

Presentation to Dr. Louis LaPierre

Concerning the Proposed Protected Areas Strategy

by Ronald Fournier, BA, B.Ed., ND

My name is Ronald Fournier, I live in Carleton County where I have land and a woodlot. I called to get on the list for Woodstock, but by the time Ms. McDorman got back to me a few days later, Woodstock was full and I was booked here (Plaster Rock). I'm a self-educated peasant, an autodidact in ecological agriculture; I work with farmers to help them make the transition away from chemical intensive farming. I grew up in St-Basile, Madawaska County, on a farm with its own woodlot. I'm quite familiar with wood harvesting. My skidder's name was Bob and he weighed 1800 pounds. Actually, you were my English teacher in the 8th grade; I don't know what you'll think of my presentation, but I hope to get a passing mark on the English. Nice to see you after all these years. From the media you've been getting, look's like you've been busier than a one-arm paper-hanger with an itchy back.

In the early '80s, an experiment was done in the States, on Halloween night, whereby on the porch of your average house on your average street, a bowl of candies was left on a chair. Besides it a message read : « Please take only one, leave some for others ». In the course of the afternoon and evening, a large mirror would be placed behind the bowl so that the children taking the candy would see themselves in the act. The mirror would be put there and taken away periodically. What the observers noted was that when the mirror was there, the children were much less inclined to take more than one because they were more self-conscious when they saw themselves going against the directive.

After listening, watching and thinking about what's been said and done by the so-called forest industry in the last few weeks, I'd have to say that your proposed strategy and your public hearings are providing a kind of mirror. Industry is un-easy, to say the least. They've been taking a lot of candies over the years. Where most of the businesses involved rarely talk to each other usually, it has been interesting to witness a virtual love-in of the industry on this issue. I've studied the proposed strategy and I understand the science behind it. It's a good proposal, actually a damned good one. Regrettably, the areas proposed are the bare minimum needed for survival of those ecosystems. As you well know, the ideal area would be at least 40,000 hectares.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, quite some time before Christ, said that one shouldn't be exporting wood to other islands where the people had cut down all their trees. Einstein said that you couldn't rely on the consciousness that had caused the problem to come up with the solution to it. A lot of bullshit has been generated by some of the corporate people. I wish we could bag it for fertilizer; some of my farmers could put it to good use. Let's look at some of that bull.

The big job myth; if companies were so worried about jobs, why is it that they have jumped on every occasion every time a new piece of machinery has come out that increases the speed of harvesting and processing and eliminates the need for workers. The reason is money. Greed and power are awful motivators. If they cared about jobs, why have so many jobs disappeared from the woods over the years. The agenda here has been to scare people about the possible loss of the few jobs that still exist. If New Brunswick jobs are so important to them, why is it that, not so long ago, they even went to hire people from Québec to come here to operate machinery.

Forestry : Let's talk semantics for a minute. A farmer and colleague of mine in PEI told me a couple of years ago about a potato grower over there who has become so sensitized to the chemicals he sprays on his fields that he would become sick just by smelling his potatoes boiling on the kitchen stove. He now sells all the potatoes he produces and goes down to road to the organic potato grower to buy some for his family. This guy cannot be called a farmer anymore; he has become an industrial potato grower. He is disconnected from what he produces and sells. The same has happened over the years in forestry. Forestry

used to mean you tended the forest, not monoculture plantations. A forester who clearcuts a track of living forest and then plants just one species is no more a forester than that industrial potato grower is a farmer. A forest is a living eco-system. With a good knife and good clothing, you can survive in it. For the life of me, I can't understand why my fellow hunters have allowed themselves to be spooked by the scare-mongering tactics of the tree-growing companies. How successful is a hunt in a monoculture when compared with a healthy forest. How can we, as hunters, outfitters and fisherman, be afraid of more healthy forest which will increase the production of the wildlife we enjoy. I'll tell you why. A few years ago, while attending a meeting where such a protected area system was being discussed, it was industry that got up and said : « If we are not able to mine or log in those areas, then hunting and fishing shouldn't be allowed either. » In order to fight your strategy, we now know that they have gone around to hunting associations and others claiming that they would not be allowed those traditional uses of those areas. Bullshit! The only places that would likely be restricted would be those few where human disturbance might endanger the local eco-system. A lot of people and even a few politicians are now running around like chickens with their heads cut off. This I would expect from politicians, but

