

## Cutting down Canadian history

# Timber rights leased in Quetico

By BARRY LERNER

The Province of Ontario describes its Quetico Provincial Park as "one of the last great primitive areas on the Continent." On the Ontario-Minnesota border there is "1,750 square miles of some of the finest canoe country in the world."

Quetico is officially a Class III Park — a Natural Environment Park with "landscapes of outstanding aesthetic and historic significance, established primarily for recreation and education."

Why do logging companies have licenses to cut down trees in over half of this park?

## Leased to logging companies

The same government which says that restrictions will have to be placed on travel in the overcrowded and overused Algonquin Provincial Park has leased half of "some of the finest canoe country in the world" to logging companies to cut it down.

The provincial government set up these provincial parks as recreation, education and scientific study areas. Since then; in the 1920's conservationists have had to stop the authorities from allowing power dams to be erected which would have flooded wide areas of Quetico; in the 1940's they had to pressure the government into banning float planes from the park's interior lakes and; today they want to stop the province from allowing trees from being cut in the park.

Why would the government want to allow logging operations to take place in the park? J.W. Keenan, long

range parks planning officer for the Department of Lands and Forests gave the following explanation.

## Natural growth control

Before there ever was a Province of Ontario, forest fires naturally controlled forest growth. Now, we have significantly reduced and controlled the incidence of forest fires. Therefore, the forests keep on growing past the nature state into an "overnature" state. One can choose two courses of action from this development.

On the one hand, the provincial government feels that this is fine. Kennan points out that one half of Quetico is zoned as "primitive" — where nature can take care of the forest growth in other ways and people can enjoy the park in its undisturbed state. This zone is closed to logging, organized campsites, motorboats and access roads. Kennan mentions that it is "the best canoe country."

On the other hand, many people enjoy the more organized type of park with its well marked trails and cleared and maintained campsites. The best example is the more heavily travelled areas of Algonquin Park. Therefore, the overgrowth must be eliminated.

## Logging for ecology

To replace the natural control of forest fires, Ontario allows logging companies to cut 3-5 square miles (1-2% of the total area) of Quetico per year. The area is carefully screened

from lakes but cannot be from the portages passing through it. Keenan admits the area (officially described as "of outstanding aesthetic and historical significance") will "look like a mess" for about 10 years but then, it will be ready for "generations of uninterrupted public use and growth."

The Department of Lands and Forests strictly supervises cutting so that there will be a minimum of "mess".

Keenan concludes it is "not a question of selling out to the timber barons for a buck" but one of "overall control of the environment."

The Algonquin Wildlands League is a group committed to the preservation of Ontario's few "protected" wilderness parks. Its secretary, Pat Hardy, disagrees with the government's explanation.

## Controlled fire less destructive

Hardy thinks that logging is not the best method available to control overgrowth. Instead, he thinks small controlled fires to burn away the extensive underbrush is a more natural way of control. Burning does not deface the area with a network of roads and does not make the area unuseable for 10 years.

He points out that the logging companies do not try to restore the natural beauty of the forest areas. In Quetico, they cut down pine trees but re-plant maple trees.

Hardy and many others want to know why, in such a large province where such a relatively small area has been set aside for conservation as "primitive", this area must be cut in half to permit logging. The only official "primitive" zone park (Class I) is Polar Bear Provincial Park located on the shores of Hudson and James Bays — hardly accessible to most people.

Pat Hardy concludes by pointing out that there are no types of trees growing inside the park that cannot be found in the immediate surrounding area and that there are no towns in the region dependant on Quetico's lumber for economic stability. The men who cut the lumber are transient and will go wherever there is work.

## Timber rights: who and why

With regard to timber cutting rights, this is the situation in Quetico today:

The Mathieu Lumber Company which held the cutting rights for years, went bankrupt and had the leases taken over by Domtar Limited. Domtar is a well known polluter, having been assessed the maximum \$1,000 fine for pollution at its Red Rock Mill on Lake Superior and having been charged, through a

subsidiary, for polluting Toronto's Don River.

Domtar wants to sell its interest in the bankrupt Mathieu Company, and hence the cutting leases, to The Ontario and Minnesota Pulp and Paper Company (owned by U.S. Boise Cascade Company). Ordinarily, leases cannot be sold but in this case, it is not the leases which are actually being sold but interests in the bankrupt Mathieu Company. Thus, O & M will have cutting rights to 486 square miles of the park for the remaining years of the lease or, until 1975.

Ontario and Minnesota also has a volume cutting agreement with the province for the Jane Working Circle area of which one third (400 sq. mi.) lies within park boundaries. So far, the set volume has been obtained with cutting inside the park.

However, the company wants to renegotiate its agreement with the government to increase the volume and cut inside the Park. Thus, if all agreements go through, Ontario and Minnesota Pulp and Paper Company will have cutting rights to one half of Quetico Provincial Park ("some of the finest canoe country in the world").

