful, but, incredible as it may seem, there are actually some people in Canada who still do not bow before The Deficit and who fail to see the wonders that will unfold once it is vanquished. A few disgruntled left-wing academics, trade unionists, and other nattering nabobs keep pointing out certain objective facts, such as:

- spending on health, education and social services hasn't grown in real terms in over a decade;
- employment in the public service has also been stable or declining for some time, and wages have barely kept pace with inflation;
- real incomes for most Canadian families have declined since the early 1980s. Rather than living the high life, families have maintained their living standards only by sending more and more people out to work;
- the largest single contributor to government debt has been the growth in interest charges generated by the federal government's obsession with fighting inflation by means of high interest rates;
- the second-largest factor has been sustained high unemployment brought on by the interest-rate policy. This in turn has decimated government tax revenues while increasing the costs of unemployment insurance, social assistance, health care, and other human services.



Gary Burnill

The Deficit means, among many other things, that hospital beds remain empty while those in need go without care.

For authority on these points we need only refer to the feature article "The Growth of the Federal Debt" by H. Mimoto and P. Cross, published in the June, 1991 edition of Statistics Canada's monthly publication, *The Canadian Economic Observer*. Mr. Mimoto is the Chief of Analysis at the Public Institutions Division of Statistics Canada, and he and his colleague write:

Broadly speaking, government program spending as a share of GDP did not rise significantly over the whole period from 1975 [to 1991]; in fact, it moderated compared to the preceding ten years, when social programs proliferated. Expenditures on social programs did not contribute significantly to the growth of government spending relative to GDP. Excluding the cost of unemployment insurance, which is intended to be self-financing over the business cycle, social program spending has not increased relative to GDP over the last 16 years... However, interest rates on the debt have soared from about 2 percent of GDP in the first half of the 1970s to 6 percent today. In absolute terms, debt charges have jumped more than ten-fold from \$3.3 billion in 1974-75 to \$41 billion. Put another way, interest payments are equivalent to 32 percent of all revenues today, compared to 11 percent in 1974-75.

Critics of the deficit mythology have the audacity to point out that government policies since the late 1970s have been focussed entirely on lowering real

wages in order to make Canadians more competitive with American workers, and more recently with Mexican workers (and eventually with Filipino workers, Haitian workers, and so on). This noble goal is pursued with high interest rates that push up unemployment and eventually stifle wage demands, and worker expectations generally.

Having largely accomplished their goals -- inflation is minimal, real incomes are down and unemployment remains sky high -- the deep thinkers in Ottawa come face to face with the consequences of their folly. Out-of-work people don't have much money, so tax revenues plummet and consumer demand stagnates. When people and governments stop spending money, aggregate demand in the economy is strangled, investors stop investing, and we have prolonged recession. (Actually we have a depression, but nobody in authority has the guts to say so.)

Faced with such a counterproductive policy and unwilling to deal with the obvious implications, the ruling elites in Canada (and elsewhere) have fixated upon The Deficit as the ideological solution to the looming economic and political crisis. In trying to convince us that government is the root of all evil, that all our problems stem from our own laziness and self-indulgence, and that the party is finally over, policy mandarins hope to divert attention from the profound irrationality of their economic policies and to obscure the public's vision of the bleak future which awaits us if we continue down this path. This explains why Kim Campbell would suggest that the people who challenge the



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myth of The Deficit are "enemies of Canadians."

Voters in Newfoundland recently re-elected Clyde Wells despite his determination to cut public sector jobs and wages, affirming the old truism that people who don't have jobs can be politically mobilized against those who do. It also seems that people want politicians to start telling the truth, no matter how bad the message, and Wells was perceived as honest and realistic while the policies proposed by the opposition parties didn't seem as convincing.

In Nova Scotia it seems the voters aren't buying Donald Cameron's "get tough" message and don't trust his image of down-home honesty. On the other hand, the Liberals with John Savage aren't lighting any fires either. With their promise to defend government spending and create jobs, they are widely perceived as opportunists who, once they are in power, will cut as fiercely as any Tory. With the Liberal examples of Wells and McKenna to go by, there is less and less basis for seeing any ideological distinction between Liberals and Tories.

The NDP, in Nova Scotia and elsewhere, has been set back considerably by the situation in Ontario, where the realities of power seem to have blunted the NDP's commitment to fairness and progressive social and economic change. While simple incompetence has been a major factor in the failures of Bob Rae's government, the harsh realities of de-industrialization, hostile federal policies, and a prolonged strike by capital would likely have overwhelmed even the most seasoned social-democratic regime. (More on this topic in the next issue.)

The bottom line is that, while The Deficit is a myth, governments in Canada at every level really do face a profound problem of debt or, more accurately, of fiscal crisis. For a whole complex of reasons, the post-war economic boom has come to an end, and today we find ourselves with an economy not structured to provide jobs and adequate incomes to a still limited population spread over a vast land mass.

