

Blue-Collar Nature(s):  
Socioeconomic Class Membership and its  
Relationship to Ecology and the Environmental Movement

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## **Abstract**

Environmentalism – a broadly construed and elusive term that covers innumerable approaches in examining our relationship to nature – has been termed the most influential mass movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Nisbet in Dowie 1995). Notwithstanding the emergence of an anthropocentric environmental justice movement, organized and institutionalized environmentalism – especially nature preservationism in North America – remains a primarily middle-class domain (Eckersley 1989; Gottlieb 1993; Dowie 1995; Dunlap 1975). A visible working class is relatively absent in the organizations arisen from this social revolution, and muted in the histories written about the movement's origin. This paper aims to investigate current environmentalism(s) by applying the lens of history to socioeconomic class in the early environmental movement. While the emphasis will be the historiography of the working class's exclusion and marginalization that is the environmental movement's legacy, this work will also examine more recent 'blue-collar' engagement with ecology and examine the tensions inherent in this social dynamic.

Key questions to be addressed are numerous. Is 'class' even a relevant construct, when it has been all but abandoned in academia and as deindustrialization, global restructuring and the service sector's rise reshapes our society's economic base? What is the early class history of the North American environmental movement? What is the usefulness of utilitarian approaches in explaining the dearth – real or apparent – of the working class in nature conservation? How do working-class people view mainstream environmentalism? What questions are raised by the 'revolving door' between industry and mainstream environmentalism? Is there any evidence of

a more inclusive approach by environmentalists, given sustained criticism of the movement's middle-class orientation? What opportunities arise for cooperation between labour and ENGOs? And is a working-class political ecology even realistic given the ever-increasing concentration of political power in the economic realm?

I will argue that environmentalism has lost its way and squanders opportunities for broader social engagement, in no small part because it has failed to integrate working-class perspectives and understandings of nature. In a world facing catastrophic climate chaos, as monumental patches of plastic swirl the world's oceans and the Holocene extinction proceeds apace, I assert here, the agency and resources of all humanity must be engaged to mount a concerted, sustained, representative and legitimate effort to avert the destructive results of industrial capitalist hegemony, which lies at the root of our unfolding ecological catastrophe.

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**Glossary**

AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations
AWL	Algonquin Wildlands League
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
DFO	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
EFFE	Environmentalists for Full Employment
ENGO	Environmental non-governmental organization
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
ICFTU	International Congress of Free Trade Unions
IFAWA	International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NMC	New middle class
NSM	New social movement
OFL	Ontario Federation of Labour
PPL	Partnership for Public Lands



## Foreword

While this paper works towards an *academic* history and sociology of the relationship between class and the environmental movement, the life events that initiated it are personal and subjective. I mention this only to openly and explicitly frame this work in concrete and materialist terms. This is not borne of ‘reverse snobbery’ or an entire rejection of a sometimes obscurantist postmodern critique, but because I wish to retain a grounded link to my subject and origin. A question that has guided my work is this: how would I explain this to an interested lay-person? It seems a particularly apt question when the working class is the subject of my analysis. I have aimed to keep my writing proximal to my subject while employing a necessary academic tone, and while maintaining a self-critical watch for ‘imposter syndrome’ since “working-class students [may] uncritically mimic the linguistic mannerisms and values of a more elite social class, thereby positioning themselves for self-betrayal” (Mack 2006, 53-54). The working class in my experience simultaneously admires and mocks academic achievement and language; with both cheers and scolds, it keeps its progeny in check. As Mack asserts, “it is no coincidence that the very same language traits that academics value are interpreted by working-class families and friends as ‘showing off’ or ‘acting like a big shot’” (56).

‘Class’ as a category has received scant attention in environmental history (Jacoby 1997; Bandy 2008); this is especially true of the period prior to World War II (Lipin 2007). My particular interest here is the class make-up and consequent proprietorship of the environmental movement. I employ history to understand the narrative of environmentalism

and the class situation relative to it, but this work is not an attempt at pure environmental history or social-labour history. Nor is it pure social science. I draw from disciplines which aid in understanding both the historiographical deficit and the current environmental ideologies of working people.

While I have explored the literature for evidence of working-class ecological politics and have examined the on-the-ground situation in other parts of the globe, my focus and locus remains North America and – whenever possible – Canada. But the historical forces that created both class divisions and environmental ruin as well as the organized institutional responses to them are not circumscribed by borders or cartographical lines. We – Canada and the U.S. – share many biomes and a similar colonial and labour-industrial history. The environmental history of our two countries is thus conjoined (increasingly so under the ‘free trade’ pacts we have entered). There is much overlap both concretely and academically.

While the literature cited comes from across the Anglosphere – the United Kingdom and its former colonies – it is not meant to be global in scope. And although my focus is somewhat Canadian, the sheer wealth of academic environmental thought and history produced in the U.S. (see Coates 2004) means that a broad-based class and environmentalist discourse must include American environmental and social history to a disproportionate degree.

The subject ‘class’ is both rejected and embraced in the common culture. As North Americans (and this is particularly but not exclusively true of the U.S) we want to believe that we live in a post-class society and that merit largely determines our social standing. ‘Classes’ are an Old World idea, an atavistic and historic concept and a holdover from an era preceding our own.

Here, temporally remote from the crumbled empires that preceded our modern nation states, we largely determine our own destinies. While this notion is demonstrably untrue – especially for aboriginals – its mythic power is culturally substantial and thus politically potent.

But we also believe another consoling myth that somewhat contradicts the first about the putatively archaic notion of ‘class’ as a social category. By one recent account, 94% of Canadians believe they belong to the broad middle class (Environics 2012; Payton 2013). How might class as category be languishing on the verge of extinction while we overwhelmingly aspire to middle-class status, and what does this paradox mean?<sup>1</sup> Clearly, class membership still means *something*, but exactly what and why is not a subject of robust enquiry. Beyond a few Marxist professors emeriti, class as subject may no longer be of compelling interest for many academics; Kirk asserts that merely writing about class “appear[s] paradoxical at a time when the issue of social class itself appears a dead one” (2002, 343). But in a society with a rapidly growing income gap (Yalnizyan 2007; Hessing and Howlett 1997) this broad and desperate grasp for ‘middle-class’ status borders on delusion, and for that reason alone should merit more scholarly attention.

The economic gap between rich and poor continues apace and while – as I will argue – class is about more than economic status, access to capital is its foundation. As Raymond Williams

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<sup>1</sup> Even Canada’s putative social democratic *New Democratic Party* (in which organized labour has played a central and official role since the party’s founding) has abandoned shopworn former references to ‘working families’ and ‘ordinary Canadians’ in their political ad-speak for the 2015 election cycle. Instead, advertisements on television and the internet feature party leader Thomas Mulcair focusing on *his own* middle-class upbringing and explaining that his middle-class values inform his party’s election platform and vision. Other parties also speak ubiquitously to the broad middle class, but for the NDP it arguably represents an expedient strategic and a philosophical shift to a more mainstream centrist position on Canada’s political spectrum.

wrote, “the economic base determines the social relations which determine consciousness which determine actual ideas and works” (Williams 1980, 19). That observation informs this paper.

Given the immense social revolution that spurred today’s environmental movement, questions of political economy are inherent in enquiries about its origin, history and proprietorship. These are fundamental questions of integrity, legitimacy, representation and the distribution of power. These questions of first principles – those of base and control – are central ones and their reification continues to determine in material terms the outcome of the political ecology of humanity and nature.

## Introduction

“To question the ordinary, the routine, the everyday is a necessary project for a truly critical social science. The enduring importance...is that it brings the ordinary stuff of everyday life into sharp focus and reveals how it is related to ideology and the exercise of power” (Dunk 1991, 3).

The seeds of this enquiry were sown in my youth. I grew up in an immigrant family in an ethnically diverse working-class quarter of Vancouver’s east side. Summers were spent exploring the lakes and rivers of the southern coast and interior of British Columbia with my father. Although we hiked and canoed, those activities were always in service of the central purpose: casting a baited hook into the water and reeling in rainbow trout or whitefish for dinner. From these wilderness trips and from my *Audubon Nature Encyclopaedia*, I gained an appreciation of the beauty of the natural world, a world which, as I soon became aware, was increasingly under siege from both population growth and industrial development.

When my family moved to Canada in the 1960s, my father was interviewed by the RCMP. Growing up in wartime Glasgow’s Clyde bank, he and his family were members of the Scottish arm of the Communist Party, as were many working-class people at that time and place. Accordingly, a subjective awareness of class-based political action (and an antipathy to religion) was central to his upbringing. As a consequence of his CP membership, he was flagged for special attention as a would-be economic immigrant to Cold War-era Canada, driven out by the post-war collapse of the Clyde’s shipbuilding industry and consequent loss of blue-collar jobs in the urban Strathclyde region.

As our family grew in Canada, my father was active in his union, volunteered during elections and attended protests in opposition to the Vietnam War. Sometimes I tagged along. To make

ends meet, my mother also worked outside the home as a 'girl Friday' (so read the job posting at that time) in a restaurant supply office. Together they instilled secular Protestant values of thrift, modesty and hard work. But the predominant lesson – and one I took unambiguously – was that the odds were stacked in favour of moneyed interests and working people had to fight for a better share of the pie, and even for peace itself. Whether it was the famine in Biafra or the unjust treatment of Canada's aboriginals, we were encouraged primarily through the power of example to learn about the world and to disdain shallow materialism and narrow self-interest. Folk music played by my parents and their friends provided a soundtrack of guitar and harmonica.

A pivotal event in my youth was my father's volunteer stint with an expedition of a then-nascent Greenpeace on a 1972 voyage to Amchitka in Alaska's Aleutian Islands. The trip was part of a broader campaign to protest a planned American nuclear bomb test, but the blast happened before they reached the bomb site. My father had served with the U.K. merchant navy and (somewhat ironically) had once worked aboard a whaling ship, making him a much-needed addition to a crew comprised primarily of novice sailors. I consequently learned by the power of example that grumbling at the television news was inadequate; the world was a troubled place, and one ought to be involved in improving it. Being of the working class was not in my youthful experience synonymous with political servitude, although I would later bump up against the limits of class and station.

In maturity, I spent years working as aide to leftist politicians. I had no formal education after high school; this career grew organically out of my own politics and activism as a young adult

(and was a marked improvement on cleaning hospital floors). In my career with the New Democratic Party government of Ontario (and subsequent NDP opposition) I was in contact with representatives of many policy advocacy groups, including those of large ENGOs, who lobbied us on issues ranging from forest protection to landfill siting. In contradistinction to my father's 1970s 'hippie' Greenpeace cohort, these 1990s ENGO staffers were cut from a decidedly different cloth. They spoke more assertively, dressed formally, had expense accounts and displayed other personal characteristics that could generally be considered middle-class. With limited education at the time, I worked to fit into this social and political milieu. Had the times changed in twenty-odd years, I later wondered, and were environmental groups now comprised of a different 'class' of people from my father and his Greenpeace ship-mates?

This paper is my endeavour to investigate this apparent change – whether real or spurious – in the social fabric of the environmental movement and to address my central subject of enquiry: whether the working-class agency I witnessed as a child still informs today's environmentalism, whether such agency had a history and, if so, why it was no longer as tangible.

Chapter 1 will analyze some of the common terms of the construct of 'class' and related terminology, with a focus on Marx and Weber and the roles of consumption and production in class identity formation. Chapter 2 details the foundation of the idea of a modern abstracted Nature and traces its origin to urbanization, colonialism and industrialization. Chapter 3 examines the Pinchot-Muir dichotomy and its formative contribution to today's middle-class environmental movement. Chapters 4 and 5 deal respectively with early preservationist class politics, and the 'culture clash' between workers and the more scientifically educated middle

class. Chapter 6 examines the politics and sociology of identity conflict between workers and environmentalists, with a focus on the U.S. Pacific Northwest. Chapter 7 details some of the ways that working people have through the labour movement worked to advance an environmentalist agenda from their own 'shop floor' perspective. Chapter 8 focuses on Ontario's environmentalist movement and the history of struggles over 'proper' use of the boreal forest. I conclude by examining some of the perils of the status quo approach to environmental action and posit changes needed for a truly legitimate environmental movement to succeed in reaching more of its goals.

## Chapter 1: The Utility of Class Analysis and the Nature of Class Membership

“We are as oblivious to capitalism as fish are to the water in which they swim”  
(Magdoff and Foster 2011, 38).

This chapter will deal with some definitional problems inherent in investigating the ‘working class’ and related concepts. It will also examine the shift from ‘production’ to ‘consumption’ as identifiers of class membership, as well as other definitional terms and concepts under capitalist production.

The working class is not what it used to be. Such a statement may sound trite, obvious or even incongruously nostalgic, but I am not referring here to the mere unfashionableness of class as a construct of academic enquiry, nor am I even referring to the jumble of confused ‘public opinion’ and questions raised by the aforementioned simultaneous rejection and embrace of ‘class’ by the ‘general public’, whatever that is. What I *am* referring to is the working class’s socioeconomic situation itself: the concrete and material conditions of social reproduction – the ‘base’ – upon which the entire concept of ‘working class’ rests. Tectonic shifts in global economics and technological change have shifted the socioeconomic landscape of the working class in the new neoliberal reality (Nugent 2009). With deindustrialization and offshoring of many economic practises, traditional blue-collar jobs have fled North America (or in some cases fled *within* North America – witness capital’s flight to right-to-work jurisdictions in the U.S.) The post-free trade economy and attendant resource extraction overreach has created economic and social chaos, from logging communities in British Columbia to fishing towns in Atlantic Canada, by precipitating de-skilling of the workforce and the collapse of entire resource sectors. The continued existence of a traditional working class built around labouring is thus imperilled

concretely and materially. Hayter, who has written about the “contested remapping of British Columbia’s forest economy” (2003, 706) argues that:

In resource peripheries, the post-Fordist transformation has featured complex interactions between industrial and resource dynamics in which powerful imperatives of flexibility, neoliberalism [and] environmentalism...have clashed to contest industrial development and restructuring. This clash is not coincidental, but is driven by the scale and intensity of Fordism’s resource cycles... Moreover, the radical innovations in information and communication technologies have enabled a deepened global integration of capital (707).

The change from an industrial production economy under Fordism and modernity to an information economy of post-Fordism and postmodernity has “fragmented stable class formations, particularly working-class formations, resulting in their reported disappearance” (Kirk 2002, 343). From this standpoint both the subject ‘class’ and class analysis, Kirk asserts, are seen to belong to an essentialist way of thinking inadequate for the new millennium. From this analytical viewpoint the decline in ‘class’ as a topic of enquiry is a natural outcome of the decline of class as a material and concrete thing, arguably in favour of a sharpened focus on the ‘new class’, the ‘creative class’ or other such trendy discourses about the information and service economy.

Associated with this transformation has been a shift in emphasis from producer to consumer as markers of identity in analytical discourses. The categorical shift from production to consumption and the shift from collective to individual identity in the working class will be explored in more detail later, but to properly understand class as an analytic construct it is necessary to understand how it was treated historically in social theory, that is, by looking at

what 'class' *was* in social history rather than what it arguably now *is* in the public and (diminished) academic discourse.

### Marx and Marxist Sociological Terminology

No writer is more closely associated with 'class' and social theory than Karl Marx. Paradoxically, although the two historically warring camps in the *Communist Manifesto* are 'classes' as historians understand them, Marx did not explicitly analyze the concept, leaving behind a "crucial, but unfinished, analysis of class" (Clarke and Linzey 1996, 154). Zeitlin (1990) explains that the third volume of *Capital* begins with a promising class analysis, but a mere page into the text it notes "[Here the manuscript breaks off]" (179). Counterintuitively, there is no systematic analysis of the class concept in *Capital* or any other work of the revered (and sometimes reviled) thinker and revolutionary. Marx's usage of the term is, however, inferred from *The Communist Manifesto*, *Capital* and other works; in today's Marxist theory, class refers to groups whose "economic conditions of existence compel them to live separately from one another" and "who have a mode of life different from each other" (Morrison 2006, 390). Having made class central to his work and despite much of the reaction that has followed it for over 150 years, Marx's class construct enjoys more currency than definition. It is little surprise then that social theorists – and Marxists themselves – are left to define 'class' to serve their own academic utility.

Marx holds no monopoly on the use of the term 'class'. Max Weber, sometimes wrongly assumed to have offered a rebuttal to Marx, embarked instead on a critical dialogue with the "ghost" of Marx (Zeitlin 1990). Zeitlin suggests that Weber's work in *Economy and Society* is

more accurately viewed as “an attempt to complete Marx’s final chapter in the light of twentieth-century conditions” (179); Weber’s work thus aims to complete – not refute – Marx’s unfinished final chapter.

Class today is a concept with many definitions and a consensus convention remains elusive. Crompton (1998) argues that the use of class in common parlance differs from that used by academics. In common language, the term has connotations of social distinction, even prestige. As a formal academic concept, however, class is “a general description of structures of material inequality, reflected in differential access to economic and power resources” (11). Classes are therefore social groups to which resources and power are distributed unequally, and this very inequality is central to the concept. But the term ‘class’ is not merely descriptive of differences in material inequality, prestige or ranking. Classes are also “actual or potential social forces, or social actors, which have the capacity to transform society” (11). Crompton outlines three commonly used meanings of the concept of class:

- ‘Class’ as prestige, status, culture or ‘lifestyles’
- ‘Class’ as structured inequality (related to the possession of economic and power resources)
- ‘Class’ as actual or potential social and political actors (11)

The term ‘class’ is not a legal or formal distinction, notes Crompton. Class categories “summarize the output, in material terms, of the competition for resources in capitalist market societies” (11). Wright (in Dunk 1991) discerns three economic criteria of the working class: “lack of power over the physical means of production, over investments and the process of accumulation, and over other people’s labour power” (5). This is broader than definitions that restrict the concept of the working class to proletarians who produce what Marx termed

‘surplus value’, or reduce the term to simply denote relationship to the means of production (ownership or non-ownership of productive capital).

Work, Crompton further claims, simply has decreasing importance to the class concept: “it has been argued that ‘work’ as employment has become of considerably less significance in the shaping of social attitudes...employment is of declining importance as a source of social identity in the second half of the twentieth century” (1998, 17). A significant development is a “growing interest in the ‘sociology of consumption’...fuelled by the emphasis on consumerism which seemed, increasingly, to characterize contemporary societies” (x), a development also attributable to the works of Bourdieu (and which itself has roots in Weberian theory). Crompton also highlights “class as a source of social and political *identity* (emphasis added), consciousness, and action” (12).

