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### C. THE ECOLOGISTS' QUESTIONS

#### Expanding Exploitation of the Natural Resources of the James Bay Region- The Experience so Far

Harvey A. Feit  
McGill University

The decision of the Government of Quebec to "promote the development and exploitation of natural resources" in the region to the east and south of James Bay will not only involve the construction of an enormous hydro-electric project, it will also open up an extensive territory to new exploitation of the forestry, mineral and recreational resources. This will be a major expansion of the kinds of resources utilized in the region where up until now the Indian peoples of the area have been the major resource users, depending on the animal populations for subsistence requirements and for cash income. The use of a variety of resources within the same environment requires an extensive and intensive coordination of the patterns of resource utilization if unintended, unforeseen and unfortunate consequences of each use upon other uses are to be minimized. This is especially the case because the relationship of the Indians of the region to the resources on which they depend is so intimate and critical. A careful planning for multiple resource utilization is necessary if the Indian peoples are not to find the conditions of their lives deteriorating while the resources of the region are exploited for the benefit of others. Examples of the dangers involved can be found within the region itself, where Indians have already been suffering the consequences of what exploitation of new resources has already occurred.

#### The Initial Phase of Expanded Exploitation of Resources

An expanded exploitation of the natural resources of the southernmost sectors of the territory now to be administered by the James Bay Development Corporation has already been underway for over a decade, particularly around the towns of Matagami, Lebel-sur-Quevillon, Miquelon, Desmaraisville, Chapais and Chibougamau, and at the settlements of Waswanipi River and Mistassini Post. These developments, initiated by private corporations, government agencies, and individual entrepreneurs, have included underground and open-pit mining, forest cutting for pulpwood and sawmills, commercial fishing and tourism and sports outfitting.

One report on some of the ecological and social consequences of this uncoordinated development has already been published on the impact of the pulp mill and chloralkali plant at Lebel-sur-Quevillon and the associated pulp cutting operations in the adjoining 7,000 square miles forest concession (Berkes, Butler, Ott and Ross, 1971). The discovery in 1970 of high levels of methyl-mercury, a highly toxic chemical, in the fish of the region of Lakes Matagami, Waswanipi and Evans, and the later confirmation in 1971 of unusually high levels of methyl-mercury in the blood of the Indian people, have led respectively to the closing of the Indian commercial fisheries at Matagami, and to the recommendation from government officials that the Indians refrain from eating fish. The commercial fishing operation which was started in the late 1950's (la Rusic 1968 and 1970) was an important source of cash income for some Waswanipi families, as well as the major programme for economic development of the Indians of the region initiated by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Fish are also important for subsistence, they are a secondary source of winter subsistence and are the mainstay of the summer diet. The need to now eliminate fish from the diet will have serious consequences for the health, livelihood and resource utilization patterns of Indians living a bush life-style. The actual origin of the mercury now known to be present in the environment is uncertain. While the Quevillon plant may not be responsible for the mercury problem over this sizeable region, it is still important to note that it is the most apparent source of mercury in the region, and until last year it was losing approximately 12 pounds of mercury per day in its aqueous effluent to the environment and 5 pounds a day to the atmosphere. Since last year this plant has introduced extensive mercury pollution control equipment and has cleaned itself up quickly and efficiently. This was, however, while mercury pollution was occurring, an extremely dangerous situation, irrespective of the source of the background levels of mercury. The point to be noted is that this plant, lauded at the time of its building as a major contribution to the economic development of the region, was allowed to be built and to start operation without these pollution control devices, and it polluted the environment with a highly toxic chemical, despite the fact that Indians hunted in the area and fished downstream from the plant, and the town of Matagami was also located downstream. This dangerous situation is surprising because this is not an old mill, it went into production in 1965.

The unfortunate consequences of the initial phase of expanded resource utilization are not limited to pollution, they are also apparent in the use of the forests of the region where a multiple-use is not

practised. The forest concessions for the Quevillon mill include approximately 4,200 square miles of land which is also utilized for subsistence hunting and trapping by Waswanipi Cree Indians. At present, however, there is no coordination of these two uses of the resources of the land, despite the fact that forest cutting operation will have an important impact on the animal populations, and that the mill concessions are granted by the Lands and Forests Department on Crown lands. The presently used methods of clear cutting large areas will result in a decline of the moose populations and the practice of cutting right to the edge of the water will seriously affect the beaver populations. However, forest cutting need not deplete the animal populations, and a careful management of only a percentage of the total land area could easily lead to an increase in moose concentration following cutting. In the areas of winter moose concentration it is necessary that mature stands be available at all times to offer shelter for moose, and that the forest be cut in patches (Telfer 1970). The early successional forest that follows cutting offers the greatest quantity of browse for moose, and so long as shelter is available moose populations will generally be higher in this younger forest. The forests along the waterways need to be preserved for the populations for subsistence hunting are compatible if the multiple-use philosophy guides the planning for resource exploitation; but as the situation now stands the two cannot co-exist for long periods (see Berkes, Butler, Ott and Ross, 1971, for a more extended discussion).