frankly not from people familiar with the woods and forests. Our ancestors have shown us that we could harvest trees and still maintain a healthy, even healthier forest. We have had and still have a few genuine foresters in this province but they are drowned out by the greedy, fast buck interests. There was a slogan in the '60s : « Fighting for peace is like fucking for virginity! » Clearcutting as a form of FOREST management makes about as much sense.

Tree-growing company : I'm going to do a little bit of Irving bashing here and I'll explain why after. The warping of language is an interesting thing. You can claim to be a tree-growing company, which is true, while not mentioning that you are also a forest-killing company. For a few dollars, the Irvings got large tracts of forest land from the NB Railway Co. a few decades ago. Their freehold and licences are big enough that they are referred to as « districts ». Take the time someday to stop along the road and look at the large monocultures they are so proud of. But mostly, take the time to listen and feel to see whether this is a forest or just a bigger version of that PEI potato field. This family, with all the businesses and interests that they have and control, is crying bloody murder and scaring their workers about the possible job loss.

Jobs which they have eliminated gradually with the increase of mecanization. This is the family that owes the Canadian taxpayer \$42 million for raising the Irving Whale. They don't want to pay the bill. Why am I singling out the Irvings? Because they are from here, home grown. We should expect more from our own people than from outside strangers. How many of us here can claim to know the shareholders and CEOs of the Avenors, Repaps, and so on. If they had to come and live here, those people would be as useless in the woods as a tit on a boar hog. And yet, they manage to pull our strings and lord it over us just as if we were still living under a feudal system. So, whatever those people have to say and whatever fear they may arouse in their foremans and managers, please understand that jobs and the future of this province have nothing to do with it. It's only money talkin'! Now, I couldn't let an occasion to tease you go by dear teacher. The Carnegies, Vanderbilts, and Rockefellers of the world have left foundations and funds behind to atone for their over-exploitation of workers and natural ressources. You've got to admit that a K.C. Irving Chair in sustainable development is a bit of an oxymoron. We have seen many times over the years just how much they really care about the environment and sustainability. More recently, however, they have become aware and are trying to improve their image by certain limited endeavours. Anyway, by the time you're done with this process, I just hope they don't yank that chair out from under you, or perhaps remove the padding from it. Just teasing!

In 1975, I stopped to get my car filled at an Irving station in Edmundston. It was undergoing a lot of renovation and there was quite a commotion. This older wiry man came out and started filling my car. He said : « My name"s K.C. Irving, what yours? »

He had dropped in to look at the work and he talked about the weather and such. I was somewhat impressed that he didn't mind getting his hands dirty. But that good impression quickly faded in later years. We seem to have conveniently forgotten that K.C. Irving did not die a Canadian citizen. He moved to Nassau more for his financial health than his own, it would seem. Media at that time claimed that he had taken with him around \$500 million to avoid paying taxes on them. Now, you and I sometimes lie awake at night wondering and feeling guilty that we might have forgotten \$50 on our income tax form. If they are sincerely worried about job creation, think about how many jobs we could create with the taxes on \$500 million!

Natives : Not long ago, both the government and industry were up in arms about how the natives were cutting down the woods, the un-checked clearcutting, the waste, the lack of proper care for the forest. Interesting, isn't? For centuries the white man has badgered the native to go out there and work like the white man in civilized ways. Wonder who it was that showed them how to cut the forest in that manner and with the same machinery? In this province, when industry has a cold, the politicians sneeze. When I trained and worked as a prison guard many years ago, we had a few choice names for those who bend over easy in the shower.