It is this very identity which Crompton references – this conscious subjectivity – that transforms working people from mere economic subjects, that lifts them from but utilitarian cogs in the industrial machine to self-conscious agents whose position is realized as much by relation to consumption as to production. Her central argument is that social class is constituted in large part as a relation to the consumption of goods and is expressed in culture, and that this relation itself is what signifies station in the class structure. It is in part class as social identity, as the subjective awareness of one’s social station in addition to the broader cultural meaning – the ‘symbolism’ of consumption – which will be explored and referred to here.

Another concept central to Marx is ‘class consciousness’ used to denote a “conscious awareness among the working classes that takes place as a result of the increase in class

antagonism occurring during the rise of modern capitalism” (Morrison 2006, 390). To fully grasp the importance of the concept, one must distinguish between the objective conditions of a class and the subjective realization of such conditions, whereby the working class could conceive of themselves as a political force, a self-aware and conscious party to be reckoned with – the ‘proletarians’. A key realization that would stem from increased consciousness was that of capitalists as a ‘permanent opponent’ – a class whose material interests are diametrically opposed to their own. Marx believed that this insight would promote working-class cohesion and lead to class-based political action. As consciousness developed, Marx believed, workers would transform themselves from a ‘class in itself’ to a ‘class for itself’ based on self-awareness of their place in social and historical developments (Morrison 2006, Dunk 1991).

Although focus has increasingly moved from production to consumption, Bourdieu rejects the common idea of the ‘sovereign consumer’, which holds that consumer practises are personalized, individual and innate. Working-class and other consumer culture does not exist in a social vacuum. It is “socially conditioned and...the objects of consumer choice reflect a symbolic hierarchy that is determined and maintained by the socially dominant order to enforce their distance or distinction from other classes of society...[and a] ‘social weapon’ that defines and marks off the high from the low, the sacred from the profane, and the ‘legitimate’ from the ‘illegitimate’ in matters ranging from food and drink, cosmetics, and newspapers; on the one hand, to art, music, and literature on the other” (Allen and Anderson 1994, 70).

Longhurst and Savage (1996) have noted that Bourdieu’s approach “tends to lead to a stress on

the uncovering of ‘variation’ in consumption practises rather than the parallel need to explore how commonality and solidarities are formed between people” (275).

‘Class’ is not reducible to paid workers alone; as a socioeconomic class it is axiomatic that the worker is but the hub of a social orbit, a grouping which surrounds and is economically centred upon them: spouses, children and other dependents, retirees, the disabled and the under- and unemployed. Social actors thus exist within this orbit forming a part of the ‘working class’ without necessarily being paid workers in the industrial economy – the “decommodified and peripheral group” (Norton 2003, 106). The working class is more usefully viewed as a community with shared socioeconomic status and common values which results in similar interests and leisure pursuits. Thus ‘class’ is no mere aggregate of wage earners, or ‘labour’. It is a sociocultural as well as an economic category. As was prosaically surmised in one of a series on class in the *New York Times*:

One difficulty in talking about class is that the word means different things to different people. Class is rank, it is tribe, it is culture and taste. It is attitudes and assumptions, a source of identity, a system of exclusion. To some, it is just money. It is an accident of birth that can influence the outcome of a life (May 15, 2005).

### ‘Blue-Collar’ Culture and Labour as Metonym

It is important to explicitly problematize the use of these terms and draw attention to the sometimes interchangeable use of the concepts of the ‘working class’ and ‘labour’. Not only is unionization in decline as the service sector grows (Norton 2003), the number of members of the paid workforce under organized labour was never a majority. Organizing the rising service sector is sporadic and challenging, thus labour’s power is diminishing as the unionized workforce faces ‘downsizing’ and restructuring wrought by technological change and shifts in

global economics in manufacturing (traditionally the backbone of labour's strength) and attendant dislocations in and exhaustion of some resource sectors. The social basis of 'labour' is thus much wider than the industrial working class of manual workers in industrial manufacturing and resource industries (Norton 2003).

Unions and the labour movement are formal and institutional organizations borne of the 'working class', an abstraction that has no hard definition. The working class is thus a much broader concept than 'labour' alone. Labour is at best metonymic of the working class, and certainly less abstract, but it is the closest to a representative 'estate' and consequently conflating the two is unavoidable, even necessary. Problems of gender representation and other categorical issues arise and are implicit in employing such metonymic devices, however. As well, the "occupational and demographic profile of the labour movement is far too diverse to allow one to ascribe to it a uniform 'class interest' or even 'class outlook', at least in respect of environmental issues" (Norton 2003, 99).

Another useful if not unproblematic social construct is the idea of 'blue collar' and a blue-collar culture. One example is the owner-operator model common to many blue-collar occupations: the owner-operator of a fishing boat with a crew, the owner-driver of a taxi or the logging contractor who owns a piece of specialized equipment. All of these in classically Marxist economic terms are not 'proletarians' but 'owners of the means of production' – even employers themselves. But the cultural and social niche they inhabit, their social conventions, consumption patterns and leisure activities may be considered 'blue collar' in a cultural sense. It is much less difficult to imagine them 'hanging out' in a sports bar with their workmates than

attending the opera, a book reading or other more 'bourgeois' pursuits. Proletarians they are not, but their social sensibilities and consumption patterns are culturally blue-collar. From this standpoint, mere relationship to the means of production does not confer blue-collar or working-class status. In addition, many 'blue-collar' workers (especially in this wider definition) have incomes exceeding those of many white-collar workers in the new service industries, further complicating matters.

The case of the International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America (IFAWA) provides one such example of the problems inherent to overly narrow definitional categorization. Concerns about the decline in their common property natural resources – the Pacific salmon and other migratory food fish – led fishers involved in the industry to organize a class-based political action to manifest their political ecologic concerns (Mann 2002). "Working class consciousness emerged among Pacific coast fishers during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and common efforts to manage common property reflected that class-consciousness" (141). Mann questioned why fishers had traditionally not sought unionization. It is difficult to argue that small scale producers can be shoe-horned into pre-existing categories described by the traditional employee-employer or labour-capital dichotomies. There are, he asserts, "many class positions that fill the space between these poles. The claim that simple commodity production and working-class identity are incompatible has been challenged on the basis of those who, like the members of IFAWA, occupy this ill-defined social space" (150).

Class matters in answering these enquiries; it is necessary, as Mann claims, to move beyond perspectives that "class position and class consciousness are determined solely by the relations

of production” (Mann 2002, 150). It remains to be explained why, if unionization is an indication of developing working-class consciousness, this consciousness has not emerged more frequently among small-scale independent resource workers. The common answer leans against forms of orthodox economic narratives, which asserts that smallholders are not ‘workers’ as such but a part of the ‘petty bourgeoisie’ (151), a distinction almost absurd considering the nature of work performed by these workers.

### Production or Consumption?

Max Weber wrote about some of the complexities of class and status as consumptive rather than productive categories. The contrast between Marx’s and Weber’s notions of class are sometimes overemphasized at the expense of the continuities and parallels (Crompton 1998). Marx was a committed revolutionary, not merely an economic philosopher<sup>2</sup>, whereas Weber was “a promoter of ‘value-free’ social science...although Weber could not be described as an idealist, he was highly critical of Marx’s historical materialism” (33). Weber believed that “all social collectivities and human phenomena have to be reducible to their individual constituents, and explained in these terms” (33). Weber defined classes as existing when people shared a “specific causal component of their life chances in so far as this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income” (Weber in Crompton 1998, 33). Weber’s analysis of classes was less abstract Marx’s; it was also more multifaceted, explicitly detailing social-cultural factors such as leisure and consumption. Weber anticipated the rise of bureaucracies and subsequent upsurge in what would today be

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<sup>2</sup> As Marx famously said in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, “the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”

referred to as 'white-collar' workers, or the "new middle class" (Zeitlin 1990, 179) of technicians, civil servants and managers. Importantly, Weber did not see classes as communities, although he allowed that classes "represent possible and frequent, bases for communal action" (Weber in Crompton 1998, 33-34). Weber, contra Marx, did not view class-based revolutions as either imminent or historically inevitable. The critical difference is Marx's construction of classes as a product entirely of production, whereas Weber's 'class situations' reflected 'life chances' in the market, or relations to consumption (Crompton 1998). 'Status groups' could be associated with honour and prestige, and thus central to identity. Weber also argued that concentration of power was not confined to the economic sphere (Zeitlin 1990) and specified *consumptive* and productive factors in determining class and status:

For all practical purposes, stratification by status goes hand in hand with a monopolization of ideal and material goods or opportunities, in a manner we have come to know as typical. Besides the specific status honor, which always rests upon distance and exclusiveness, we find all sorts of material monopolies. Such honorific preferences may consist of the privilege of wearing special costumes, of eating special dishes taboo to others, of carrying arms...the right to pursue certain non-professional dilettante artistic practices, e.g. to play certain musical instruments. Of course, material monopolies provide the most effective motives for the exclusiveness of a status group; although, in themselves, they are rarely sufficient, almost always they come into play to some extent (Weber 1944).

For Weber one's relation to the market was at least as important as relationship to the means of production in determining 'social status', which co-existed with 'class' as a central concept. In "contemporary societies, 'consumption processes' are in the process of becoming...more important than production (or 'class') processes in shaping social identities and explaining social behaviour, and that as a consequence the consumer has become a more suitable case for sociological treatment than the producer" (Crompton 1996, 113).

The working class as a potential revolutionary force is also of central interest. Marx predicted that structures of inequality, the “differential access to the ownership and control of productive resources, would lead, via the class struggle between labour and capital, to the revolutionary overthrow and eventual transformation of capitalist industrialism” (Crompton 1998, 8). But class actions, much less revolutions themselves, have been rare exceptions to the general condition of workers’ political passivity in capitalist economies (see Dunk 1991, 22-27; Dunk 2002, 878-900). As Rose notes of Marx’s ‘inevitability thesis’,

In sum, oppressed classes would mobilize around common conditions, against the power of the dominant class that oppresses them. But observers of social movements have been asking since 1848 [the height of the Chartist movement and of waves of mostly abortive revolution across Europe] why the working class has failed to pursue such class-based politics (Rose 1997, 462).

It perhaps goes without saying that the outcome of the rare revolutions that have occurred have been less successful in liberating the workers than Marx so fervently both worked for and predicted.<sup>3</sup>

The intent here is to problematize and complicate the notion of class – especially to contradistinguish it from the often-essentialized and romanticized working class – and to knock class out of the iron cage to which it is consigned by some Marxists and others for whom economic status is the sole arbiter of the class situation. Economics is admittedly central to the class concept, but it does not stand as a lone variable. Having problematized notions of class, proletarians, labour and related concepts does not mean disavowing them. Some working-class

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<sup>3</sup> The Second Reform Act (of 1867 in the United Kingdom) did not provide universal suffrage, but it did ensure the majority of voters were members of the working class. The experience of the 1868 election — which returned a Liberal government and in which no working-class candidate was elected — no doubt tempered Marx's earlier optimism about universal suffrage being revolutionary in outcome.

'common sense'<sup>4</sup> (see Dunk 1991, 132-151) will have to apply without being encumbered in a futile attempt to locate a correct terminology, especially when there is no consensus and 'class' is so nebulous, especially compared to more tangible 'race' or 'gender' constructs; these categories currently enjoy a sharper focus in sociology, especially in the discourse of cultural studies.<sup>5</sup> Montrie claims that of the 'holy trinity' of class, race and gender, class is the one central and continuous element common in our relationship to nature (2011, 7).

Brown (2006) offers a grounded and concrete use of the working class as a "common sense concept...the term 'the working class' emerged in English in the early 1800s to describe anyone who worked for a living, as opposed to landlords, who do not have to work and who had a guaranteed income" (952) and Brown's 'common sense' definition is the one generally employed in this work.

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<sup>4</sup> "Common sense is the substratum of everyday forms of thought everywhere, and anti-intellectualism is strongly present in Anglo-Saxon culture" (Dunk 1994, 19)

<sup>5</sup> The emergence of postmodernism, asserts Kirk (2002) "has resulted in some cultural commentators identifying a new and unprecedented proliferation of social and cultural identities clamouring for recognition, thus reducing the importance of class, if not eclipsing it altogether" (343). Commensurate with this erasure was the suspicion of class as a "master narrative" (344).

## Chapter 2: The Origins of Nature and the Early Environmental Movement

Having clarified some of the definitional problems related to class and status, it is necessary to clarify 'environmentalism' and its categorical cousins: ecology, conservation, preservation and, as some would have it, Nature itself. This chapter will also anticipate the rise of the 'first wave'<sup>6</sup> of environmentalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries during what is today known as the Progressive Era.

### Deconstructing 'Nature' and the Discourse of 'Common Sense'

Raymond Williams (1980) does us the service of further problematizing the term 'nature' which is frequently bandied about and decontextualized. Nature is now "singular, abstracted and personified" (69). Under monotheism, and especially Christianity, the pagan animistic impulse was erased in favour of an abstract Nature which serves as second fiddle to God itself as a "minister and deputy" (69). The power of this abstraction is such, Williams notes, that even in the wake of the Darwinian evolutionary watershed that the "singular and abstracted....personified Nature" (70) retains its power even as that of God comes under assault. Williams enumerates and contrasts a "nature red in tooth and claw" (the words are Tennyson's, though Hobbes shared the sentiment that nature is a perpetual state of war) with "an extraordinary interlocking system of mutual advantage; a paradigm of interdependence and cooperation" (70).

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<sup>6</sup> Dowie (1995, 8) asserts there three waves of environmentalism. The 'first wave' was the Muir-Pinchot divide in the Progressive Era. The 'second wave' happened during the 1960s counterculture. The 'third wave' refers to those organizations that arose after Earth Day 1970, and produced organizations allied with the interests of the middle classes and which speaks the language of business and commerce: the win-win conciliators. Montrie (2011) and others have contested this historiographical construct as reductionist, but it serves a general purpose if one leaves room for nuances and exceptions.

Nature can be all these things and more. Nature can serve as the prelapsarian human stage of Adam and Eve. Or, conversely, “Nature is a whore” – according to famously tongue-in-cheek lyricist Kurt Cobain<sup>7</sup> – something to be used and discarded when spent. But when a sentence begins ‘Nature is’, Williams notes the tendency for the following appropriation of nature in the abstract to serve the writer’s specific purpose. And as an idea, nature contains copious amounts of human history, a fact so often ignored. Williams notes that by the eighteenth century, there were already camps of improvers and lovers or admirers of nature in existence. The uses and abuses of nature went hand in hand with the capitalists’ imposition of pauperization on what were to become the working classes of the new industrial order. Nature can be a reactionary idea or a reforming one. After Marx, Williams employs the notion of ‘alienation’ of man from nature. But this separation is not modern – industrial or urban – it is produced by earlier kinds of labour on the land, including rural labour. “It will be ironic if one of the last forms between abstracted man and abstracted Nature is an intellectual separation between economics and ecology” (84). Clearly Williams is drawing not a mere parallel but a singularity between exploitation of humanity and nature. The process is one and the same. The terms of despoliation of Nature – conquest, domination, and exploitation – are real human practices, relations between humanity and capitalism. As Williams notes, terms such as culture, art and class pose definitional challenges, but “the idea of Nature makes them seem comparatively simple” (67).

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<sup>7</sup> “Cobain, K. (1992). “In Bloom.” [Recorded by Nirvana]. On *Nevermind* [CD] New York: Geffen Records

Here, Williams notwithstanding, nature will have to stand largely on its own ample and concrete self-evidence, but that is not the approach to a problematized nature that reigns in academic discourses of deconstruction. Numerous literatures – and the works of William Cronon and the postmodernists are foremost of mind here – have dissected and deconstructed ‘nature’:

Far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it is quite profoundly a human creation – indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history. It is not a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for at least a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization. Instead, it is a product of that civilization, and could hardly be contaminated by the very stuff of which it is made... [and] hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural. As we gaze into the mirror it holds up for us, we too easily believe that what we behold is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires (Cronon in Taylor 1996, 7).

To cite but one problem, Cronon treated colonial settlers as “undifferentiated in their environmental behavior by any distinctions of ethnicity, class, gender or faith” (Taylor 1996, 6) although Taylor notes that Cronon has since retracted that holism by asserting that the utmost flaw of environmental history is its “failure to probe, below the level of the group and explore the implications of social division for environmental change” (Cronon in Taylor 1996, 6). The implications of this for an investigation of class in social-environmental history are obvious: one must ‘read between the lines’ and employ various not unproblematic aforementioned metonymic devices (e.g. ‘labour’ for ‘working class’) to locate the specific sensibility in defining working-class concepts of nature. Working class women are even more difficult to ‘read into’ the literatures of early nature writing; although there are important exceptions, this is a topic

that deserves focused and specialized treatment, and this is by admission principally a probe into working-class (white) men's environmentalism, a limitation of the existing literature.<sup>8</sup>

I do not assert here that questioning 'common sense' is an unworthy quest: some of the most compelling critiques have deconstructed long-standing assumptions and revised previously unquestioned terms that undergird them, and 'common sense' is frequently appropriated to reinforce hegemonic structures. It is simply that "for all the power of the post-modern critique, it neglects this physical, tangible world, a world of substantial bodies, and trivializes our experience in it" (White 1992, 874). "Certain radical forms of 'postmodern deconstructionism' ...question the concepts of nature and wilderness, sometimes in order to justify further exploitive tinkering with what little remains of wilderness" (Soulé and Lease 1995, xv). The threat to nature is so monstrous and imminent that the "prudent course is to directly challenge some of the rhetoric that justifies further degradation of wildlands for the sake of economic development" (1995, xv). John Livingston shared no such delusions or deconstructions of nature, and was unsparing in his indictment of humanity for the problems of real, tangible and unquestioned nature; what he questioned was our capacity to think beyond our own narrow self-interest. "Entirely out of control," he thundered, "the human technomachine guzzles and lurches and vomits and rips its random crazy course over the face of the once-blue planet, as though some filthy barbaric fist were drunkenly swiping with a giant

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<sup>8</sup> The social and environmental histories of class that do exist are almost exclusively written by men and about men: this enquiry is thus self-limiting in that regard. Reading 'working classes' for 'labour' may aggravate these unintentional omissions.

paint roller across an ancient tapestry...we are left with a miscellaneous rag-tag assortment of odd and disconnected relics" (2007, 19).

