

But who will get the direct benefit?

Debaters say province should fund silviculture

By DAVE SIMMS

Who should be responsible for the management of crown lands in New Brunswick—corporations or government?

The two opponents in a debate on this question Monday agreed that the province should provide the funds for silviculture but differed on who should be the direct beneficiaries of such experimentation.

The debate, part of the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton's annual Forestry Week, featured Kingsley Brown and Stephen Wiltshire.

Brown is a professor at St. Francis Xavier University and formerly an organizer of small-scale wood producers in Nova Scotia while Wiltshire is a senior vice-president with Parsons and Whitmore, a New York multinational which owns the St. Anne-Nackawic hardwood craft mill 40 miles northwest of Fredericton as well as a pulp mill in Prince Albert, Sask.

Wiltshire opened the debate proposing that crown land management could best be neither the sole responsibility of government nor industry but that industry should have the most significant involvement in the implementation of management policies established by government in consultation with various groups involved in the sector.

He said protection of small-scale, private wood producers by provincial legislation is not a fundamental issue. He was making reference to natural

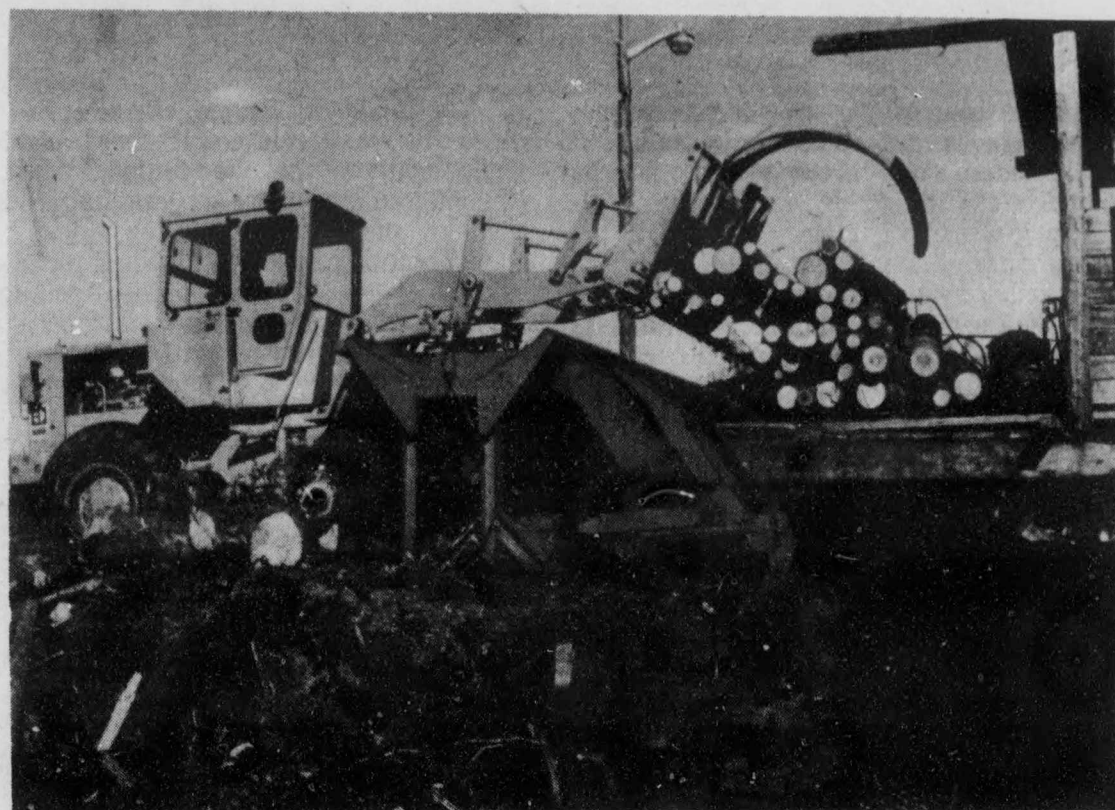
resources minister Roland Boudreau's recent statement that the province next year finally would enforce its policy that firms must buy timber and pulp wood from private producers before being allowed to cut off their crown-leased limits. The policy has been endorsed by New Brunswick governments since the 1790s but hasn't been enforced yet.