The people in power have come together around a consensus that the standard of living — both individual

incomes and the "social wage" (human services, social amenities, and the like) — has to be dramatically lowered to accommodate the harsh realities of a more competitive global economy. People without power in this country — workers, women, the unemployed, primary producers and other rural dwellers, racial minorities, people with disabilities, the elderly — have been disenfranchised by this consensus. They don't have access to the political system and nobody in the public realm is giving voice to their sufferings, fears, and anxieties. With a few notable exceptions, we rarely see a politician these days who can genuinely and effectively express what it is like to lose your home, your farm or your fishing vessel, or to be 45 years old and have your skilled job disappear forever.

The Deficit is a myth, a powerful ideological tool for convincing people to accept a grossly unfair distribution of the human costs of economic crisis and adjustment. But we do have a very real problem with deficits — that is, with political leaders who are missing certain basic components essential to their being able to lead this society through the valley of death and restructuring. They need to go back to Grade III and pick up some human warmth and compassion. They need to learn to talk to people with respect, to treat them as adults who can understand the issues and make tough choices. Most of all we need leaders who can lead rather than impose, who can draw out ideas from people and get them involved in practical problem-solving and collective action.

Anyone who uses their eyes and ears today can see that the anger and frustration are building. Anxiety about the future is palpable, and people are looking for clear, concrete and understandable answers to their immediate needs. I would offer this advice to any Minister or Premier or Tory leadership hopeful: don't go to Glace Bay or Tracadie or Alberton and start talking about The Deficit. If you do, it's going to be... "Goodbye, Charlie." •

Rick Williams is an Associate Editor of New Maritimes.

A Trail of Hope

Halifax journalist Valerie Mansour recently travelled to Guatemala, a country where military repression has been the order of the day for almost four decades. She was there to take a first-hand look at the human rights situation in the country. Here, we take a look inside her travel log.

In the early 1980s, thousands of indigenous Guatemalans fled government forces, and they have lived clandestinely in the mountains of this Central American country for the past twelve years. Known as "Communities of Civilian Populations in Resistance" (CPRs), they have had little contact with the outside world. But this past February, 400 people travelled in two *caravanas* from Guatemala City to the Sierra and Ixcán regions of the country for the first-ever overland visit. I was the only Canadian among the 200 Europeans, Americans, and Guatemalans who went to the Sierra.

Thousands who survived Guatemala's early-1980s massacres fled to Mexico, but others didn't make it or simply didn't bother to try. At least here, they figured, they were on their own land, and it could support them with its herbs, fruits and berries. Sometimes they would plant corn and build shelters, only to have the army discover and burn them. Many have been killed or died of starvation.

Two years ago, the CPRs publicly demanded recognition as a civilian population and an international delegation came by helicopter to visit them. The next step was the journey of our two *caravanas*.

Day I

Twelve buses set out from Guatemala City bedecked with banners boldly pro-

Valerie Mansour

claiming where we are going and why. We will spend two days on buses followed by two more of trekking to reach the CPR of Caba, where we will stay for three days before retracing our steps back to the capital. I sit with some Guatemalan nuns to force myself to cope in



Spanish. Besides, I soon discover, they're the best singers on the bus. We wind through dusty, mountain roads. At every stop we are astonished by the welcome we receive. In Chimaltenango we are taken to a church for lunch where I meet Josefina, a weaver who visited the Maritimes three years ago. When we hit the town of Santa Cruz del Quiché three hours late, night has fallen, but hundreds of people crowd the church steps and applaud as we enter. After dinner, all 200 of us settle down on the cement

floor of the large church hall where the locals have spread a bed of pine needles to cushion our tired bodies.

Day II

Black beans, tortillas, and tamales for breakfast. As we near our destination, larger numbers of people greet us: many have family members in the CPRs. In Nebaj, the streets are crowded with women in spectacular red traditional clothing. There are marimbas and loud firecrackers at every stop, and speeches — *viva* this and *viva* that. This boldness is new: we are, after all, in a repressive country.

We spend the night in the town of Chajul in yet another church hall — several rooms this time, but with familiar cement floors and lovely smelling pine needles.

Day III

Our buses take us as far as the village of Juil and from there we set out on foot — through mountain passes blessed with spectacular lush scenery and cursed with exhausting heat. Men from the



Taking a breather along the jungle trail.

Valerie Mansour

CPRs have walked from Caba to carry supplies we've brought for them. Others insist on carrying our backpacks. They move along with great ease, almost running, but for us the walk is oh, so, difficult, especially since we didn't bring enough food and water. I am thrilled to find a little store along the way, but others have been there already and its one commodity, Pepsi, is sold out. I can think of nothing more than my thirst. Pointing to an approaching spring, a Guatemalan comments, "Where there is water there is hope."

By late afternoon I drag my feet into the tiny community of Jua, where cups of hot rice water are waiting. When we continue on, I'm still at the back of the pack and I accept a brief ride on horseback to give my knees a break. By the time we reach Chel, our destination for the day, darkness has fallen. Here, the Civil Patrol — a type of forced civilian military service run by the government

— has a strong presence and they crash our welcoming rally to accuse the CPRs of being guerrillas. Nothing comes of the confrontation, but it adds a chill to the damp night and only exhaustion permits us to sleep. There are no pine needles here.