As inhabitants of a newly modern industrial society, we found ourselves in an increasingly uneasy relationship with nature (Ariensen 1998). That relationship had an ethical, not purely rational dimension to it; there were "moral limits to what we [could] do to non-human living beings" (153), creatures who inhabit the very same nature whose very existence postmodernism questions. This relationship created "obligations...embedded in us as a part of our moral nature" (153). However, Deluca and Demo instead argue a doctrinaire postmodernism; the 'deconstruction' and 'historicization' of wilderness is of "vital significance", they claim, while allowing that such deconstruction "can be harmful politically" (2001, 555). They further argue that "the sublime feeling produced by wilderness is not an innate, universal feeling but a culturally conditioned response...not so much a feeling but a commodity produced through specific techniques; deconstruction...shatters the belief that wilderness is a natural object that people will 'naturally' respond to. Wilderness is not a natural fact, but a political achievement" (555). Environmentalists, they further claim, need to "accept that wilderness does not have value in and of itself but instead has social value that must be communicated and fought for" (556). These sorts of view are commonly found throughout the 'deconstructionist' camp of postmodern academia and they appear to reject the idea that the

non-anthropocentric wilderness – comprising the ten million species that inhabit the Earth – as having any inherent ‘existence value’.<sup>9 10</sup>

It is not ‘nature’, however, but the term ‘environmentalism’ that poses a bigger challenge for the purposes of this paper. That definitional challenge is best elucidated by providing a short history of the concept as employed in the history of the decidedly middle-class movement that arose to protect it.

### The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in the Middle Class

Environmentalism has a longer history than is generally accepted. Common historical accounts locate it in the counterculture in the 1960s, a decade bookended by Rachel Carson’s 1962 *Silent Spring* and the infamous Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969 and Earth Day 1970 (Montrie 2011) But environmentalism’s predecessor ideologies arose as “a core concept of a complex of social movements that first appeared in response to the urban and industrial changes [arising from] rapid urbanization, industrialization and the closing of the frontier...” (Gottlieb 1993, 7) which were part of a throng of changes and an “intensification of the harsh distinction between rural and urban life” (Thomas 1983, 243). To begin to understand today’s environmentalism, it is important to briefly note the history of the middle-class form it takes, which is rooted in the

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<sup>9</sup> For a complex exploration of humanity’s ethical obligations to a non-anthropocentric nature see Ariensen (1998, 153-162) and for an examination of the concepts of existence and intrinsic value see Attfield (1998, 163-168).

<sup>10</sup> Here, for the purpose of this work, I take the inherent value of the natural world as a given and nature as deserving of protection from modern ‘progress’ and the ravages of industrial capitalism, as Livingston (1981) has argued.

division of labour and the increasing tendency of Western cities to act as centres of consumption, not production.

While nature appreciation and other early forms of valuing wilderness are evident in England as early as the 1700s (Worster 1977; Sachs 1992; Thomas 1983), the genesis of the early modern environmental movement is commonly attributed throughout the literature to two major historical developments: the colonialist settlement of North America – especially the American West in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – and the corresponding and contemporaneous rise of mass urban populations under industrial capitalist expansion, with particular reference to the rise of a metropolitan bourgeoisie increasingly divorced from processes of production. But even this history has a history.

According to Worster (1977) the term ‘ecology’ – often interchangeable with the ‘economy of nature’ – first appeared in 1866, but its history precedes that and is traceable to Europe, primarily England. Nature writer Gilbert White and Charles Darwin are but two of the more recognizable names associated with the interest in nature that preceded the rise of a nature preservation movement. This development was a product of the rise of science and philosophical inquiries that grew from the Enlightenment watershed. While these early developments are not of central interest here, they merit some acknowledgement because they inform the emergent bourgeois nature conservation ethic.

White died in 1793 as the Continent was rocked by revolutions and just as his England was becoming the first nation to enter the industrial era of modern capitalism. Manchester’s population doubled in the 1790s alone. In one description, “what had once been a slowly

moving stream quickly became a thundering cataract plunging over a milldam” (Worster 1977, 13). The remnants of feudalism and of communal subsistence farming were soon swept away in the turmoil. The commons, upon which generations immemorial had depended for their livelihood, was walled off through Acts of Enclosure and other oligarchic measures that drove peasants into burgeoning cities to work as proletarians. In Scotland the infamous Highland Clearances devastated local culture by forcing crofters off their lands to create space for industrial scale sheep farming for wool export, driving the people into urban centres and creating generations of emigrants to the colonies. Industrial capitalism’s throughput, then as now, required inputs both of humanity and nature.

This virulent industrial capitalism and attendant social dislocation spread to America and “never again would it be possible...to take for granted a sense of permanence or stability” (Worster 1977, 14). The reading of Gilbert White “became a drug to deaden the senses against the landscape of ruin in Manchester, Birmingham and Pittsburgh, as well as a point of renewed contact with a rural nature shrinking into a vague memory” (16), at least for literate burghers.

While reading and writing natural history essays may seem an effete pursuit out of touch with the unfolding zeitgeist and material reality, White’s work and that of others like him provided “streams of healing for the discomforts of civilization” (16) and tellingly were some of the best-selling literature of the age (Thomas 1983), albeit in a society where literacy was restricted to the middle and upper classes. “Nature was not only beautiful; it was morally healing” (26). This natural history had a profound impact on later writers; H.D. Thoreau and John Muir, who would become sanctified figures of the nature canon are but two (Worster 1993). Ecology then as now

“remains...a subversive science... [a] revolutionary appeal to an earlier time when man’s economy worked in harmony with nature’s,” Thomas alleges (1983, 23). But ecological thought had from its earliest days been built over a framework of class distinction. As Thomas notes, “the taste for the wild and the irregular was much more likely to seduce the well-to-do than the poor, struggling for subsistence, or the agriculturalists, still battling with the land” (1983, 264). The less well-to-do remained chained to productive activities, then as now.

There is, Worster (1977) asserts, an undeniable continuity from White’s works of nature literature to the forerunners of the contemporary middle-class ecology movement. But unlike White, writers like Thoreau were keenly aware of the tectonic change taking place, change which “was rapidly replacing older static models of the economy of nature with new ones that emphasized ecological change and turbulence” (63). It was apparent that the history of post-Columbian America was one of “violent ecological change” (66). The New England from which Thoreau wrote had been irreversibly degraded by the removal of forests for the agriculture on which growing manufacturing towns depended. By 1880, Massachusetts had only 40% of its original forests. ‘Ecology’ itself would transform, and the ideology of science would eventually become a more potent ingredient thereof than White’s Arcadianism and its sometimes paganistic strain of nature worship.

In 1805 Lewis and Clarke had reached the Pacific overland and paved the way for the enhanced removal – by killing or relocation – of the native inhabitants of western North America and their immediate replacement by generations of east coasters and Europeans. Gone with the aboriginal inhabitants was a belief common to many of them that “humans and other forms of

life formed a single society...salmon constituted a nation comparable in stature and rights to human nations" (Nash 1989, 117). These ideas were, like the people who believed them, simply obstacles to be removed. "Kill a buffalo, starve an Indian" was the battle cry of General George's Crook's western cavalry and the elimination of the great herds of buffalo were a prime example of the utilitarian approach to both nature and people (Helvarg 1994). A trenchant commitment to industry rode along with the settlers en route to the West (Jacoby 2001). War with Mexico would soon provide further settlement territory, annexing what is now the American Southwest, including California, soon to become ground zero in the emergent philosophy of 'conservation'.

### Chapter 3: Utilitarianism and the Debate for the Soul of Conservation

The works of Darwin are central to ethical debates, and not only those about the (now) commonly accepted shared origin of nature and humanity. As importantly, Darwin's biologically levelling exposition was an antithetical and socially heterodox scientific counterpoint to the hierarchy central to the catechism of Christianity, which subjugated all of nature in service of humanity (Foster 2000, 13). Darwin effectively put humans *back* into Eurocentric nature, even as Genesis had catalogued their eviction from Eden for original sin. As Thomas Hardy (in Worster 1997) wrote in 1910:

Few people seem to perceive that the most far-reaching consensus of the establishment of the common origin of species is ethical; that it logically involved a readjustment of altruistic morals, by enlarging, as a necessity of rightness, the application of what has been called "the Golden Rule" from the areas of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom (185)

Through his magnum opus *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, Darwin was to be a key figure in the development of the notion of 'biocentricity' (Worster 1977). We are "all netted together – fellow brethren on a single, shared planet" Darwin exclaimed (187). His work led to no less than a scientific as well as a social revolution.

Scientific ecology was central to the middle-class nature conservation tenet that unfolded at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hays claims that 'conservation' was, more than anything else, a scientific movement (1999). Its leaders came from "fields such as hydrology, agrostology [and] geology" (2). These professionals set the tone for 'conservation' – the 'wise use' of resources, to use Gifford Pinchot's term – that was to become a flagship policy of Theodore Roosevelt's administration. Its core principles were rationality and the efficient development of 'natural

resources'. Hays argues that the conservation movement must be understood as one of "applied science rather than democratic protest" (2). Its adherents were not "Malthusian prophets of despair and doom" (2). Who, Hays asked, should decide the course of the development of America's natural resources? Hays answered his own question:

The correct answer to these questions lay at the heart of the conservation idea. Since resource matters were basically technical in nature, conservationists argued, technicians, rather than legislators, should deal with them. Foresters should determine the desirable timber cut; hydraulic engineers should establish the feasible extent of multiple-purpose river development and the specific location of reservoirs; agronomists should decide which forage areas should remain open for grazing without undue damage to water supplies. Conflicts between competing resource users, especially, should not be dealt with through the normal processes of politics (3).

The struggle for resource policy, Hays further claims, has been "myopic" and the "people versus the interests" strain of debate owes its putative historical inaccuracy to "the disinterestedness of the historian and the social scientist...often accepting implicitly the political assumptions of eliteism (*sic*)...invariably sympathetic with the movement, conservation historians have considered their view to be in the public interest" (1999, 3). Hays does not, it would seem, reveal any awareness of the irony of accusing an entire movement's historians of elitism while explicitly supporting an all-encompassing resource policy crafted by politicians and middle-class technocrats.

### Whose Nature? The Rise of 'Conservation' and Utilitarian Perspectives

What Hays does do, however, is get us straight to the heart of the central question of this review: what is 'conservation', and in whose hands lie its proprietorship? Prior to John Muir and his peers entering the fray, the idea was fairly straightforward, and the quotes above generally outline the precepts: conservation was wise utilitarian use, based on a "Gospel of Efficiency"

(Hays 1999) of natural *resources*. It was an unapologetically anthropocentric and economic doctrine which aimed to preserve those aspects of nature that were of particular benefit to humans while abjuring the rest; predators were especially detested as they preyed on both domestic animals, game and other “socially necessary species” (Thomas 1983, 276) reserved for hunters’ rifles. Conservation arrogated the notion that scientists and technocrats could manage nature in a rational manner that would be of benefit to all (humans). It managed down the increasing public outcry over the visible destruction of nature by subjugating it to scientific rationality. As a doctrine, ‘wise use’ came complete with the colossal pretence that politics had been excised from the debate. And central to these policies, in the context of rapid economic and population growth, were decisions about water use and development: irrigation, fisheries, damming and the creation of reservoirs. Hydrographers would make decisions about water use (Hays 1999). Water’s utility became and remains a central flashpoint in resource and conservation politics. This was and is especially true in the arid West.

As Merchant (2007) argues, Americans began to appreciate wilderness only as the forests – perhaps the most evident manifestation of nature despoiled – began to visibly disappear. And while forestry was an issue in the West, water use was also a matter of public debate in a way it had not been in the East. Into the fray stepped John Muir, an unlikely saviour and highly romanticized “mythical founder of environmentalism” (Deluca and Demo 2001, 550). Muir was a draft-dodger who had “no interest in fighting to save the Union or free the slaves” (Nash 1989, 39). Muir did, however, care deeply about nature. Muir realized his concerns would not be popular with his contemporaries (one imagines they would be more consumed by questions of civil war and slavery) and his entry into ecological politics was initially a tepid one. Tempering

his biocentricity and ethical impulse, Muir cloaked his emerging politics in the mantle of anthropocentrism. The only way to save the American wilderness, Muir concluded, “was to persuade the American people and their government of its worth *to them*” (41). Later ecologists like Aldo Leopold used the very same approach.

Muir’s tack was to change, however, when he and Gifford Pinchot – Roosevelt’s chief forester and advisor – famously clashed over the damming of a California river (the infamous Hetch Hetchy Valley debate) to create a reservoir for San Francisco. Muir “held nothing back when it came to attacking people who would destroy the wilderness” (Nash 1989, 41). Protection of nature, even a nature couched in anthropocentric terms, became the object of what Nash called a “holy war.” This language gave the crusade a moral intensity rarely before seen in American political life; the controversy stirred the entire country and especially east coast city dwellers (Hays 1999) who had come to value unspoiled nature. And it most famously pitted Muir’s ‘preservationist’ ethic squarely against Gifford Pinchot and his ‘conservationist utilitarianism’ (Merchant 2007). Though Muir engaged much sympathy for his biocentric views, Pinchot prevailed. The dam was built.

This debate and Muir’s campaign and loss is a foundational one in the historiography of middle-class environmentalism (Dowie 1995), where utilitarian ‘conservation’ becomes distinct from the project of ‘nature preservation’. Arguments for a more biocentric nature had momentarily lost out to arguments for ‘wise use’ of resources, and the issue was to become a formative one in the battle for the soul of ‘conservation.’ In the history of environmentalism that has been written following Muir’s defeat, the bifurcation of the movement into utilitarian

(conservationist) and biocentric (preservation) camps has had a lasting impact that continues in today's debates over the uses and abuses of nature's bounty, debates which continue to have a class element built into them, and one which tends to assign the working class the role of destroyer of middle-class nature. Under capitalist industry, the working classes, especially the rural constituent, remain chained to processes of production in a way that urban consumers are not.

Gottlieb (1993) has assailed this narrow historiography of the movement, which has focused on the 'nature's saints' version to the exclusion of other activists, those whose concerns were more urban. Nature, by these standard historical accounts, was something that happened outside of cities. The sharp focus on the Muir-Pinchot divide has obscured the role of class in resource policy, including but not limited to 'conservation' (of resources) highlighted during the Theodore Roosevelt administration in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Utility, claims Gottlieb, was the guiding principle of the early conservationists. Even Muir, today viewed as a spokesperson for biocentric values, once wrote that "American logging should draw on the Prussian approach to forest management, whereby the state woodlands are not to lie idle but are made to produce as much timber as possible without spoiling them" (22-23). A broad consensus emerged at the turn of the century, with Muir's Sierra Club and the Boone and Crockett Club, an elite mostly eastern wildlife protection and hunting association both signing on. The vision balanced what Muir called 'preservation' with the Pinchot's 'right use' of resources. "The fundamental idea of forestry," thundered President Theodore Roosevelt, was "the perpetuation of forests by use" (23). From this standpoint, forest protection was not an

end in itself but a means to “sustain the resources of our country and the industries which depend on them” (23).

Unregulated timber cutting had become a major public issue, not only in the West but across the country (Gottlieb 1993). Rapid depletion of forests had created a “timber famine” (22) and paved the way for interventionist policies. The intent was not to “lock up forest reserves as a form of wilderness protection” (22) but to curtail more destructive practices that were offensive to so many. The shift was to the development of “appropriate logging for forest management approaches as defined by Gifford Pinchot and others” (22). The conservationist coalition, already strained by the Hetch Hetchy debate, fell apart after the 1912 elections (23). In the late 1920s and 1930s, after the Progressive Era had drawn to a close, conservation as expertise and scientific rational management became the movement’s dominant ideology. This created a gap into which a more biocentric wilderness advocacy movement eagerly stepped, capitalizing on “popular reaction of the post-Civil War influence of private corporations in federal public lands policy” (Hays 1999, 261).

Even Gottlieb’s revisionist version of history is not without its critics. Montrie (2011) has assailed the historical “periodization” of environmentalism, which divides it into “meaningful chunks...part of what led folks to identify *Silent Spring* as the beginning of it all, and what keeps them repeating this claim over and over, is that it serves as an all-too-easy way to understand history” (5) he asserts. “But writing workers into the story moves the origins of environmentalism back in time and requires recognition of otherwise unrecognized and

underacknowledged moments and experiences as key points of change, complicating the stories we tell” (5).

It is thus important to note the middle-class origin of environmentalism inherent to the Muir-Pinchot controversy, since questions of production and consumption would continue to exist at the heart of the environmental debates in the years to follow.

#### **Chapter 4: Class and Early Nature Preservationist Politics**

This chapter will examine the role class played in the origins of the early nature preservation movement, and locate its basis in the antipathy to life in the emergent mass urbanity.

There is a kernel of truth and a certain continuity in the binary oppositions between utility and preservation set out in the previous chapter; workers with utilitarian values versus aesthetes, divides between those who argue for an anthropocentric (possibly aesthetic, material or spiritual) or an intrinsic value<sup>11</sup> for nature and against those who believe that nature is a simply a resource to be exploited, between those who work on the land year-round and those who live in cities, primarily relating to nature as a consumable recreational resource. Consequently, the divide is deeply carved between urban and rural, between bourgeoisie and proletarian, between those for common sense rationality and against those for whom nature is viewed primarily through a distancing lens of abstraction. These essentializing narrative oppositions continue to provide conflict-driven media tropes (MacDowell 2006; Gottlieb 1993) every time loggers or other resource workers find themselves at odds with those who value Nature for its own sake, and in these media stories preservationists are invariably middle-class city-dwelling radicals (see Dunk 1991; 1994). And at the root of the historic divide, although it is not always spoken about in such direct terms, lay questions of socioeconomic class.