### The Role of the Government in the Allocation of Resources

The introduction of multiple-use planning depends on the establishment of a coordinating and planning body, most suitably a government agency. So far this role has not been taken up and government agencies and officials have all too frequently taken a very narrow view of resources exploitation as a purely economic problem. This has occurred in the case of the development of tourism in this same area, which is promoted by the Department of Tourism, Fish and Game, and which resulted in a major shift in the allocation of resources between alternate uses without evaluation of the consequences.

As roads were extended into the area and services became available in the new settlements in the latter half of the 1950's and the 1960's, tourists and sportsmen began to frequent the area seeking summer fishing and fall moose hunting. Among the first whites established in the area were hunting and fishing outfitters, licensed by the Quebec Department of Tourism, Fish and Game, which has itself

recently established camps (c.f. La Rusic 1968, and Smith 1971). Moose hunting was at first restricted to the areas around towns and roads, but in the past few years promotions have brought more hunters to the area and services have been instituted that fly hunters directly from the main northern towns into the isolated bush sites known to be good for moose hunting by the pilots who regularly fly over the region. The impact of sports moose hunting has constantly increased as the impact has been distributed more widely over the area. This represents a shift in the utilization of an important animal resource from the Indian subsistence hunting sector to the newly created white sport hunting sector; and it has been done completely without consultation between the government departments and the Waswanipi Indian Band. One explanation may be the idea repeatedly expressed by both provincial and federal government officials that Indian hunting and trapping are dying and would be abandoned as soon as jobs were available. This prediction was believed by some officials to be imminent for the Waswanipi people when the Hudson's Bay Company closed its store at Waswanipi Post in 1965, and the band members moved to the outskirts of local white settlements where jobs in forestry, mining and mineral exploration were available. However, the abandonment of hunting has not occurred. After a significant drop in the number of men hunting during the 1965-66 season (see La Rusic 1968, 1970, and Tanner 1968) the number stabilized, and in 1969-70 the percentage of men hunting full-time was slightly higher than it had been in 1965-66 (Feit 1972). A significant number of Waswanipi people, over half of the adult men, have proved unwilling to abandon the hunting way of life on which much of their culture depends.

Provincial authorities, however, did not just misjudge the course of events. The Conservation Officers (then called Game Wardens) of the Department of Tourism, Fish and Game carried out a programme that amounted to harassment of Indian subsistence moose hunters. Over a period of several years the Officers have attempted to tell Waswanipi men that hunting moose outside the several week long fall hunting season was illegal because the game laws of the province do not recognize the aboriginal hunting rights of the Indians, and the Officers have regularly searched for moose meat in the Indian villages. During the 1968-69 hunting seasons this was intensified and Conservation Officers visited not only settlement Indians but most winter hunting groups, even in isolated locations, in some cases up to three times during the course of the winter. They looked for moose meat, and took samples as proof when meat was found, but no bush Indians have been prosecuted to our knowledge, and this practice has since declined. This harassment, accompanied by the threat of prosecution, initially had the effect of discouraging some of the subsistence moose hunting.

The programme was apparently done with complete disregard of the importance of moose as a source of food for the Indian families who live in the bush, for whom, in 1968-69, moose provided 30 percent of the total calories available for human consumption during the winter (Feit 1972). The reasons for this interference are not clear, but the danger of enforcing sport hunting regulations on subsistence hunters is clear, and is also unnecessary given the self-regulation hunters impose on themselves (see other article by Feit in this issue). Other parallel examples could be cited, but one additional case will be sufficient. One of the managers of a provincially run fishing camp in the Lake Mistassini area decided that Indians at his camp could not fish for their own consumption because a government report indicated that the population of fish in the lake was low, and he thought it would be endangered by Indian fishing. He enforced this decision while the tourists who came to the camp were guided to the good fishing locations by the Indians working at the camp (Smith 1971).

The conflict over alternate allocations of the same resource is a critical aspect of the expanded exploitation of resources, because the relative importance of economic development must be compared with the subsistence importance of the same resources. The overall effect of the growth of the sports hunting sector in the last decade and of the lack of a planned change is clear. In 1969 forty moose were killed and registered with provincial authorities during the official three-week long hunting season in the 11,500 square miles used by Waswanipi hunters, of which only a small number were killed by settlement Indians. Seventy-eight moose were killed by Indians living in the bush during the entire winter of 1969-70. Thus, by 1970 fully one-third of the annual moose harvest of the region was going to the sports hunting sector.

### Conclusions

Given the problems that have already arisen in the sections of the James Bay region already subjected to new development and exploitation of the natural resources, problems of pollution and of unplanned consequences of one resource use on other resources, and the lack of consultation and agreement when resources are re-allocated, it is clear that multiple-use resource

planning is necessary. If the dependence of the Indian people on some of the resources of the region is to be respected and protected, it is also clear that the Indian people must be involved in this planning body. It is not enough that White institutions who are familiar with the Indians, whether governmental or independent, be intermediaries between the planning bodies and the Indians. The Indians must be directly represented so that their knowledge and experience in the region can be tapped, and so that their needs can be recognized in the planning process. It is imperative that mutually agreeable arrangements be made between the agencies responsible for White exploitation of the resources and the Indian peoples of the region through the Band governments.

If a multiple-use plan is not developed in consultation with the Indians it is likely that a large number of unintended social and ecological consequences will be produced by this project. Decisions taken in ignorance, even if disguised under a confident optimism that the consequences will be predominantly good, are going to be risky indeed.

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