Day IV

The worst of our walk is yet to come. The path through the middle of the jungle runs up and down steep mountain banks. It has just been opened by the CPRs. Last night's rain has turned it into a sea of muck that on occasion swallows up a boot. Every step is a struggle. The CPR men pass, yelling "Vamos! Vamos!" ("Let's go! Let's go!") in encouragement. Just as I decide I that couldn't possibly walk another step, an old woman in native dress comes up from behind me and tells me that her family was killed in an army massacre.



Valerie Manour

Gathering in the square at Caba to welcome the visitors.

"Isn't it great that you've come to visit?" she asks fervently. I continue on, still exhausted but also somewhat energized by the woman's enthusiasm.

By the end of the day I'm leaning on two people — my feet are barely touching the ground. Finally, our destination lies proudly before me: Caba is a collection of well-built thatched wooden huts tucked among the lush hills. Together with Juan, a Dutch priest, I will stay here with Vincente and Maria and their four children. Before retiring, we all sit round the fire for a meal of freshly made tortillas, rice, and black beans.

Days V, VI, VII

People from all three of the CPRs in the area have come to enjoy their visitors and, especially, the freedom our presence allows. In a moving ceremony, local people walk to the church carrying crosses inscribed with the names of those who have died. They erect one large cross in the square to commemorate their martyrs.

We attend meetings about food production, women's issues, health, and human rights, and we quickly realize how organized these people are. The health clinic, though, is almost empty. They use herbs and acupuncture, they tell us. Each day, Maria brings lunch to the square for Juan and I. One evening, it's dark when I head for home. There are so many paths and they all look alike, but not to worry. Half-way up the hill one of Maria and Vincente's children waits patiently to guide me.

Each morning I am awakened at about 4:30 by the "pat-pat-pat" of Maria's hands forming her corn tortillas. In indigenous clothes and headdress, she moves gracefully, fanning the fire, the only light in the cabin.

One evening, Vincente tells us that after the army killed his oldest daughter and "disappeared" his son the rest of the family fled their home to live in the mountains. One of the children climbs a wooden ladder to get a parcel wrapped in brown paper from the rafters. In it are several pieces of very worn paper, propaganda dropped from helicopters by the army. One shows a picture of Che Guevara with horns.

On our last afternoon in Caba there

is a real fiesta. Children present us each with pottery they have made for us, and there are speeches and thank yous. Those still with good knees dance in the square.

Day VIII

Vincente hands out bananas as we begin our return journey at six o'clock in the morning. I'm with the slow group, the *lentes* who leave two hours before the *rapidos* in the hope that we might arrive at Chel, where we plan to spend the night, more or less together. Most of the muck has dried up and we reach Chel in the early afternoon, the *rapidos* well in the lead. The Civil Patrols are in the main square denouncing the CPRs so we change our plans and walk for another hour to Jua, a more welcoming community. Here we are given tortillas, beans, and hard-boiled eggs. We buy every bottle of pop in town and spread out on the lawn for a much-needed picnic. I'm in my sleeping bag in the evangelical church by 7:15 pm.

Day IX

We leave Jua at 5:00 a.m. to avoid the hot mid-day sun. At one point along the trail, encouraged by a singing Guatema-

lan, I give a rather pathetic rendition of *Farewell to Nova Scotia*. By early afternoon, we reach the end of our walk and await a truck to take us to our buses.

The CPR men who have carried our supplies now prepare to return home. They shake our hands to say goodbye: "Have a good trip, go in peace, good luck, thank you." As though being organized were in their blood, they instantly form three lines — one from each CPR — and yell slogans until they are hoarse. They then turn and, in single file, head off down the mountain trail. With tears in our eyes and lumps in our throats, we wave and applaud.

We board our buses and head back to Chajul to spend the night on familiar pine needles. In the town square, Civil Patrol members complain that the CPRs are on their land. In many cases, this is true, but our organizers, the Guatemala City-based Multipartite Commission, explain that once the CPRs are recognized as civilian communities the land issue will be settled fairly.

Day X

Our buses arrive late in Santa Cruz del Quiche, and we miss mass and a fiesta in the square. But while we are eating in the church kitchen, a group of people

enter and serenade us in welcome. They continue on to the church hall where many of our delegation have already turned in for the night. Everyone stands and applauds as they enter singing. Then our hosts apologize to us for having given us such a poor initial welcome.

Day XI

We arrive in Guatemala City at mid-day and await the Ixcán *caravana*. Together we head for the main plaza for mass and a few more chants. A press conference follows to demand recognition of the CPRs and an end to army harassment. A few hours after we disperse, a Guatemalan trade unionist who was a member of the Ixcán *caravana* is deliberately shot and seriously injured while heading home.

Day XII?

Guatemalans continue to hope and to work for change. •

Valerie Mansour's trip to Guatemala was made possible through the generous support of the Montréal-based International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.



Valerie Mansour

Giving a cheer before turning to go back home along the trail cutting through the mountains.



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