As Merchant (2007) claims, land, labour and capital are linked together in a framework centred on modes of production. As the division of labour proceeded apace, the number of people

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<sup>11</sup> One problem with the notion of intrinsic value is that it implies those who recognize it are willing to give up scarce resources to maintain them (Attfield 1998); this assumes that all who share these views have the same amounts of resources to cede. Under industrial capitalism, such equality of surplus resources does not exist.

employed in primary industries plummeted as Western countries industrialized and more people worked in urban industry. An increasing “physical and intellectual difference between people and nature opened up” (33) and those intellectuals – artists and writers and other ‘mental labourers’ – came to appreciate nature aesthetically; they were removed from the necessities of daily life in farms and forests. This distinction between physical work in nature and intellectual work about nature remains apparent even today.

Throughout European history, Dunk (1994) argues, “the character of one’s relationship to nature has been one of the ways in which social distinctions have been defined” (78). Over the course of working history, most people have known nature through their bodies by working directly in it; this creates a gulf between them and those who intellectualize and abstract Nature (Merchant 2007). One of the distinguishing features of the middle class today is their relative distance from sites of production and primary productive activity (Gottlieb 2004). Middle-class environmentalism to this day continues to draw its support base primarily from urban areas correlated with high education levels (Buttel and Flinn 1978; Samdahl and Roberston 1989) reflecting the schism between types of labour performed. Middle-class wilderness preservationism was historically marked by an explicit antipathy to city life (Gottlieb 1993, 29): this view prevailed among the movement’s most radical advocates including preservationist Muir and conservationist William Hornaday. Muir was “especially hostile to urban living” (30). The anti-urban outlooks of the early preservationists were linked to class bias; often “the objection to urban life was less to the physical environment of the city than the moral behaviour of its inhabitants” (Thomas 1983, 246). The appeal of the country and the natural world was thus a negative one, an antipathy to city life borne of the new urban form

(Nash 2001). “It was this recurring urge of town-dwellers to turn to the wild for spiritual regeneration which lay behind the subsequent movement to preserve mountain scenery or tracts of waste and moorland before they were all swallowed up by human progress” (Thomas 1983, 269). Nature provided not a means to a living, but a restorative balm for the soul, at least amongst the urban bourgeoisie. But nature worship rested on a false ideology, since this appeal “rested on a series of illusions” (250) about the fictive innocence of the countryside and its inhabitants as distinguished from the Dickensian conditions found in the growing metropolises. For Nash “the appreciation of wilderness...appeared first in the minds of sophisticated Americans living in the more civilized East...lumbermen, miners, and professional hunters...lived too close to nature to appreciate it for other than its economic value as raw material” (Nash in Jacoby 1997, 325).

#### Class Distinctions Come to the Fore

Disapproval of the lower classes has a long history in societies whose basis rests on a foundation of inequality. Such views were often on display over the issue of hunting – but not all hunting. The terms “pot hunting and pot shot, or hunting for food, entered the language as depicting acts of lower-class cowardice and ill-breeding, as distinguished from the upper-class sportsmen [who] pursue his game for pleasure” (Gottlieb 1993, 30). Hornaday, director of the New York Zoological Society made the same distinction between classes of hunters, and called for sanctions against those who “sordidly shoot for the frying pan” (30). Hornaday’s arguments, Gottlieb asserts, were “structured as an appeal to his upper-class supporters, whom he urged to “take up their share of the white man’s burden” (30). Disputes over hunting – who should get to hunt and for what purpose – only “reinforced the strong perception that preservationist

debates were primarily disputes *between* elites, between those who wished to leave the natural environment in a pristine state and those who viewed it as a place for recreation and pleasure” (31). Although hunting traverses classes, note Deluca and Demo (2001), hunting for food is historically associated with lower rural classes. “All members of the lower classes of southern Europe are a dangerous menace to our wildlife” (552) claimed Hornaday. When the National Park service was created in 1916, it had “all the trappings of an institution run for and by the elite,” run by a wealthy businessman “as a kind of fiefdom, a playground for the wealthy, whose support for a parks system he hoped to secure” (Gottlieb 1993, 31). Promotions were aimed at these elites. Tourism was primarily an upper class activity, and management sought to establish grand hotels catering to the wealthy. Promotions were designed “to reach a hand-picked elite, capable, they hoped, of passing the habit of parks travel down from above” (31).

What radically changed access to national parks and wilderness was the unanticipated introduction of the automobile, eagerly adopted by the middle classes and some workers who could afford them (Gottlieb 1993; Lipin 2007). With travel to remote mountain vistas no longer limited to those who could afford the elite wilderness travel afforded by the train or horseback, debates over the appropriate use of wilderness areas – and who could use them – took on a new urgency. Tourism – nature as a consumptive activity rather than resource development as production – became a major driving force determining national parks usage policy. During the 1920s, park traffic through Yosemite alone increased tenfold (Gottlieb 1993). The defence of wilderness as an elite enclosure, “a landscape that would reflect class-based values that include the leisurely escape from urban contexts tinged with the working classes and their polluted lives, the civilization of the wild national treasure for the privileged few, and the romantic

aestheticization of a pure wilderness conveniently purged of indigenous groups” (Bandy 2008, 4) was to become an ugly but undeniable aspect of early nature preservation movements and their advocacy of the parks system, which by definition excluded much primary production. Locals, both native and settlers, were relocated to assure the purity of wilderness under the new parks. It is an exclusionary legacy that the environmental movement writ large continues to struggle over and come to terms with.

### Toward a Working Class Wilderness

Historical associations between the privileged class and the origin of nature preservationism are numerous (Bandy 2008) if not always well documented. While the wealthy were alarmed at the intrusion of the hoi polloi on what had for millennia been seen as their exclusive preserves, working-class wilderness was not without its advocates. Forester Robert Marshall, not frequently referenced in the rise of nature preservationism, was one such figure. Marshall “proposed a common thread for a movement split between those focused on the management and/or protection of Nature and those who defined environment as the experience of daily life in its urban and industrial setting” (Gottlieb 1993, 15). “The liberation of society,” Marshall stated, was a condition for the “liberation of Nature, and the liberation of the natural environment from would-be exploiters was an essential condition for social liberation” (15). Marshall was an advocate against the development pressures on forest lands and especially of the activities of logging companies which led to declines in productivity and increased soil erosion and precipitated the “ruination of forest beauty” (16). Marshall saw wilderness as “a region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by any mechanical means, and is sufficiently spacious that a person crossing it must have the

experience of sleeping out” (16). Marshall argued that the wilderness belonged to all people, not simply to elites who demanded exclusive use. In 1925, just as the Progressive Era and city beautification movements were drawing to a close, Marshall wrote that “people cannot live generation after generation in the city without serious retrogression, physical, moral and mental, and the time will come when the most destitute of the city population will be able to get a vacation in the forest” (Marshall in Gottlieb 1993, 16). During the New Deal era of the 1930s, this idea appealed to the administration, which convinced Marshall to head a new outdoors recreation office through which the Forest Service would “contrast itself as a kind of blue-collar alternative to the Park Service” (17). His best known work, *The People’s Forests*, was severely critical of the role of both the state and the forest industry in “destroying wilderness, and in injuring the work force, the community, and the land itself” (18).

Marshall was a forceful advocate for nationalization of forests, having viewed what happened to natural areas left in private hands (Gottlieb 1993). Public ownership, Marshall believed, provided a natural means to a social end. “Social welfare is substituted for private gain as the major objective for management” (17). Marshall envisioned a new labour and rural economic development strategy and careful land use planning for the benefit of all, not merely the elite. This linkage of forest protection with social policy was, according to one journalist from *The Nation*, “the best assurance for future generations that the forests could provide a green retreat from whatever happens to be the insoluble problems of their age” (17).

Marshall aimed to establish parks or wilderness areas where working people would have ready access. The public should acquire “at least 562 million acres of the 670 million existing acres of

forest, for their social and natural value” (Merchant 2007, 242). Wilderness appreciation had once been seen as “snobbish,” but working people could benefit from wilderness if given access, Marshall believed. Factory workers who “experience our machine civilization in its rawest and most extreme form” (Gottlieb 1993, 18) were a natural constituency for Marshall’s vision. His friend Catherine Bauer, then head of the Wilderness Society strategically noted that not only would urban proletarians benefit the most from wilderness experiences, but in so doing they could broaden the political base of the wilderness preservation movement.

These were radical social ideas and revolutionary language for their time. Alarmed, key figures in the Wilderness Society and other reactionary forces set out to derail Marshall’s and Bauer’s objectives, worried about worker radicalization. Marshall was relentlessly rebaited, taunted by members of Congress on the House Un-American Activities Committee for whom the notion of ‘democratic wilderness’ posed an existential threat (Gottlieb 1993; Dowie 1995). In 1939, Marshall died unexpectedly at thirty-nine, and this brought to an end his idea of a combined social and protectionist vision. The ‘peoples’ forester’, who fought to combine a love for the wild with a commitment to social justice, never had the chance to fully realize his vision. Over time, he has become an “ambiguous historical figure representing environmentalism’s divide between movements, constituencies and ideas” (Gottlieb 1993, 19). If his brief life and work proved one thing, it is that the linkage of class and wilderness is an idea with roots in social and political history. Equally, it proves that these ideas are seen as radical and will be fought by moneyed interests and even state actors.

Marshall's ideas did find some traction, however, in the New Deal politics of the Franklin Roosevelt administration, even if Marshall's preservationism was not fully embraced. The creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) allowed policy-makers to explore a central question: how could three million working-class men be put to work in wilderness areas without destroying natural features? Integrating the conservation of natural and human resources in the form of the Corps generated a fierce debate about conservation politics, but the public remained supportive of the CCC (Maher 2008). The work of the CCC "expanded the meaning of conservation beyond the efficient use of natural resources to include concern for human health through outdoor recreation, for wilderness preservation, and for ecological balance, all of which became central to postwar environmentalists" (10). The CCC, Maher argued, introduced both conservation and the welfare state to the nation and "in doing so helped to raise broad geographic support for the New Deal" (10). The CCC's appeal crossed ideological divides. It appealed to liberals, working-class families and conservative minded upper-class business owners who sold their goods and services to the CCC and its members. Roosevelt used the CCC and the ideology on which it was centred to extol his New Deal to the public. In so doing, he courted not only the working class but converted "many of these working-class enrollees to the conservationist cause, thus expanding the movement's composition" (13). The CCC accomplished a goal no less than "democratizing conservation"; what began the Great Depression "as an ideology dominated by the likes of Gifford Pinchot, in other words, ended...the New Deal Era with additional intellectual baggage borrowed from thinkers such as Frederick Law Olmstead, Bob Marshall and Aldo Leopold" (225). The redefined and realigned movement that resulted reflected not so much the narrow and limited

constituency and concerns of Progressive Era conservation but increasingly broadened the base and expanded the interests and scope of postwar environmentalism writ large (Maher 2008), and was the forerunner of the modern environmentalist movement, which would eventually transform into one characterized by those adorned in business attire and speaking the technicist language of government, law, science and business.

## Chapter 5: Culture Clash: The Working Classes and Scientific Conservation

This chapter will examine the role that the ideology of science has played in discourses of environmentalism, and show how science (and by extension education) fetters working-class involvement with an increasingly credentialist environmentalist movement (Dunlap and Mertig 1992; Gottlieb 1993). Workers have their own views of what constitutes risk and detriment to the environment around them, even if those views are not generally derived from technical or scientific knowledge as claimed by the wealthier middle-class forms of environmentalism.

“Without recourse to science,” Sachs declares, “the ecology movement would probably have remained a bunch of nature freaks and never acquired the power of a historical force” (1992, 30). The secret to ecology’s success is found in its ‘hybrid character’ – at once suspicious of science and technology, and at the same time willing to question the very basic assumptions of modernity and the development economy. The ecology movement, Sachs continues, is “the first anti-modernist movement attempting to justify its claims with the enemy’s own means” (30). Ecology is not, of course, synonymous with preservationism or environmentalism, but ecology does provide the scientific platform from which much of modern day preservationism is argued; it has left the biology departments and become a worldview in its own right (30). And while Rachel Carson’s work will not receive extensive treatment here, to ignore the import of *Silent Spring* would be to leave out one of the seminal works on which the modern scientific ecology movement is based. Carson’s scientific work provided one launching point for the 1960s ‘second wave’ of ecological politics and became an integral feature of countercultural questioning of the basic assumptions of industrial capitalism.

The social actors in mainstream environmental politics with its inherent scientism, Hays (1999) affirms, are overwhelmingly drawn from technocratic professions: scientists, engineers, planners, economists, all occupations of the middle class. They have “distinctive values and objectives, the peculiar social and political roles of these people are also part of the environmental drama” (5). Technical matters, “are laden with disputes over what problems are to be chosen for attention, how they will be examined, and how to assess the available knowledge” (6). The world of environmental expertise is shaped by formal and specialized knowledge, not by the concrete, experiential context of working lives (9). Environmentalism is increasingly in the province of the educated, and education is an unequally distributed commodity under the neoliberal capitalist form of state.

As Gordon (2004) has stated, “mainstream environmentalists’ are typically middle or upper-middle-class. Because of their secure economic status and white-collar occupations, they can afford to be concerned with the preservation of nature and other ‘quality-of-life’ issues” (2) (see also Dowie 1991, 1995; Gottlieb 1993). These middle-class environmentalists, asserts Silverman (2004), “have tried to claim a longer view of the difficulties involved in domination over nature and to call for a sacrifice of economic opportunity in pursuit of a universal good – a sacrifice that does not directly affect the middle and upper class as much as it does workers” (130). In contrast

Labour environmentalism is an outgrowth of occupational health and safety, a particularist goal to protect the members of unions. To be fair, sources of non-labor environmentalism are not simply disinterestedly objective or indicative of a higher ability to understand the needs of the world than the supposedly narrow, prosaic concerns of the workers’ representatives. Often, greens are equally as class- and interest-based as labour. Moreover, the unions can at least claim a certain representativeness (132).

Although, as Silverman claims, the source of our environmental woes is the production and consumption inherent in industrial society and derives from “the same source as the exploitation of workers” (131), little has been written about the ways in which subaltern groups, particularly the working class, understand human-natural relations (Bandy 2008; Gottlieb 1993). This is especially true of social history where benign indifference (Taylor 1996) rather than hostility best characterizes the academic response to environmental history (see Jacoby 1997). As has been noted, nature appreciation has frequently been depicted as an educated, elite pursuit. Writers as early as Wordsworth asserted that “many people were prevented by defects of their education or social situation” (Thomas 1983, 267) from viewing nature as the middle classes did. “A feeling for romantic scenery was not inherent in mankind...it took a long course of aesthetic education to instill a taste for barren rocks and mountains. The urban classes, it was supposed, could derive no good from immediate access” (297) to nature.

For most of its first century, the environmental movement has focused almost exclusively with the preservation of an ostensibly pristine nature (Deluca and Demo 2001). This “narrow, class...based perspective of what counts as nature leads the environmental movement to neglect people and the places they inhabit, isolating the movement from labor and civil rights concerns and rendering it vulnerable to charges of elitism and misanthropism” (542). Work performed in nature is devalued and derided; as has been shown, this tendency goes back at least as far as Muir. Contrary to the economistic Maslowian reduction<sup>12</sup> so often implicitly

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<sup>12</sup> Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs” asserts the idea that people are motivated by differing levels of need. From this viewpoint, the ‘working class’ is primarily concerned with meeting basic economic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Once these needs are met, secondary or higher level needs are sought, “self-actualization” or the reaching for the full potential of human

referenced by the media and others, Dunk (1994) has found that economic concerns in isolation from other variables are inadequate in understanding the nuanced views working people have of nature and its would-be self-appointed saviours.

Studying forest workers in northwestern Ontario, Dunk's ethnographic research illuminates a subject that gets scant attention. The views of the workers he interviewed are "connotatively linked to class and regional oppositions so that they become metaphoric and metonymic symbols of other class and regional conflicts" (1994, 14). Their relationship to the environment defies economic reductionism and essentialism and "transcends a narrow concern with employment and includes many concerns about the state of the forests" (15). Many loggers expressed concerns about destructive forestry practises. The use of herbicides and their effects on both humans and wilderness were regularly cited. Logging procedures themselves were also "frequently criticized, especially clear-cutting practises and consequences such as waste...soil erosion, desiccation, climate change and the effects mechanical harvesting equipment...have upon the environment" (21). This awareness generates an ambiguity and confusion amongst these workers who simultaneously work and live in the forests they cut.

Despite the comprehensive list of environmental grievances as enumerated by Dunk, however, northern Ontario forest workers do not identify with the environmental movement:

environmentalists function as the 'other' in opposition to which forest workers construct their own social identities. External (southern and urban) domination is a recurring theme in Dunk's

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agency becomes a goal. Working-class people don't 'do' environmentalism as such because they remain primarily concerned with meeting more basic, functional needs and are disinclined to idealism. There are many critiques both of Maslow's hierarchy and its utility in explaining current social conditions and economic functions.

(1994) interviews; perceived lack of regional control is central to the anger often expressed about ‘meddlers’ who are viewed as southern, urban ‘do-gooders’ uninterested in local concerns and viewpoints.

Finlayson (1994) interrogates environmentalist exclusivity directly: is there a place, he asks, for fishers in fisheries science? There is an almost insurmountable challenge in “synthesiz[ing] a progressive relationship between scientific and other forms of knowledge” (101). The relationship is often an adversarial one, and negotiation is difficult when there are “contradictory sets of norms, traditions and values that inform the cognitive realities of concerned social groups” (101). Science, he asserts, has a very limited range of knowledge on which data it will confer the status of ‘valid’. For inshore fisheries workers to participate in any negotiations on the future of the fisheries, they would have had to become “proxy scientists”<sup>13</sup> (103) and “renounce and destroy a seamless web of culture and practices that defined them as individuals and as a people and to accept an alien culture and practise” (103). They were expected to accept the DFO’s findings “on faith,” ironically enough, because the “knowledge claims of members of each culture were literally heard as incoherent by the other” (103). Resource conflicts come to be seen as “intractable because they appear to defy resolution, even though [they are] dynamic and potentially resolvable” (Todd 2008, 6) and the seeming

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<sup>13</sup> There are many examples of working people without the benefit of formal science training proving themselves equal to the task of countering official versions of science offered by business. Worker-led asbestos research began in Canada in the 1970s largely as the result of Paul Formby, a miners’ union health and safety representative in Yukon’s Clinton Creek asbestos mine. Formby fought the company – Thetford Mines – for more information on about exposure levels before learning how to take and analyze samples on his own. His findings led to an eight-month strike against the offending mine. See McPhee (2014) for Formby’s and others’ examples of agentic working people serving as “barefoot epidemiology” and as “organic intellectuals of the new environmentalism” (2014, 131).

intractability may result from differences of social identity which “manifest themselves as group affiliations, ideologies, power differences and organization structures” (6).