Wiltshire said such protection is unnecessary because there is an overall shortage of softwood in New Brunswick and that demand surpasses the allowable cut. He said management of private holdings is necessary to increase the meagre returns now received by private producers.

Wiltshire said the small producers represent a marginal industry because their average holdings would be between 300 and 500 acres. For this reason, he said, the producers would get a fair return not after a revision of five or 10 percent but only with a jump in returns of about 50 percent.

Wiltshire said it would be unwise to ask industry to solve such a complex social and economic problem when industry faces a hard enough struggle to survive in New Brunswick.

Wiltshire said motivation for industry to manage crown lands must be provided by government. He said the present Bathurst Brunswick Mills pilot project is an "unhappy" example that government shouldn't try to implement forest management policy. The province is currently negotiating to buy the mill in an attempt to make it economical after it ran



One debater at Monday's Forestry Week debate said the province should fund forest management but that industry should implement silviculture policies. His opponent said governments cater too much to corporations and that the electorate should become informed so government management policies reflect their best interests.

into economic difficulties due to poor quality wood supplied to the mill by the province.

Wiltshire recommended that part of the stumpage fees and forest protection fees paid by the companies be put into individual trust funds and reserved for forest management and silviculture. Management policies would be laid down by government but

would be implemented by the companies, he suggested.

Brown began his argument by rebutting Wiltshire's contention that corporations could be trusted to manage forests in everyone's best interests. He said companies have complained without justification about poor productivity on the part of workers and high capital costs. Brown said the companies should also consider whether managerial incompetence had any role in the companies' difficulties. He said the firms complained in the early seventies about not having the money to pay the prices which the private producers wanted, yet were able to grant the high wages gained by the Canadian Sulphite Workers' Union.

He also criticized the province for giving too much assistance to St. Anne-Nackawic which did "an inadequate and ad hoc job" of organization when it started operations in the late sixties.

He says it does no good to argue whether management of crown lands should be in the hands of either government or corporations since both are in "an unholy alliance" to ensure that benefits are channelled to an "elite and privileged group in society" at the expense of those who provide the labor for such industries.

Brown suggested that New Brunswick's small-scale producers could learn a lesson from those in Nova Scotia who had banded together to develop forest management units where the province paid all silvicultural costs. Such units also made exploitation of the forests more efficient by cutting down on the number of roads necessary to get to stands.

Brown said public awareness and participation is necessary in order that the existing system be used to best represent the public interest in the instance of forest management.

He said it's unrealistic to leave

management to corporate responsibility.

"Where was the corporate responsibility when K.C. Irving made one of the largest fortunes in the world in a province where the standard of living remained below that of the southern United States where there existed a master-servant relationship?"

He said there's a spirit of poverty in New Brunswick, that the media lacks the ability to carry on advocacy and dissent and that politicians manipulate the electorate rather than manage the forests.

He rebutted Wiltshire's comment that K.C. Irving Ltd. was an example of a firm applying outstanding forest management practices. He drew attention to Nova Scotia Forest Products Ltd., the subsidiary of the Sweden-based Stora Kopparberg interests, which he said used a more sophisticated approach to management by writing into its contract with the government a clause that guarantees that each year, regardless of its profit level, it will spend a given amount on silviculture.

Wiltshire returned to say that government involvement led to forced growth and said that "you can't make an uneconomic proposition money making, you've got to work with what you've got." He conceded that firms tend to exploit forests without taking care that there is regeneration but that this is changing. He said with anti-inflation controls and declining profit margins "we can't afford to fumble anymore. Industry must provide leadership in areas where it is able."

Wiltshire said it's unrealistic to call for public participation in forest management because the power lies in the hands of bureaucrats, even though it's more difficult for the public servant to do the same work as a private executive because of the amount of public scrutiny.

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