The allegation that the World Wildlife Fund (a so-called « outsider ») is behind all this I made a few calls to check this out : it turns out that WWF – Canada has over 800 members in NB. They have re-invested some of the money they receive from New Brunswickers so that in the last five years, one person from NB has been working on this and other related issues at below market wages. WWF also uses some of that money to help protect endangered species. I'm not a member of WWF, I'm not paid to be here. I asked my boss if I could take the time to come here to make a presentation : being self-employed, I said yes, but no pay, no expenses re-imbursed. It would seem that it is the forest industry that has the big funds to spend thousands of dollars on this campaign alone, not to mention their ability to hire people to « Cater » to their needs.

Tweeddale report : In the '70s, the government of the time commissioned Rex Tweeddale to do a complete review of the forest management practices in the province and to make recommendations. He basically recommended that the public lands (I don't call them Crown anymore, the Crown can't even take care of itself) be reserved for the use of the public. He said we had too many pulp mills (we've since added 2) and that the woods should be reserved for saw mills and other uses that would keep more money here. The report was basically shelved and I'm afraid yours may be as well. You've been given a hot potato and you are on the receiving end of ignorance, anger and frustration while politicians are planning to quietly put this away before the next election. You are being portrayed as an enemy of the good people of NB. I've heard that Doug Tyler is complaining that his phone is ringing off the hook about this.

Well, Mr. Tyler, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen and go back to selling cars. We have eco-systems going down the drain here in order to satisfy a few money-hungry outsiders that dangle decreasing jobs above of the people they've exploited for years. If our province is in such a bad shape that we can't afford to set aside 3.5% of our productive forests, we're already fucked!

Most people don't understand that a spruce monoculture only processes a fraction of the amount of carbon and produces much less oxygen than hardwood trees do. Most people don't know that a lot of those forest lands are sprayed in order to kill the hardwood for the benefit of the spruce monocultures. Since similar bad agriculture and forestry practices are on-going in many places around the world, we are gradually blocking off the lungs of this planet. Water pollution is killing larger amounts of the zooplankton in the ocean that also acts as a carbon sink and produces vital oxygen. Cousteau showed us years ago that many oil-tankers were illegally washing their holding tanks at sea and leaving large patches of oily sea-water. Where and when does it end? When do we take back what is ours and learn to use it properly for ourselves, for future generations, for eco-system stability, and for plain oxygen production?!

I want to end by mentioning to you again that fear and intimidation tactics have been used by industry in recent weeks. People in my community who work in the woods industry have complained of having to sign a post-card and leave it with the foreman; their names were checked-off a list to ensure that they complied. Others were asked to attend meetings like these and said that their presence was being monitored. Dr. LaPierre, not only is this coercion unfair, but I'm thinking it may even be illegal.

If I were in your position, I would ask the Solicitor General to look into this obscene practice. Otherwise, it means that the so-called wave of opposition you're proposal is being subjected to is being railroaded by the money interests. One woman from my community was scheduled to make her own humble presentation here tonight. When she went to put up her small home-made poster beside the larger industry one at the corner store, somebody asked for her name and number; in the following hours and days, a few things happened that caused her enough fear that she eventually withdrew her name and asked somebody else to take her place. Needless to say she didn't sleep well for several nights after. A second-hand source that I have no cause to doubt told me that one Jean Arnold, scheduled to make a presentation on behalf of the Falls Brook Centre, should be taken out and shot. This gives you an idea of the kind and level of fear that has been generated around this issue. When money talks, decency and common sense seem to quickly go out the window.

This is our last chance at saving vital eco-systems in our province. We don't need to expropriate private lands or buy back company freeholds. We do need to reclaim our public lands and re-establish proper management and uses of our forests. So, dear

teacher, continue your round of meetings and think about the mirror you are providing in the process. When all is said and done, it will all be a question of political will. Political will : now there's a a real oxymoron for you. Good luck and don't let the bastards wear you down.