Todd (2008) has concluded that the nature of the resource conflicts as well as the conventional procedures used to address them (litigation and administrative appeals of regulated activities) very seldom lead to any resolution. Of those checks and balances that have been applied to free market practises as a result of the conflict resolution approach, it is unclear that they have resolved any socioeconomic crisis or resulted in greater protection for natural ecosystems. It is hardly surprising, then, if extractive commodity workers have little or no faith in scientific and bureaucratic processes when so little discernable change is made evident by their *own* processes.

Class expressed as educationally-derived knowledge is an exercise of power on many fronts. As Richardson, Sherman and Gismondi (1993) have argued in their guidebook to participation in environmental public hearings:

The purpose of environmental impact assessment is to predict the effects of large industrial projects or other deliberate human actions, such as the building of dams, on the environment. To be done well, environmental impact assessment requires a good deal of knowledge of what the environment is, and how its functioning will be affected by the activity in question...if science is organized knowledge of any kind...what kinds of science are needed for environment impact assessment in the modern context? (77).

Simply put, the practise of scientific environmentalism is an expression of class power. There is an “inherent power imbalance between project proponents and members of the public at an environmental public hearing” (11). Members of the public without scientific expertise cannot expect their contributions to be taken seriously. For environmental groups, this means that

staff and consultants they hire must have advanced training in science, law and other post-secondary disciplines. Environmental decisions are outside the province of lay persons – working people – who even if so motivated are not equipped to usefully participate in the theoretically democratic process of environmental decision-making. To do so, they must counter the binary oppositions, hierarchies, rhetorical metaphors or tropes and dispute the “belief that scientists deal objectively with facts, while environmentalists and concerned citizens may be well-meaning, but deal with emotions and values” (16). Subverting these dominant discourses is difficult because members of the public lack the *social authority* to do so. Establishing authority to speak, Richardson, Sherman and Gismondi (1993) assert, leads to questions of social identity and “it quickly became apparent that [it] was a highly political and hotly contested act” (18).

The scientific nature of ecology has time and again proved an insurmountable peak to climb, and separates many working people and government departments and environmental organizations from pursuing what could be common goals because their views on what constitutes valid knowledge are so far apart. As the gulf between the DFO and inshore fishery shows, one basis of knowledge – science – is written and the other – the experiential knowledge of the fisher folk – is verbal. Each side questions the legitimacy of the other’s basis of knowledge. In Canada, decisions made by a science-centric government bureaucracy has led to decision making characterized by “broad areas of unappealable administrative discretion, high levels of secrecy and few formal avenues of access to information and participation” (Richardson, Sherman and Gismondi 1993, 19).

Leisure activities are also a cultural expression of class identity. Buttel and Flinn (1978) state that the concerns of the well-educated – concerns such as nature preservation – may be attributed to the types of leisure activities they prefer. They cited “appreciative outdoor recreation” and that “leisure interests ...reflect suspicion of a working class that fails to appreciate nature” (435). However, as Dunk has shown, the blue-collar timber extraction workers he studied cited access to local natural amenities as central, not incidental to their lives (1991; 1994). The well-educated ‘elites’ Buttel and Flinn refer to may simply appreciate nature in a different manner, with workers preferring snowmobiles and fishing and the ‘elite’ stereotypical outsiders preferring their birding books and binoculars. As Dunk states, “to the horror of animal rights activists and eco-tourists...interaction with nature is heavily mediated by technology and much of the leisure enjoyment of nature does involve appropriating it rather violently, thereby reflecting the relationship with nature entailed in logging” (1994, 22). At one level “hunting is an expression of a predatory relationship with nature. However, it is described as a family activity and as an opportunity ‘just to be out in the bush’ for the pleasure of being there” (22). Those who oppose hunting are seen as hypocrites: “they’re walking around with leather shoes on, eating chicken, they’re eating beef” (26). Again, “the Boys” (as Dunk calls his male logger research cohort) invert categories and declare themselves to be more humanitarian than those (urban and southern) ‘others’ who eat meat raised in a cage which “suffered a hell of a lot more than any of these animals that were ever caught” (27) by local hunters.

There is, Dunk notes, a subtext of masculinity to much of these consumptive activities and “paradoxically, masculinity is expressed most strongly in the endless series of jokes and

innuendoes regarding homosexuality...men who, from the Boys' perspective, are overly interested in some element of so-called high culture are suspected of homosexuality" (1991, 96). While Dunk does not equate environmentalist sympathy directly with suspicions of homosexuality, the implication that 'real men' can act only in certain culturally narrow and consumptive ways may be inferred from the subversion of effete and overly-intellectualized forms of thought by effeminate 'others'.<sup>14</sup> A critical cultural analysis derived from Bourdieu would assert that this process of delineation is "ultimately a class struggle over the definition and possession of legitimate knowledge and cultural and symbolic capital" (1994, 23).

Understanding the meaning of environmental issues in male workers' culture, Dunk asserts, requires analyzing their identity formation in the multiple ways in which meaning is "overdetermined by existing narratives about social divisions rooted in class and space" (1994, 14).

Dunk's central enquiry is posed as a question: why do these forestry employees in northwestern Ontario – many of whom openly declare their concern about environmental issues and *do not* hold environmentalists responsible for declining forest-based employment – have such a negative view of environmentalists? The jobs-versus-environment dichotomy, Dunk asserts, is the "primary narrative structure of much mass media reporting on environmental issues and this undoubtedly both reflects and reinforces what is a widespread common-sense understanding of environmental issues" (1994, 15). It can also be argued that this dichotomy is "a gross oversimplification of complex and more nuanced arguments on both sides" (15).

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<sup>14</sup> In "The War Against the Greens" David Helvarg notes young men yelling "fuck you, faggots" at "counterculture longhairs" amassing for an Earth First! "Redwood Summer" protest in northern California (1994, 1).

MacDowell (2006) similarly assails the oversimplification of these over-emphasized albeit significant tensions. Workers and environmentalists, she argues, share an experience common to both – being pressure groups and marginalized ones at that, in a society that places value on ‘progress’ and ‘development’ at the expense of biodiversity and workers’ and others’ needs for a healthy environment and workplace.

Inarguably, forest communities across the country are under siege, but it is not from environmentalists. Employment in the timber sector has declined over the same period that production quantities have risen sharply. The total production of roundwood has doubled in Canada between 1960 and 1988 (CPAWS 2011). At the same time, logging employment declined by over ten thousand workers (Forestry Canada 1991, 29). Changes in technology in the forest industry, exhaustion of the resource and economic downturns are all more salient causes of lowered employment statistics than environmental measures taken by government in response to the lobbying of forest conservationists. Surprisingly, Dunk found that forestry workers are aware of the causes of their precarious employment situation and do not blame it on the actions of environmentalists, even while they claim to despise them (Dunk 1994). Part of the reason for this disconnect lies in the reality that, for locals, nature preservation movements are “elided with other aspect of the regional interpretation of relationships between northern Ontario and ‘the south’” (1994, 18).

In any society, what amounts to useful knowledge is highly contextualized: it is socially, culturally and geographically specific. In the boreal forest-belt logging towns of northern Ontario, common sense and anti-intellectualism are central to the ideology of working-class

people (Dunk 1991). 'Nature' is not an abstraction when life is "dense and concrete" (Hoggart in Dunk 1991, 133). Notably, for Dunk, it is related to the way that knowledge is defined and realized. It "represents an inversion of the dominant ideas of society of what constitutes important and useful knowledge" (1991, 133). This makes it democratic in nature, since it derives from "epigrams, proverbs...jokes, anecdotes" (133) and what Geertz refers to as a "clutter of gnomic utterances" (in Dunk 1991, 133).

The impact of technological change, industrial restructuring and resource exhaustion is not lost on Dunk's subjects. Many faced indeterminate layoffs, and were aware of the real causes of their precarious employment. As one 36 year-old logger with eighteen years of experience told Dunk, job losses "are more because of the state of the economy down here. The machines are cutting more and more so they don't need people" (1994, 16). The same logger, Dunk notes, was concerned about destructive forestry practises while at the same time proclaiming that he had 'no use' for environmentalists. Most notably, not one of Dunk's subjects blamed environmentalists for job losses. The antipathy towards them was more rooted in the politics of identity and symptomatic of a generalized hostility to outside interference than a mechanistic linkage between the activities of environmentalists and the massive changes in the industry.

Related to conceptions of common sense is the working-class division between mental and manual labour, also a general distinction in class theory (Poulantzas 1978 in Dunk 1994). A raw and unapologetic anti-intellectualism is central to working-class views of life and nature. It is not, Dunk (1991) argues, that the blue-collar classes are not capable of higher thought; it is that the dominant culture tends not to value the things they think about. In contrast, those who

perform mental labour “generally possess a greater amount of cultural capital. They have more formal education and have acquired appropriate tastes in clothing, entertainment and food, and have learned proper forms of speech and writing” (Dunk 1991, 137) which echoes Weber’s status distinctions referred to in Chapter 1.

In a process sociologists call ‘stigma management’, while constituting their identities blue-collar workers may invert categories. The “formal, abstract<sup>15</sup> knowledge of the professional middle class is represented as being empty. Real knowledge is common sense and derived from direct experience” (Dunk 1994, 28); it is based in the immediate, the local and the concrete – experiential knowledge that city (and southern) others are presumed to lack.

Many resource workers, it bears noting, also live out their lives in the regions in which they work. For forestry workers, this means they live in ready access to the forest and natural amenities it provides and this lived reality complicates their views of nature. In British Columbia, access to wilderness is a main attraction for prospective residents of forest industry-based communities (Marchak 1983 in Dunk 1991). In California, access to a rural, wilderness-based lifestyle is also a “dominant theme in logger’s culture; to the logger, the city represents a crowded, unhappy place where individualism and freedom are stifled” (Carroll and Lee 1980 in Dunk 1994, 20). Similar sentiments are found in logging communities in Ontario (Dunk 1991; 1994). As Dunk has shown, debates about the utility of nature take on a concrete meaning for

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<sup>15</sup> The working class, it bears noting, is not incapable of its own form of abstract thought, not least of which is religion. Engels noted the tendency of some pre-Chartist workers: “they went regularly to church [and] listened with inherited reverence when the Bible was read” (Engels in Dunk 1991, 22).

those who work directly with nature as well as live within it, and working people are forced to react when their livelihood is threatened by 'do-gooder' outsiders.

What utilitarian 'conservationists' and later preservationists and their successors managed to accomplish, especially when their efforts were fixed on regulation of resource extraction industries, was the effective criminalization of those who attempt to survive outside of the market economy (Jacoby 2001). Writing about the regulation of timber cutting in the Adirondacks in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jacoby claims that

The most striking feature of conservation was its reconceptualization of many long-standing practices as crimes; hunting as "poaching," the cutting of trees as "timber theft," foraging as "trespassing." While inhabitants often resisted these redefinitions, employing their detailed knowledge of the local landscape to surreptitiously hunt, fish and cut timber on state lands, such behavior now carried with it the risk of arrest and fine...(1997, 329).

What this resulted in was something that regulators had not foreseen: the creation of a popular culture of resistance among the affected local population. When law-breakers were prosecuted, getting witnesses and local jurors to convict proved a near-to-impossible task; the inhabitants of the region "often profess to be unable to recognize their nearest neighbors while cutting State timber a few rods away; they do not know their neighbor's horses and oxen, nor the location of roads and lots...every conceivable evasion is resorted to, and all local influences are brought to bear to screen offenders against the State from justice" (330). The widespread resistance to game laws was animated by a staunch belief that the statutes had a clear class flavour to them. The locals drew a distinction between their own sustenance usage and urban hunters; the wealthy sports hunter did not need the game he was shooting, and locals resented the conflation in law of their meeting basic subsistence needs with the leisure activities of elite

outsiders and their recreational consumption of nature. "Make the game laws for the rich as well as the poor" (332) was a commonly expressed sentiment. Locals viewed the killing of a deer for its rack morally wrong and even incomprehensible; they found "the code of the sportshunter, with its elaborate rules of the chase, wasteful, frivolous, even barbarous" (332). Accordingly, many locals did not favour wide-open exploitation of the environment as their foes often supposed of them. They drew a distinction between their taking firewood and building wood and that of a purely capitalist exploitation of state timber "for the purposes of marketing and selling the logs again" (331). Inhabitants even successfully appropriated conservation ideology and methodology itself, claimed Jacoby; they "transformed many of the game laws into tools on their behalf, demanding strict prosecution of all violations committed by tourists – the more powerful, the better" (333). Private reserves were "unquestionably the most hated facet of conservation in the Adirondacks...supported by laws that greatly increased the penalties for trespassing and protected by a force of guard that collectively exceeded the Forest Commission's corps of foresters, private parks were resistant to local claims in a way that the Forest Preserve lands never were" (335). The publicly-held lands at least allowed right-of-way and even the taking of game during hunting season. Private enclosed preserves, however, were immune to all such concessions and because of their sheer size, going around rather than over them was virtually impossible. As well, locals believed that animals belonged to those who invested time in catching them, and that ownership of game 'in a state of nature' should not derive from the mere ownership of the land. "Wild game, wild fish and wild birds belong to all the people" (335) claimed one opponent of the private reserve system expressing a common sentiment. From the locals' perspective, property owners had no right to limit access to the

commons. In other words, the Adirondacks' poor rural residents explicitly challenged the very legitimacy of claims of private ownership of a common pool resource, and problematized the very notion of what property is and what rights derive from mere paper title to the land.

The local people "advocated a narrower set of uses of the environment than those allowed by state regulation" (Jacoby 1997, 329) and thus complicated the temptation to frame disputes about resource use with the state government in simple dichotomous terms i.e. 'exploitation' or 'nonexploitation' of local resources. Such a binary opposition is misleading. "Far more complicated and contested questions incited events like 'The War in the Adirondacks': What is nature? Who should control it? And toward what end?" (330). Although Jacoby is writing about a specific site and time, these essential questions bedevil all who attempt to narrate oppositions between locals and outsider 'others' who want to enclose, regulate, legislate, advocate or even mediate disputes over the 'proper' uses of the natural world. There in the Adirondacks, the control of natural resources "undergirded all other structures of everyday life" (336) as it does elsewhere, by the creation of enclosures of the commons which make it challenging for locals to support themselves and by driving the landless poor into the labour market, as has so often been the case in the social history of common pool resources.

The conversation about problems with our relationship to nature involves many pre-suppositions about the "true nature of nature" (Dunk 1994, 18). This includes the idea of what exactly constitutes ecological decline (Grundman 1991 in Dunk, 1994). Like all culture and linguistics, the semiotic field is littered with meanings remaining from past conflicts of ideology. As already noted, the broadening of the bourgeoisie or middle classes was the starting point for

a new appreciation of the natural world; nature was a place to get away from 'it all' – the noisy, messy and decidedly downmarket urban chaos. By contrast, the sensibility (aesthetic and otherwise) of the blue-collar classes is often said to be dominated by 'utilitarianism' (Dunk 1994, 18). The rural working class in particular "took a practical view of nature, seeing it primarily as a source of resources for use, rather than as an object of beauty to be appreciated in its own right" (Stallbrass 1990 in Dunk 1994, 18). The working class did not revere nature appropriately and with the awe it inspired in bourgeois society. The noise, picnics, music, games and other lower class pursuits were widely reviled by middle-class nature lovers, who placed a premium on the proper mode of aesthetic asceticism in the "sacred halls of nature" (Frykmand and Löfgren in Dunk 1994, 18).

One of the reasons that cooperation between workers and professional environmentalists is difficult, MacDowell argues, is "class tension, cultural differences, and a different perspective of the work process" (2006, 423). Middle-class environmentalists assume workers want jobs at any cost, and workers for their part are frustrated at environmentalists' apparent lack of concern about job loss. But the stereotypes cut both ways, claims MacDowell. Workers stereotype preservationists as "hopeless romantics bent on preserving wilderness for the sake of a few owls" (423). Power and economic imbalances inherent to capitalist industrialism have created economic injustices and environmental ruin, but affected groups often have differing and even opposed priorities – all in the context of rapidly shifting global economic conditions. Better communication and a more tolerant appreciation of the complexity of the issues is key; environmentalists need to become "more sensitized to how class relates to ecological issues, and by workers developing more consciousness of the environmental and social consequences

of their actions” (423). The greatest problem for both groups, MacDowell believes, is the enormous power of industrial capitalism and its unrelenting pursuit of economic growth at any cost, a tendency related to what Rogers (1998) assails as the ever-increasing concentration of political power in the economic realm.

Skogen cites various findings that people from “working class, farming, fishing and ethnic minority backgrounds were prominent in environmental groups addressing local problems or engaged in immediate environmental repair, whereas humanistic/social fractions of the new middle class (NMC) remained dominant in large-scale environmental organizations” (Skogen 1996, in Norton 2003, 110), which tends to support the main argument that working people *do* perform environmental service work, albeit in a different fashion and on a scale that may not be as visible as that performed by mainstream environmental organizations, to which a public communications and self-promotion tack is a dominant feature of their campaigns.

Class *per se* should not cease to be a concern for those advocating for labour and environmentalist cooperation. Eckersley’s (1989) ‘advantage thesis’ acknowledges that class is still important in expanding or limiting social actors’ abilities to shape and respond to socioeconomic and environmental change. Not paying attention to class’s impact or to the political economy of power under conditions of neoliberal industrialism runs the risk, in Norton’s words, of “environment policy and the environmental restructuring of industry...becoming something that is ‘done to’ workers and the less well-off members of the traditional middle class by NMC professionals” (2003, 115). And while class location in and of itself does not predispose anti-environmental sentiment in working-class people in

economically imperilled regions and sectors, it does increase their vulnerability to policies which radically restructure their economic and social statuses – however good the intentions of the promoters of such policies may be in finding a “just transition” to more sustainable practises.