## Logging affects roads, deer

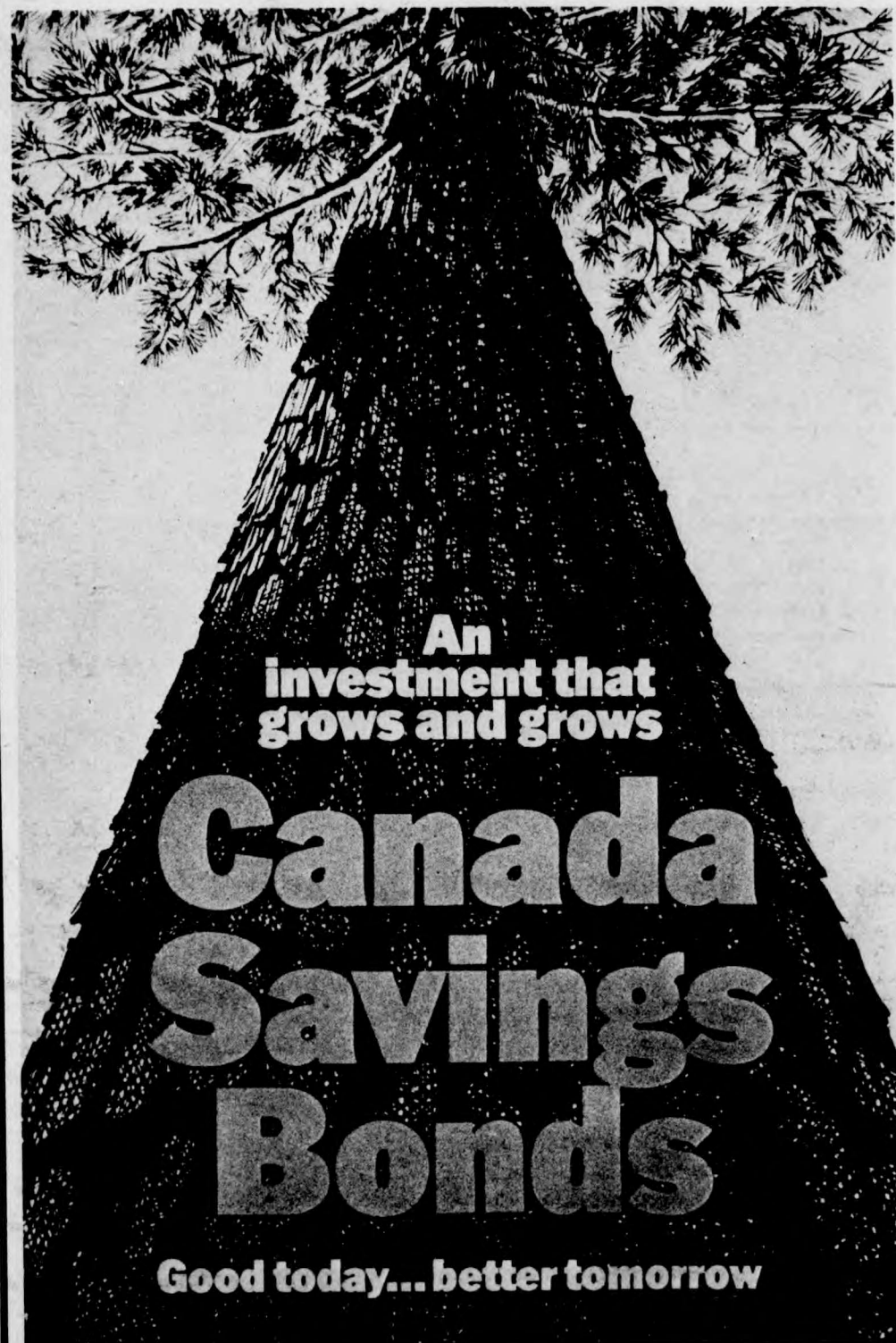
The effects of logging operations in Quetico have already been noticed. There are 25 miles of Class A roads, more miles of logging road and even more miles of logging skids cutting through the "land of outstanding historic and aesthetic significance".

Many people feel that Quetico is too historically and aesthetically valuable to be logged. They want the Government of the Province of Ontario to terminate or let expire the Domtar licence (expiry date 1975) and refuse to let Ontario and Minnesota increase its volume agreement.

## Public Meeting

Some of the people who are concerned, have formed an organization called Prevent The Destruction of Quetico.

The organization will hold a public meeting in Town Hall at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts on Tuesday November 3, at 8 p.m. A film made by Christopher Chapman (who made Ontario's Expo 67 and Expo 70 films) entitled "Quetico" will be shown. There will be a discussion with Bruce Littlejohn, Gavin Henderson and Christopher Chapman, moderated by Charles Templeton. The aim of the organization is to get public support at the meeting, encourage the public to write to their MPP's and to finally send a delegation to see Rene Brunelle, Minister of Lands and Forests.



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## Quetico Provincial Park

One of the last great primitive areas on the Continent — and one of the most interesting — Quetico Provincial Park lies along the International boundary between Ontario and Minnesota, from west of Lake Superior to Rainy Lake. Here is 1,750 square miles of some of the finest canoe country in the world, a haven for the out-of-doors enthusiast where the tensions of every day living melt away. Forty per cent of its area is water.

Quetico Park is rich in history too. Through this wild region, explorers, fur traders and missionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries drove their canoes to the West. For three hundred years voyageurs, trappers, and later, prospectors and lumbermen paddled its waterways in search of treasures of furs, minerals and timber. Today's voyageurs camp beside historic canoe trails in a land which has changed little over the years.

— Provincial Parks of Ontario,  
Ont. Dept. of Lands and Forests