## Chapter 6: Workers and Environmentalists: A History of Conflict

“Are you an ENVIRONMENTALIST or do you work for a living?”  
Bumper sticker common in the U.S. Pacific Northwest in the 1990s

This chapter will examine examples of conflict arising from environmentalists’ involvement in resource development battles, and critique their relative lack of interest in the economic concerns of working people in the course of their campaigns. The case of the U.S. Pacific Northwest’s ‘war in the woods’ in the 1980s and 1990s will serve as an example of this exclusionary tendency.

As Dowie has argued, environmentalism is the only mass movement that was not “forged in oppression” (1995, 3), unlike other NSMs such as the women’s or civil rights struggles. That fundamental social disconnection from other counterculture movements has tended to shape the mainstream version of environmentalism as an enclave of elites, one that remains fundamentally conservative in its mission, and one where Nature is envisaged as a site of aesthetic consumption, not primary production. In contrast to other noisier protestations such as the anti-war movement, “environmentalism remain[ed] genteel, white and very polite” (3). This caginess in critiquing the basic assumptions of industrial capitalist developmentalism and accumulation have led to the formation of a ‘third wave’ of environmentalists, falling over each to work with, not against, the interests of business (Gottlieb 1993; Dowie 1995). This social class schism is reflected in the environmental movement’s general antipathy toward coalitions with other social movement groups, although there have been some noteworthy exceptions.

To ask why the working class is comparatively passive on questions of environmentalism and nature preservation compared to the putatively more activist middle class (Bandy 2008; Dunk 2002; Gordon 2004) is the wrong question. It is necessary rather to ask “more specific questions: how do notions of what constitutes the environment shift across the class divide?” (Bandy 2008, 2). What is the role of class identity in determining “what one regards as appropriate trade-offs between environmental protection and resource use, between ecological sustainability and economic development?” (2). Relatively little is written about how subaltern groups – and the working class in particular – understand nature and human relation, Bandy reminds us.

Many studies have reported that while the agenda of environmental organizations is widely supported by the middle class (Buttel and Flinn 1978), they also assert that much working-class opposition to environmental actions may be due “primarily to the nature of reform tactics undertaken by the state and environmental organization elites” (434-435) and thus it is highly problematic to characterize the working class as either ambivalent or hostile toward environmental goals. However inclined or disinclined the working class is towards environmentalism in general, the fact remains that the membership and staff of ENGOs are “upper middle class – well-educated, white-collared and moderately affluent – is beyond doubt” (Dunlap 1975; see also Gordon 2004). Education is the class variable most closely related to environmental support, exceeding either income or occupation alone (Buttel and Flinn 1978; Samdahl and Roberson 1989); this invokes the ‘status group’ conception of Weber (1947) noted earlier in this paper which complicates the notion of class as a purely economic

category. But education is commodified under neoliberal capitalism, and higher education is more readily accessible to those endowed with class privilege.<sup>16</sup>

A recurring criticism of nature preservationism is that the dominant conceptions of nature are still shaped without the participation of low income people and their representative organizations (Bandy 2008). This has been acknowledged by some organizations; the executive director of the Sierra Club called for a “friendly takeover of the Sierra Club by people of color... [or else] remain a middle-class group of backpackers” (Deluca and Demo 2001, 541). Although race has received more scholarly attention, Deluca and Demo argue, class is equally central to the notion of justice. Part of the mutual suspicion is traceable to the view many workers have of environmentalists: they are “elitist and aloof...extremists who [are] callously indifferent to the economic growth and job opportunities essential to the well-being of ordinary working people” (Dewey 1998). Dunk (1991, 1994) has noted that the image forest workers in northwestern Ontario have of environmentalists derives primarily not from direct interaction but from the mass media tropes. The workers’ image of the movement comes from the clichéd jobs-versus-environment trope, and this narrative “has a clear class connotation, specifically denotes a spatial relationship, and alludes to the question of knowledge” (1994, 28). Moreover,

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<sup>16</sup> Once believed to be the great equalizer, education has exacerbated and not ameliorated the class divide: three-fourths of children whose parents obtained a Ph.D. or professional degree earn at least a four-year college diploma. So do nearly two-thirds of young people whose parents earned a master's degree and half of those whose parents obtained a bachelor's degree. By comparison, only about a fourth of children whose parents attended but didn't finish college earned a bachelor's degree themselves. The numbers fall to about one in eight for kids whose parents advanced no further than a high school diploma (Brownstein 2013). If support for environmentalism is tied to education, the prospects for a shift in working-class active engagement is unlikely given current circumstances.

government bureaucrats, industry executives and non-local 'others' who determine the material conditions of workers' lives are also seen in class terms.

Some ENGOs have faced this problem head-on. By the 1970s, the Sierra Club realized that its public image had taken a beating: it was increasingly seen as a white, wealthy enclave. If the organization was going to attract a significant number of younger and more politically-minded environmentalists, it would need to more fully engage with other social and political struggles (Gordon 2004, 471). As a result of this realization, the Club held labour-environmental summits, the first in 1972. An AFL-CIO lobbyist in attendance warned those attending that environmentalists "have not recognized the needs and aspirations of the people. This no-growth nonsense, this feeling that society cannot grow further, is strictly an upper middle-class view of society, a view of those seeking to preserve their piece of the turf" he stated (471). But Sierra was stung by the reaction of much of its membership, especially over its support of striking Shell workers in 1973. Many supporters took the view that the Club should not involve itself in labour-management disputes nor involve itself in "left wing social action" (473). Despite much internal opposition, the leadership did not alter its position. A Club executive said that "wherever we find a common environmental interest with another group, no matter what its primary objective may be, we strengthen our cause by lending it our support" (473). Executive director Mike McCloskey understood the importance of alliances with the union movement and the specific objectives of the striking workers. He said in an address to the union: "we have more in common than divides us...we know that what is good for General Motors or Dow Chemical is not necessarily good for us all...in short, let those of us who are infused with both a

social conscience and with the environmental ethic join together in finding a common way” (475).

Foster (2002) has written about the “limits of environmentalism without class” (104) and has excoriated environmentalists for having “adopted a political stance that sets them and the movement that they profess to represent above and beyond the class struggle...and the redundant polemic of class warfare” (104). Some environmentalists, says Foster, blame both the capitalist *and* working class for the global environmental crisis. This analytical disconnection from production and capitalist accumulation – and their failure to see their own interests inherent in it – lies at the root of the class struggle over the usage of natural resources.

One case that clearly delineates the problems between workers and environmentalists – the dilemma of labour versus ecology – is the class war over logging that occurred in the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s, where the battles to save the ancient forests left “forest product workers and single-issue environmentalists at each other’s throats” (Foster 2002, 105). Preservationists were accused of being “enemies of the people” (105) and ecological activists characterized timber workers as “enemies of nature” (105). The northern spotted owl (whose habitat was threatened by the logging of old-growth forests) was to become a famous symbol of a “seemingly intractable conflict between jobs and environmental protection” (105). Environmentalists missed an opportunity to work in concert with rather than against loggers and other forestry workers, argues Foster. The narrow conservationist programme of mainstream environmentalism betrayed a lack of empathy for the thousands of workers who would be put out of work if the owl’s habitat was protected under the ESA

without concessions for workers. Foster also finds fault with the “unimaginative business response of organized labour” (105) and the divide-and-conquer strategy employed by lumber interests with the state acting as an ally of capitalist accumulation (Foster in Gottlieb 2004). The corporate-financed Wise Use coalition did not miss the opportunity to scapegoat environmentalists, and – harnessing economic fear and the anger of logging communities that environmentalists ignored – mobilized thousands of workers to organize against all manner of environmental protection, including sustained attacks on the ESA. It is important to understand that this ‘class war’ took place in the context of economic restructuring and the removal of limits on free-market exploitation of both human and natural “conditions of production” (107).

According to Foster (2002), by 1990 800,000 acres of intact old-growth forest were in protected public lands. Another 1.6 million acres were open to exploitation, and these were being logged at the rate of 70,000 acres a year. At this rate of extraction, old-growth forest would disappear in 30 years. In the radical right Reagan-Bush era, the state moved away from the longstanding principle of sustained yield and towards a policy of maximum liquidation of remaining natural assets and the implementation of silvicultural over ecosystems approaches. Regulatory impediments – on the exploitation of both humans and nature – were being stripped away under successive conservative regimes, regimes guided by the ideology of the Chicago School’s supply-side economics, which viewed forests as “fully managed” assets devoid of qualities other than as ‘natural resources’ and saw unions and collective bargaining and environmental regulations as fetters on the economic growth machine.

This proposed liquidation of forest ecosystems devoid of any ecological principle sent environmentalists into a flurry of activity aimed at halting or at least abating the Reagan-Bush doctrine of maximum yield and the attendant mantra of economic growth at the expense of both humans and nature. But ecologists failed to make the link between the ravaging of nature and the exploitation of the workforce that was central to the neoconservative economism of the federal state. They viewed loggers and logging companies as aspects of the same problem, failing to usefully distinguish between the two. It was a categorical as well as a strategic misstep for the movement. Environmentalists fuelled the 'jobs-versus-environment' dichotomy with their narrow, class-based rhetoric devoid of any empathy for imperilled working people. Preservationists in the 1980s used "every means at their disposal; blockading logging roads with their bodies, tree sitting, and filing a flood of legal proceedings designed to slow down and eventually halt the removal of ancient timber" (Foster 2002, 108). In 1988, a federal court upheld an environmental lawsuit and ruled that the federal government had violated the habitat provisions of the ESA. Ecologists had used both forestry science knowledge and legal means as instruments to fight for protection of the forests in the courts, and at least on this occasion had prevailed. Equally they understood the climate implications of so much carbon being sequestered in the forests, and the impact on climate should the remaining (if highly fragmented) forests be clear-cut. But their righteous indignation contained a fatal flaw, that of "the limits of environmentalism without class" (104).

The mutual antagonism of these forces – economism and ecology – signaled the emergence of contradictory conditions, which Merchant has called "ecological revolutions" (in Foster 2002, 109). These are oppositions characterized by "widening tensions between the requirements of

ecology and production in a given habitat and between production and reproduction” (Merchant 1979, 5). The result was a widening “ecological and class war as capital stepped up its efforts to exploit the old-growth forest, environmentalists responded on behalf of the forest, and the workers, caught in the middle, struggled to defend their economic livelihoods” (Foster 2002, 109).

An interagency panel of biologists laid out the ‘lines on the map’ of the 11 million of acres of intact forest in Oregon and Washington that would require legal protection – off limits to logging – if the threatened owl was to survive as the ESA required; the Forest Service estimated that implementing that plan would lead to the loss of 28,000 timber jobs over a decade (Foster 2002). The industry itself claimed the loss of all forestry-related jobs would be in the vicinity of 100,000. In 1990, the northern spotted owl was listed as a threatened species under the ESA. From that point the conflict, already highly inflamed, became an incendiary one. A series of legal instruments such as court injunctions were successfully applied, and in 1992 the Fish and Wildlife Service unveiled its final recovery plan which required setting aside only 5.4 million acres of old-growth with job losses projected at 32,000. At this size, the owl could still survive, but its numbers would be reduced by about one quarter. This was not an acceptable compromise to the Bush administration, and the secretary of the interior publicly mused about changing the ESA. The so-called “God Squad” (111) (comprising seven government secretaries and agencies with the power to override the ESA) was convened, which voted to exempt thirteen public timber sales from the habitat provisions of the ESA. They cut the size of the protected forest to 2.8 million acres, about half of what biologists believed was minimal for conservation of the spotted owl. This new plan would result in the loss of only 15,000 jobs.

Environmentalists labelled it an “extinction plan” (112). Even this was not enough for the timber industry and its shills in Congress; one Republican asked “it comes to this; are you for people or for the bird?”

Foster has assailed the tendency for the “establishment discussion to focus in a fetishized fashion on timber, owls, loggers, and environmentalists while ignoring the major historical agent of change: capital itself - including the capital-state partnership” (2002, 113). This partnership between capital and the state explains the continuity between the Bush and Clinton administrations and their similar management approach to the Pacific Northwest forest. Clinton was able to credibly claim in 1995 that “I’ve done more for logging than any single person in this country” (113) after he further opened up old-growth areas to extraction and to “aggressive thinning and salvage logging operations” (113) which further endangered the owl but also the Northwest salmon, itself a sustainable resource.

Foster (2002) notes that the timber interests stayed behind the scenes as much as possible, leaving lobbying to industry alliances and associations which acted as a public relations shield. He also assails the tendency of mainstream commentators to ignore “the historical dimensions of this ecological catastrophe brought on by the accumulation of timber capital” (113). The public is left not with a deeper understanding of how capital and its interests operate, but a false dichotomy of owls or jobs in which the state is “presumably neutral and capital is notable mainly by its absence” (113).

The class struggle characteristic of the Northwest timber wars came to the fore in 1983, when Earth First! activists stood between a running bulldozer and a tree in Siskiyou National Forest in Oregon (Foster 2002). Other tactics included sitting on dynamite, tree spiking, tree sitting, chaining themselves to equipment and forming human barricades on logging roads and “setting their feet in cement-filled ditches or inserting themselves in rock piles” (118). This path of direct confrontation was distinct from that of other environmentalists (such as the Sierra Club Legal Defence Fund) who relied on more scientific and legal means to realize forest protection. Forest workers looked on actions of environmentalists with extreme dismay and anguish; in their view, victories for environmentalists meant significant job losses for them.

Soon, frustration with what they saw as an extreme preservationist ethic was inducing many workers to display angry bumper stickers such as “I Love Spotted Owls – Fried” – often seen in timber areas of the Northwest. On a number of occasions, owls...have been killed and nailed to trees or road signs. One was discovered with its head in a noose (Foster 2002, 119)

Timber interests were all too eager to exploit and fuel the anger that threatened workers had toward ecological activists; it was a convenient foil that hid the reality that the industry had been shedding jobs for decades, long before any conservationist action had been put in place by the state. Many mills sponsored anti-preservationist lectures during work hours, stoking workers’ fears. But “more tragic...is the fact that environmentalists have sometimes fed this rage through the insensitivity with which they have occasionally greeted the plight of the workers. *Forest Voice*, a radical environmentalist publication, argued that “the problems of the workers threatened by displacement can be left to the condign sanctions of the market” (Foster 2002, 119):

A market economy does not maintain an industry simply for the sake of employing workers. When a product becomes obsolete or a resource runs dry, the economy adapts. Companies and industries have been changing or shutting down for 200 years and workers always find new jobs – the nation is not lacking for jobs; it's a natural, *necessary component of capitalism* (emphasis added). Chopping down forests for the sake of jobs is nothing more than social welfare, not something our nation prides itself on (119).

As Foster argues, these sorts of arguments are common to those who represent 'deep ecology'.

Dave Foreman, the cofounder of EarthFirst! claimed "the loggers are victims of an unjust economic system, yes, but that should not absolve them for everything they do...sometimes it is the hardy swain, the sturdy yeoman from the bumpkin proletariat so celebrated in Wobbly lore who holds the most...destructive attitudes toward the natural world" (2002, 119).

But it is not only deep ecologists but mainstream environmentalists who distance themselves from the working class. While they may not display an open hostility in the mocking manner of Foreman, they express their disdain with their "that's not our problem attitude – not to mention their interlocking directorates with major corporations and their...upper middle-class membership base" (120). Foster quotes the late Judi Bari, once a leading figure with Earth First!

I have even had an international Earth First! spokesman tell me that there is no difference between the loggers and the logging companies...I have heard various environmentalists say that working in the woods is not an 'honorable' profession, as if the workers have any more control over the corporations' policies than we do. As long as people on our side hold these views, it will be easy picking for the bosses to turn their employees against us (120).

This failure to distinguish between industry and worker and this reluctance to join hands with displaced workers represents nothing less than a failure on the part of many mainstream environmentalists. The 'war in the woods' took place in the context of neoliberal restructuring

and technological 'advances' and increasing exports of raw logs for processing elsewhere. Wage competition from the Southeast where right-to-work laws provide 'comparative advantage' has also played a role. But automation has been the main driver of unemployment in the timber sector, and environmentalists had little to say about it. As in Canada, logging in the U.S. was already producing more timber with fewer workers before environmentalists joined the fray; most of the decline in jobs took place before the northern spotted owl was even an issue (Foster 2002; Gottlieb 2004).

As Foster has noted, capital chose this period to launch a class offensive; Louisiana-Pacific demanded wage concessions from its workers, forcing them into a strike and eventual decertification. Weyerhaeuser demanded wage and benefit cuts and closed the mills when unions resisted. Although strikes continued throughout the region in the 1980s, unions suffered greatly in a "great reversal of their class war with capital" (2002, 122). And during all of these battles between capital and labour, environmentalists were missing in action. In fact, "middle-class environmentalists sometimes seem to go out of their way to separate themselves from workers" (122). These deep divisions emerged in a manner that explains the policy of the state in containing the ecologists' assault on lumber capital interests. The Bush administration took advantage of the dichotomy of interests in popular forces and employed a "divide and conquer" (123) strategy that was ultimately successful. The administration also opposed measures to aid displaced workers while claiming to act in their interests; to successive administrations, workers served simply as a 'fig leaf' for the interests of capital. Foster has assailed the "political and organizational consequences of this environmentalism without class, separating environmentalists from workers" (122). The failure of environmentalists to analyze the situation

in terms of capital's alienation of both labour *and* nature, and to display little to no empathy for workers under siege has fed the classic jobs-versus-environment dichotomy that continues as the foremost media trope of the conflict to this day (Gottlieb 2004). On occasions where environmentalists and workers do sit down together, as will be detailed in the next chapter, the mainstream media displays little interest, because it does not fit the narrowly defined narrative of conflict and inherent drama, one to which environmentalists have inarguably contributed both explicitly and implicitly. As Foster argues:

This situation is a problem not simply for workers and trade unions, but for any environmental movement worthy of its name. Capitalism as a system devoted to accumulation without end is inseparable from a capital-intensive, energy-intensive economy – and thus necessitates growing throughputs of raw materials and energy...surplus labor, economic and ecological waste. This should be differentiated from the basic needs of the majority of people, which have to do with the availability of steady and worthwhile employment and an improving quality of life, therefore having no inherent link to an intensive process of ecological devastation (2002, 131).

The job blackmail so often employed is thus more clearly seen as tied to a system that promotes profit by exploiting both humans and the natural world. A more successful and legitimate environmental movement would be one that breaks the “seemingly intractable conflict between jobs and environmental protection” (131) by replacing capitalist accumulation with what Foster calls ‘ecological conversion’ – planning new ways of working within nature and meeting the social needs of the working class. This means moving away from the status quo, conservative and detached stance that environmentalism is in some way above and beyond the class struggle, a position many ‘greens’ have taken. From an eco-socialist perspective, Foster argues, “there is no difficulty in seeing that the rapid destruction of old-

growth forest is not about owls versus jobs but ecosystems versus profits” (132). The real choice is between “economics divorced from all other considerations, and on the other [hand], life and society” (132). As long as environmentalism continues to be informed solely by middle-class ideologies, Foster’s vision appears an unlikely one.

## Chapter 7: Labour and Environmentalism: A Hidden History

“What we call Man’s power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with nature as its instrument” (C.S. Lewis quoted in Taylor 1996, 16).

This chapter will examine how working people in the labour movement have interacted with the concerns of environmentalism. There are examples of conflict (as detailed in the past chapter), but workers through their labour unions have also played a role in winning some key environmental battles and unions have been active in raising awareness by their membership of the ecological impacts of industrial capitalism. While much of the earlier work has focused on workplace safety, there is also evidence of a labour environmentalism that is less instrumentalist, and on occasion even biocentric. Whether labour and environmentalists can cooperate over shared goals is less a general question than a specific one; under certain conditions, conflict is inevitable, and under different conditions, coalitions are possible and even advisable (Gottlieb 2004).

According to Peck, if there is little labor in environmental history, there is even less environmentalism in labour history (2006). “Is there, then, much common ground on how environmental and labor historians think of the nature of labor?” (221), Peck asks rhetorically. For some labour historians “any call that decenters the shop floor and industrial wage earning represents a kind of heresy, a descent into either discourse or muddled ideas of cultural ‘difference’ that occlude the historical importance of wage earning and class analysis” (231). The narratives of labour and environmental historians are inevitably different ones.

Recent scholarship in the social sciences has often portrayed unions as social organizations “bereft of transformative potential” (Carroll and Ratner 1995, 195). In a steady stream of scholarly work from Marcuse to Gorz on NSMs, they claim, unions are the “reactionary foil to the more dynamic and contemporary social movements that revolve around the various politics of identity and everyday life” (195). While unionism may not be a chief generator of social change in recent decades (especially as its numbers and influence wane) there is much documented evidence that supports a competing narrative of unions that, if not always the leaders of broad-based coalitions, at least accords them their due in 20<sup>th</sup> century environmental history. It behooves us to remember the union movement is diverse, and that despite many conservative labour leaders espousing pro-growth treadmill sentiments, there are others taking risks, speaking out, building coalitions and challenging the political status quo. In many instances union leaders ran decades ahead of public opinion, not only on the more traditional territory of workplace safety, but on matters ranging from clean water to habitat preservation for threatened wildlife.

Conflating working-class environmentalism with labour-based environmentalism poses some problems, and not merely questions of definition and appropriate representation stated earlier. There are also complications of historiography and documentation. To almost the same degree that environmental history has overlooked class – both conflicts and examples of intermovement cooperation – environmentalism is under-documented in labour history, which has concentrated instead on other political coalitions within the NSM counterculture; the women’s, peace and civil rights movements are preferred areas of study (Dewey 1998; Peck

2006). This is all the more mystifying given that labour activism on environmental issues such as pollution precedes even the movement's Carsonian watershed of *Silent Spring* in 1962.

Silverman explains that "in keeping with labor's basic purpose and ideology, trade unionists had long thought of the natural world as a place they could not enjoy because of their exclusion from bourgeois leisure or as a site for resources which could enrich their members" (2004, 120). "If workers are placed in the same danger as nature, then industrial societies become increasingly problematic" (124). And in other words, "exploitive alienated labor, the basic form of Fordist industrial production is equally dangerous to health, psychology, and ecology" (124). The Miners' International Federation has argued that "the present crisis is a forceful reminder of the antisocial and environmentally catastrophic effects inherent to limitless economic growth and indiscriminate technological development" (125) but on the whole trade unionism has not opposed growth *per se*, simply some of its undesirable social, environmental and economic results. As early as 1978, ETUC claimed that "the logic of production and consumption in the pursuit of price and profit was intrinsically damaging to human beings and nature" (127). While this view was not widely shared, it did inform later environmentally-minded labour activists. Environmental topics continued to be regular features of the labour press from the 1980s onward.

There are significant instances of blue-collar unions working in concert with NSM groups including ENGO. Support for environmentalist positions is high across occupational and economic strata, notwithstanding some uneven distribution across socioeconomic sub-strata, disparities that began disappearing in the 1980s and 1990 (Norton, 2003). There are important

exceptions, such as in resource-dependent and highly contingent occupations such as logging, where environmental support is more muted and mediated by regional and social identity-based disparities (Dunk 1991; 1994; Obach 2004a).

“To the extent that union members are capable of securing a share of the growing wealth generated by the [production] treadmill,” claims Obach (2004b, 340); “union members have a material interest in expanding production...but the interests that unions represent are not monolithic” and neither are unions themselves. Contradictory tendencies exist in organized labour, whose memberships are diverse in occupational and social identifiers. Although occasionally expressing support for environmental protection measures, organized labour’s political agenda has been “decidedly protreadmill and at times explicitly antienvironmental” (342). While mainstream labour advocates for economic growth, some union activists within the movement have taken positions contrary to the industrial growth machine. Still, especially in the collective bargaining process, material gain for their members has been a constant item at the top of the agenda to the exclusion of broader social issues (2004b) and strident environmentalism is exceptional, not typical.

As key participants of ICFTU have asserted, it is necessary to “promote workers’ involvement in dealing with environmental issues from the shop floor to the UN Assembly hall” (Silverman 2004, 131). They further argue that “today’s unsustainable patterns of production and consumption are rooted in workplaces that are fundamentally unsustainable...in large part, a problem of work, of prevailing approaches to managing the workplace” (131).

To the extent that labour is metonymic of the working class, working people have played a key role in some of the most significant regulatory gains in North America. Despite having on occasion worked in coalition with conservationist and preservationist groups, unions have typically worked within the framework of capitalist economy rather than against it, as seen in the strong embrace of the sustainable development discourse noted by Silverman (2004). Culturally, this places them directly at odds with the types of structure-critiquing eco-activists who tend to volunteer with community-based environmental initiatives. Despite this, coalitions have been created across the class divide that have yielded some not insignificant gains.

Unions, Dewey asserts “helped spread awareness of environmental issues among working people, who were far removed from the professional middle class usually identified with environmentalism” (1998, 46). There are certainly many documented instances of labour and ecologists working together, but these campaigns generally receive scant attention from a news media that thrives on conflict and lacks the imagination to go beyond the usual news stories of opposition and struggle. Labour, contrary to this ubiquitous narrative of conflict, has “often exhibited a sophisticated understanding of environmental issues...unions [have] adopted relatively radical positions that were strikingly at odds with the views of the employers with whom they were supposedly allied against environmentalism” (46). One reason for organized labour’s support of outdoor wilderness preservation was its anticipation of increased leisure time for workers. Many labour experts expected that automation would lead, not to layoffs and restructuring, but to more leisure time for everyone (Dewey 1998).

Environmentalism politics and the politics of labour are two very different species, serve different constituencies and have a multitude of differences separating each from the other. Trade unionism “has been depicted as an institutionalized practice of organized capitalism, integrated into the legally-sanctioned apparatuses of industrial relations, and capable of lending at most a social democratic inflection to the political life of the state” (Carroll and Ratner 1995, 195). Labour’s chief purpose is not, after all, to bring an end to capitalism and realize a proletarian revolution. The central purpose of labour, and of collective bargaining in particular, is to get a bigger share of the pie for its members. Labour has been an essentially conservative force in political economic history, one that seeks to bargain within the constraints of industrial capitalism. In contrast to the historically culturally conservative labour movement<sup>17</sup>, nature preservation and other environmentalist groups are more dynamic both in orientation and organizational form; they inhabit and work within the terrain of civil society while the aims and strategies of labour tend to be state-centric (Carroll and Ratner 1995; Gottlieb 1993; Obach 2004b). Preservationist groups value informal networks and grassroots organizing, working with likeminded others. Labour unions are “characteristically viewed as limited to an older style of political contention built over a framework of hierarchy, not consensus. Their aims are framed in terms of the political integration and economic rights of workers – the pursuit of full social and economic citizenship” (Carroll and Rather 1995, 196). Labour also tends to harbour an innate suspicion of environmentalists (Dewey 1998) and there is ample fodder for those who want to suspect the worst of the other movement.

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<sup>17</sup> The early labour movement is historically implicated in opposing immigrants (the so-called ‘Oriental problem’ early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and many unions were unsparing of those with ties to the Communist Party. Those are but two earlier examples of labour’s innate reactionary conservatism.

Organized labour showed an early interest in fighting air and water pollution; this marked a significant move beyond the more traditional “preoccupation with wages and work conditions (Dewey 1998, 47). The relative simplicity of the problem of pollution, as well as its “anthropocentricity in conception and intent” (47) made fighting polluting both a popular cause as well as one that labour and the anti-pollution segment of the ecology movement could struggle against in unison. Water pollution was understood much more clearly than air pollution prior to the 1960s, and as early as 1958 there is evidence of labour’s involvement in the fight against it. In so doing labour was often at odds with the representatives of the industries in which they worked. One example is the AFL-CIO testifying before congressional hearings calling for stricter water pollution control measures, regulations that industry opposed (Dewey 1998). In so doing, labour “transcended self-interest... [displaying] an enlightened pragmatism that many Americans did not share” (50). Labour involvement in environmental issues has not been limited to pollution abatement and workplace health and safety issues, however. “Union support for wilderness conservation,” Dewey asserts, “is striking in view of later events and assumptions” (50). Between the late 1960s and the 1980s, Gordon emphasises, “workers, progressive union leaders, and environmental activists from across the country concluded that the spread of hazardous substances in the workplace and the spread of pollution in the environment represented two aspects of the same problem” (2004, 461).

In 1973, five thousand Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union members walked off the job at Shell Oil and eleven of the largest American ENGOs supported their strike: “for six months, striking workers and environmental activists battled the world’s second largest oil corporation to a virtual standstill. Workers and environmentalists returned Shell cards by the thousands,

endured threats and harassment, walked picket lines side-by-side, and argued that toxic wastes not only fouled the environment, but also threatened the lives of workers, their families, and their communities” (462). But the coalitions have proved difficult to sustain. In the late 1970s and early 1980s conservative elements in each movement revived ‘traditional’ values, “marginalizing the most vocal advocates of continued cooperation...mainstream labor and environmental groups mobilized their resources to defend core values – union jobs and wage increases on one hand, and the preservation of wilderness areas and endangered species on the other” (462). By the mid-1980s the alliance between labour and environmentalists collapsed. In 1975, environmental leaders had responded to labour’s concerns about job blackmail and other anti-worker tactics by forming Environmentalists for Full Employment (EFFE). These types of coalitions reached their apex, however, by the start of the more conservative 1980s. Part of the reason, argue Gordon (2004) and Gottlieb (1993) is that these coalitions were not borne of the grassroots, but formed at the level of leadership. The memberships of both movements proved a good deal more conservative than their leaderships tended to be. EFFE closed its doors in 1984, with a long-time staffer “candidly admitt[ing] that leadership-dominated coalitions for progressive causes are doomed...given these hard times and the political climate, we did not believe that this kind of organizing could be stimulated, much less directed, out of Washington” (Gordon 2004, 478). Gordon cites the growing neoliberal climate, the failure of top-down models and lingering class divisions as the three main reasons that environmental-labour coalitions ultimately fail. “When push came to shove,” he asserts, “the leaders of both movements were unable or unwilling to reconcile two very different sets of core values” (479) – those of union jobs, economic growth and rising living

standards for labour, and saving wilderness and endangered species for the environmental preservationists. However, evidence of continued working-class support for the environment (if not always for its representative organizations) can be seen in the rise of the environmental justice movement and the class-based opposition to trade pacts such as NAFTA (Gordon 1998).

MacDowell (2006) argues that the Canadian labour movement also has a long history of involvement with fighting environmental hazards. At least since the 1960s, and especially through the 1970s and 1980s, labour has been central to these struggles for 'environmental justice' and even habitat protection. Some of the battles in which they engaged led to occupational health and safety legislation and ensured a cleaner and healthier work environment for all workers, not only for members of labour unions. Discussions about environmental issues increasingly took their place alongside issues of staffing, time, money and more traditional labour movement agenda items at the bargaining table. As early as 1973, the Energy and Chemical Workers Union (ECWU) struck against Shell Chemical in Sarnia, in the process winning both recognition of joint health and safety committees and full disclosure of chemicals used at worksites. In 1981, The United Steelworkers of America (USWA) negotiated contracts with Denison Mines Ltd. and Rio Algom Ltd. to allow full inspection of their companies' health and safety records and contained a provision allowing for a shutdown of a workplace found to be unsafe (MacDowell 2006). In 1993, the OFL pushed the government to protect workers who refused to perform environmentally damaging work. The legislative outcome was Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights which amongst other achievements protected workers who blew the whistle on polluting employers. This achievement is indicative,

argues MacDowell, of a broadened social and environmental agenda on the part of the labour movement.

In British Columbia, the Suzuki Foundation and the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union worked together to fight pollution threatening local fisheries. They fought campaigns aimed at stopping pulp mill pollution, estuary destruction, dam projects, fish farming, poor timber extraction work, and other industry activities that endangered fish habitat. They also combined resources to teach timber workers about salmon stream biology. Rank and file members of local unions pitched in to help clean marshlands around the Fraser River. These examples provide evidence that workers can combine self-interest with an ecocentric approach serving broader ecological purposes.

The Suzuki Foundation has continued to work with labour unions as well as First Nations and environmental groups. One such coalition, the Georgia Strait Alliance, took the local municipal government to court over sewage outflow that was lethal to fish and which contravened pollution regulations of the Federal Fisheries Act. There is indeed 'power in the union' – a labour refrain that has taken on greater significance as union members increasingly work with others to clean up the world around them. One of the outcomes realized by environmentalists in the coalition is a recognition that workers are critical to stopping pollution at its source. As a Canadian Labour Congress policy statement claimed, "as trade unionists we understand instinctively the conflicts between the corporate bottom line and the public interest that underlie much of the environmental debate" (MacDowell 2006, 422).

While most of these accomplishments could perhaps be listed under the rubric of 'enlightened self-interest', the outcome has been somewhat greater. The labour movement increasingly began to work in coalition with the community, including with environmental and other NSM organizations. The labour ideology of solidarity (forever) in the face of mighty industrial foes here takes on new meaning. In Toronto, the Green Work Alliance was formed by local labour and environmental activists under the banner "Green Jobs Not Pink Slips" (MacDowell 2006, 422) and they worked to promote environmentally friendly industries.

These fleeting blue-green alliances between labour and environmentalists are worthy of mention, if only because they provide a counterfoil to the standard media narrative of conflict. The famous WTO protest named the "Battle of Seattle" featured "Teamsters for Turtles" placards and of visual demonstrations of cooperation the face of a common enemy, that usual driver of coalitions. But Silverman (2004) has questioned the strength of the coalition and asked whether it is simply an expedient one based on "opposition to a common enemy of free trade regimes, structural adjustment, and privatization" (118) and asked whether the movements are simply too disparate to maintain an alliance; he cites the not inconsequential differences of class, ethnicity and nationality along with "conflicting interests [and a] history of distrust" (118). Silverman claims that the alliance is more indicative of shifts in the movements themselves, and not simply a 'marriage of convenience'. "Labour thinking about the environment today grows from a profound...reorientation in trade union ideology about human beings' place in the natural world" (119). Environmentalists have changed too, he asserts, as they have become more socially conscious through interactions with international institutions such as the UN. What has resulted from the "two intertwined evolutions" (119) is a "labor version of

sustainable development around which many countries are organizing their environmental activities” (119). There is insufficient space here to adequately tackle the problems with the discourse of sustainable development, but it is clear that both movements have undergone a wholesale change in their practices and in some cases in their purpose. “‘Sustainable development’ has become a key organizing idea, a principle that the labor movement has taken to heart” (119).

Unions went beyond workplace safety to include demands for protection of a more broadly construed ‘environment’. In the 1950s, years before Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, the AFL-CIO began demanding action on clean air and water. Sometimes the demands were ‘self-serving’ in that they demanded job creation tied to these activities, but not always. A 1958 bill to create a national wilderness recreation system had the support of labour; “we favor the preservation of wilderness areas for reasons other than recreation. Wilderness has practical values, even though they cannot be measured in dollars, of obvious benefit to the nation” said one spokesman (Dewey 1998, 50).

As early as the 1950s, labour leaders “warned of the rapid depletion of forests, fresh water, and soil and demanded a federal natural resources policy and the comprehensive adoption of sustainable forestry practices” (Obach 2004b, 349). The AFL-CIO called for preservation of wilderness for the working class’s “spiritual bond with the natural world [citing the] need for workers to have access to nature” (349). Over the 1970s, labour lent its support to many additional wildlife preservation and environmentalist causes, sometimes overshadowed by the

more high-profile conflicts; ties between labour and preservationists were positive for much of this period (Obach 2004b, Gottlieb 1993).

The AFL-CIO grew ever more strident during the early 1960s, “calling wilderness a soul-restoring spiritual antidote to an over-urbanized, over-mechanized society and urging federal legislators not to make it too accessible to motor vehicles, a notable and unusual position given Americans’ obsession with the automobile and the role of unions in its manufacture” (Dewey 1998, 51). Union representatives called on U.S. senators to save areas of western wilderness before it was too late, arguing that such forest lands were more valuable as parts of a wilderness preservation system than as mere timber. Lodge 130 of the Boilermakers in Butte, Montana, noted the “availability to all...of wilderness areas, where our wildlife may be saved from extinction” and asked Senate to resist the “pressure of greedy resource extractors and pass this wilderness bill” (51). UAW head Walter Reuther “took the lead as the most environmentally activist union in America. With his profound personal love of nature, his insistence on a wider community role for labor unions, and his bold vision of a popular front promising sweeping social reforms, Reuther readily included environmental protection among the other major planks of his platform” (51). Reuther proclaimed his hope that a “massive mobilization of citizens...of a popular crusade not only for clean water, but also for cleaning up the atmosphere, the highways, the junkyards and the slums and for creating a total living environment worthy of free men” (52). In 1968, speaking before a meeting of a water pollution groups, Reuther argued that the nation’s “environmental crisis was really the result of a crisis in our value system, of priorities out of focus” (53). In so doing, Dewey argued, Reuther “espoused not merely an environmentalist position, but a radical environmentalist position far in advance”

(53) of the rest of the general public. The UAW's Worley wrote to Congress on behalf of the Greater St. Louis Council questioning the use "of worrying about wages, contracts, medical insurance, civil rights, nuclear disarmament...if we continue to poison and destroy the life supports of the world?" (56). He continued:

Better we tear the factories to the ground, abandon the mines, plug the petroleum holes and fill the fuel tanks of our cars with sugar than continue this doomsday madness...we demand that uncompromising and irreversible standards and controls be established to preserve our environment, no matter what the cost, no matter how great the violation of property rights, no matter what effect on dividends and no matter what the effect on our bold plans for collective bargaining (56).

These sorts of labour-driven and blue-collar environmentalisms rebut or at least complicate the 'pantheon of environmental saints' approach so often taken in environmental history. As Montrie (2011) has written, it is not so much about a need to broaden the pantheon to include more blue-collar figures alongside the Thoreaus, Muirs and Carsons of the movement – it is more a matter of abandoning the top-down approach to writing the history of environmental activism in toto. To tie leaps in the environmental imagination to one historical figure is to misrepresent how environmental history actually unfolds. Quite often, 'leaders' had to be pushed to act, Montrie (2011) claims, by a more militant grassroots.

## **Chapter 8: From the Algonquin Wildlands League to “Lands for Life”: Ontario’s Wilderness Protection Politics**

This chapter will focus on Ontario’s wilderness protection politics and critique key struggles for the establishment of parks and wilderness areas and the corresponding inclusion (or lack thereof) of working people’s concerns in the process and its outcome.

Prior to 1960, Canadians exhibited minimal interest in preserving nature, even though wilderness is central to Canada’s economic and cultural history (Killan and Warecki 1992). At best “only a small amount of upper and middle-income elite shared an appreciation of the physical, aesthetic and spiritual values of wilderness” (2). There was no exception to the general rule that a North American wilderness appreciation ethic emerged slowly and had an explicit class component, even in Canada where, contrary to the U.S., cultural identities of ‘rugged individualism’ arguably took a back seat to more collectivist national character. Beyond the elites, few espoused value for wilderness shorn of its economic utility. Nature and the boreal forest were taken for granted.

After 1960, an outdoor recreation boom and the emergent ecological social politics fuelled support for a wilderness ethos especially among the younger, more educated demographic of the Canadian population. One result was exponential growth in the membership rolls of nature preservation organizations (Killan and Warecki 1992). Public anger at logging in provincial parks led to the 1968 establishment of the Algonquin Wildlands League (AWL). AWL’s stated goal was to protect and expand provincial parks: none of the four existing provincial parks were free of logging or mechanized recreation. The inaugural meeting of the AWL comprised eight people, all “well-educated, middle-class males...canoeists familiar with the park and concerned with

threats to its wilderness values” (1992, 6). The AWL desired a park system “less liable to pressure from commercial interests and recreational overuse. These goals had strong appeal” (6) and the AWL’s paid-up membership grew from zero to 1200 in eighteen months. The AWL had clearly tapped a latent reserve of concern about wilderness and the state of the provincial parks system. The AWL used the media, presented at public bodies and forged links with government bureaucrats and agencies. Through these various actions, the AWL was successful at raising awareness of Ontario’s wilderness and threats against it. A main contribution was successfully lobbying the Ontario government by pushing it to consult the citizenry about any future changes to uses of natural resources; previously these decisions were the sole domain of the provincial bureaucracy. In so doing, the AWL had demonstrated that grassroots organizing was not only possible but would be key to the protection of nature (Killan and Warecki 1992).

In 1969, the AWL launched a public education campaign which involved thousands in lobbying for the establishment of Quetico Provincial Park. Hearings held across the province were well attended:

The number of people who took active part in the hearings was extraordinary. The committee received 262 written and 144 oral presentations, as well as some 4500 letters...the majority of them stressed the wilderness aspect of the Park’s future and in particular the elimination of commercial logging. *No longer could critics claim that wilderness protection was the pastime of a few elitist, male, Toronto-based canoeists* (emphasis added). The hearings established that the wilderness movement in Ontario now drew strength from northern as well as southern regions of the province, and from all ages and social groups, including business and organized labor, teachers and students, professionals and homemakers (Killan and Warecki, 1992, 16).

In May 1971 the Quetico Advisory Committee unanimously recommended that commercial logging inside the park be eliminated. The Premier announced that “from this point onwards,

there will be no logging in Quetico Provincial Park” (16). The AWL continued to work towards expansion and protection of parks and wilderness areas for decades to come, winning some battles and losing others. But they had assured that the preservation of nature was now a political issue, and that any future commercial timber industry expansion could be met by the wrath of public opinion. As Killan and Warecki concluded, the AWL “galvanized Ontario’s modern wilderness preservation movement, and became a catalyst in that province for the emergence of environmental politics” (1992, 21), one that transcended narrow class interests.

ENGO politics involves an incredibly diverse set of concepts, practises and aims. There is a wide range of organizational goals, forms, scale, and funding and membership make-up. Some prefer direct action while others don suits and meet with of government bureaucrats; some like the aforementioned AWL practised a combination of several tactics as they found their organizational *métier*. This diversity of approaches may be viewed as a strength, permitting adaptation to specific threats, but also poses a potential for confusion and conflict. A particularly significant example is that of the forest accord that was reached in Ontario in the late 1990s.

#### The “Lands for Life” Process and Outcome

Groups seeking to change the status quo, especially ENGOs engaging in the politics of natural ecosystems, face a push-and-pull dilemma (Cartwright 2003). Although the small compromises that so often form a part of the ‘art of the deal’ are inevitable, the ‘devil in the details’ can lead to the loss of entire ecosystems. The stakes are high. At the same time, ENGOs are under considerable pressure to appear to be reasonable negotiators; business and other interests

allied against them have at their disposal ready-made narrative tropes of 'eco-terrorism' and environmental extremism that can have resonance with a jittery public which – for all its putative environmentalism – does not want economic stability threatened. Questions of strategy are also tempered by other considerations: what 'give' will their own membership accept? Are the stakes high enough to merit confrontation, and if that is the decided tack, will the public come on side, or will they be dissuaded from support by economic arguments that always percolate just below the surface of any environmental policy debate? For Cartwright it boils down to one basic question. Given that governments are the institutions capable of 'delivering the goods' the litmus test is a straightforward one: how far has an ENGO succeeded in pushing the state to act? For Cartwright, there are four main variables to be considered by the organization in question: "the nature of its own support, the degree of congruence of its own goals with the values of the general public, the potential for resistance from groups hostile to its goals, and not least in importance, the receptivity or hostility of the government decision-makers to its goals" (2003, 116).

By the 1990s, seven percent of Ontario's land base was a protected wilderness area. Outside the parks, annual timber extraction doubled between 1965 and 1985, increasingly by means of clearcutting. The increased demand for wilderness experiences and recreation was on a collision course with the intensity of extractive industry practises. Large protests were organized especially aimed at the Temagami wilderness region. Public support was firmly in the preservationists' corner. Remarkably, residents of northern Ontario – whose livelihoods were directly affected by logging policy – supported wilderness protection at levels roughly parallel to that in the south of the province (Cartwright 2003).

In 1997, Ontario's Progressive Conservative government, an administration openly hostile to the aims of nature preservation (Cartwright 2003) embarked on the so-called "Lands for Life" policy project. Its aim was to "complete the system of parks and protected areas; to provide certainty and assured supplies for logging and mining interests; and to provide areas for use by the tourism industry" (120). The result was the *Forest Accord*, which created the greatest increase in protected wilderness spaces ever seen in the province's history (115). The history of the campaign is revealing of many things, chief amongst them the nature of politics and the art of compromise. The telling of the history also reveals much about the nature of preservationist groups and the differences between them and the role that public opinion plays in the development of the politics of nature preservation.

NGOs involved in the wilderness protection politics in Ontario ran the gamut: from the corporate Nature Conservancy of Canada, which depended on business funding and avoided controversy, to the then-Federation of Ontario Naturalists (now Ontario Nature), which worked through formal channels but also applied some pressure tactics such as coordinated letter-writing campaigns, to Earthroots, a more 'direct action' group of grassroots activists ready and willing to blockade roads. With the election of the right wing Progressive Conservative party in 1995, a new mood permeated the province and it was unclear which direction public opinion would follow in a classic jobs-versus-environment standoff. Preservation groups were aware that under a newly mandated conservative government they would have to fight to hold any advances made under previous administrations.

Environmentalists wanted to ensure the viability of natural ecosystems, but differed on exactly how to attain the goal and the strategy. They also differed on whether they should legitimize the Lands for Life process by participating and instead view the process as an opportunity for public education. There was significant and not unreasonable fear that the process was rigged in favour of industry, given the radical right orientation of the government. Industry had more precise quantitative goals, but was flexible on how they attained them as long as there was no overall reduction in extraction (Cartwright 2003). Many smaller businesses and some timber workers themselves were ambivalent: as Dunk (1994) has argued, rural smallholders and workers balance 'pocketbook' and 'consumptive' concerns; they appreciate natural areas for hunting, fishing and other forest recreation as well as depend on the forest for their livelihoods.

As Cartwright has stated, the process was somewhat slanted towards extractive interests, but the long public input process somewhat allayed the public's environmental fears. A coalition of mainstream corporately financed ENGOs worked together under the rubric of the Partnership for Public Lands (PPL) to assert a preservationist perspective at the hearings, while other more activist groups stayed away, concerned that it was "rushed and skewed" (2003, 122) and hesitated to legitimize the process.

The government had given no hard figures on how much land was required to complete the parks system. But public participation itself was never in doubt; the public hearings drew large crowds representing a wide range of viewpoints on the future use of wilderness areas. 15,000 people attended 95 public meetings; a further 7,000 wrote in and the preponderance of views favoured wilderness protection over development imperatives (Cartwright 2003).

The post-consultation recommendations from the government panel, however, were a “severe disappointment to environmental groups; in all three areas, the recommendations were for limited additions to the existing parks network” (Cartwright 2003, 123). Some proposals even set time limits on protection, so that areas set aside could conceivably face extraction in the future. Even though a majority of participants in the process and public opinion favoured greater protection for wilderness, the recommendations were essentially the status quo. The government sensed political trouble on the horizon, facing an election just as the process was winding down. They “needed to appear to have done something, but something more politically palatable than what the panels were recommending” (124). The province then began a series of private meetings, inviting forest interests and ENGOs to the table, and the outlines of the *Forest Accord* were hammered out. Although the PPL had originally argued for 20% of public lands to be set aside, they settled for 12%, a figure in accord with Brundtland Commission recommendations. The timber interests were assured that even though the protected wilderness was being raised to 12% (from 7%) that they would still be able to meet existing volumes. In March 1999 the province released the *Forest Accord*, agreed on by the PPL, the ministry bureaucrats and timber interests. The terms included 378 new parks and conservation reserves. The PPL also attained two other goals: new protected areas would be permanently free of logging and development, and a commitment was made that future changes would involve extensive public consultation. Where the ENGOs lost out, however, was on the extractive methods to be used outside of parks: forest companies could still clear-cut, and they and mining interests could still build road networks. Timber interest were intransigent and the PPL did not believe they had the combined strength or public support to gain any more

than the 12% commitment. Still, they had achieved the largest increase in protection of wilderness in the province's history, and the "government could hardly lose support by expanding the provincial parks system" (Cartwright 2003, 127). All three parties to the process could claim victories of sorts.

What has objectively been achieved is still a matter of some debate. Cartwright's own view is that the future of wild spaces and ecosystems is far from protected; it is generally accepted in conservation biology that small parcels of land, even if they are significant in total, suffer from 'edge effects' such as incursions from human activities and invasive species. The government was able to appear reasonable, the timber interests were able to count on the same amount of board feet in perpetuity, and the ENGOs saw extracted a commitment for a significant (if minimal by even Brundtland's modest standards) levels of wilderness protection relative to what had been in place previously.

Even with the lumber industry's assuredness of harvest, it is doubtful that there is any 'win' for workers as the industry continues to downsize, and the general public appeared to have accepted the *Forest Accord* as an achievement. The Conservative government was re-elected later the same year the *Accord* was reached; environmental politics played very little role in the campaign since they had effectively silenced critics with the assistance of the participating ENGOs.

There may be some temptation to read a 'win' for workers into the stable extraction of the total timber harvest. But as CPAWS Wildlands League (2011) has shown in "Woods, Jobs and Wilderness: The Future of Ontario's Forests," "the long-term trend of fewer workers harvesting

more wood has continued over the last decade” (2011, 3). In fact, the number of jobs in the province’s forest sector per cubic metre of wood harvested has been steadily declining since the 1960s. “This trend has been driven by technological changes...and this trend shows no signs of stopping” (4). For forestry communities, this has “been a punishing trend, with workers moving away...and opportunities to find well-paying stable jobs dwindling” (4). CPAWS also notes what logging workers already know – that new protected areas or wilderness and waterway protection guidelines are not the culprit (see also Dunk 1991; 1994). Despite increases in the number of parks and biodiversity protection guidelines introduced in 1999, the provincial roundwood harvest increased three million cubic metres (14%) in the decade prior to 2002.

The process of negotiation and the role of the PPL especially merits closer enquiry. Of the three major players at the Accord table, the ENGOs were the new party, and the question of whether they were in some way co-opted – even unwittingly – requires scrutiny. Some of the explorations central to such an enquiry are whether the PPL was ‘outgunned’ by the timber industry and state bureaucracy, both of whom brought greater resources and experience to the table. As well, the major environmental players (and mainstream ENGOs in general) are increasingly funded from private industry coffers, which raises basic questions about legitimacy and representativeness; as Beder (1997) has shown, there is a ‘revolving’ door between mainstream ENGOs and industry which raises a whole new set of questions. Having ‘locked in’ wilderness at 12% of Ontario’s public lands, it is questionable that there is any leeway remaining for future gains. Did the ENGOs negotiate away ecosystem protection for a specious win in the present? Was there a lost opportunity to include labour and the perspectives of

working people, and what suggestions might they have brought to the table that could deal with sectoral change and restructuring? As CPAWS argues, “there is growing interest and a growing economic incentive due to declining prices for products to shift the focus to value-added products” (2011, 5). It is unclear what opportunities for ensuring value-added regulation or incentives may have been lost by not including labour in the secretive ‘tripartite’ process of bureaucrats, lumber executive and co-opted ENGOs. As Dowie (1995) has asserted, compromise, “which had produced some limited gains for the movement in the 1970s, had by the 1980s become a “habitual response of the environmental establishment” (6). These compromises have “pushed a once-effective movement to the brink of irrelevance” (6).

The *Forest Accord* exacerbated divisions between the mainstream groups that signed it and the more militant wing of the preservation movement (Cartwright 2003). Cartwright believes that “serious threats to boreal ecosystems may have been intensified by the *Accord*; the assuredness of supply may only intensify extraction in non-protected areas. Much of what was added was in small disconnected strips, and of little ecological value. Fragmentation is widely accepted to be a driver of species extinction (128).

The mainstream environmentalists who formed the PPL missed opportunities to both further the goals of the preservation movement and those of working people. By not insisting on bringing workers to the table and by not communicating with the labour movement, they lost out on a chance to overcome the over-used ‘jobs-versus- environment’ cliché that beleaguers ecologists to this day, and as was seen in the earlier chapter dealing with the Pacific Northwest’s own ‘war in the woods’. By not insisting on local value-added products and worker

protection as a condition of assured logging rights, they negotiated away not only the future of Ontario's wilderness, but a chance to form a common bond with workers in the face of a common enemy – industrial capitalism. The 'win-win' negotiating tack that Dowie (1995) called mainstream environmentalists' habitual and reflexive response to resource conflict has allowed rapacious capitalist logging interests to continue ravaging both wilderness and workers.

Industry profits continue to climb as trees fall and forestry workers lose their jobs. This political-economic insight was missing on the part of the PPL, and they thus missed an important opportunity to include working peoples' interests in their movement by guiding the discussions toward what Foster's (2002) vision of social and environmental revolution based on popular power. The minimalist approach and the willingness to concede speaks volumes about the business orientation of today's mainstream environmentalism. The PPL was so eager for a 'win-win' solution that they bargained away, not solely the chance to create protection for ecosystems in the future, but a chance to have worker protection written into the process. In so doing, they have failed both ecosystems and working people, who together provide the throughput – the human and natural capital - that capitalist industry requires to operate.

It was not lost on the working people of northern Ontario that Lands for Life was yet another forest-use decision that was being hammered out by southern Ontario interests. The PPL, the timber companies and many of the state's agents were based in Toronto, or at least had an urban, big-city perspective. As Skidmore (1996) wrote of the debate over the Temagami forest battle that raged in the 1990s, "the issues are not environmental in nature...nor are the issues scientific" (65). "When Northcare (Northern Community Advocates for Resource Inquiry contacted [scientists calling for a moratorium] several indicated they did not know where

Temagami was...the issues involve values other than environmental, economic and scientific ones. Canada is sustained by its small community resource sector, and by the people who work there without the benefits of air-conditioned offices, university tenure, and travel grants to faraway places...without the values of our resources people, we wouldn't be able to provide the funds for the government offices coordinating the study of development issues in Temagami" (65-66). "Multiple use is a tradition in the north....we favour multiple use over single use, employment over recreation, the needs of residents over the needs of visitors...if we examine their [local] values carefully, we see that they include the environment and recreation" (67), Skidmore claims, echoing the multi-use sentiments of the workers Dunk studied (1991; 1994) as referenced earlier in this work.

## Conclusion

Movements create countermovements. The long period of preservationist successes that reached their regulatory apex in the 1970s in Canada and the U.S. could not last without a countermovement from those who claimed victimhood under all this new regulation. There are – contrary to the ‘win win’ mantra of negotiation – aspects of a resource economy that indeed do operate as a zero-sum game; there will sometimes be winners and losers, despite the claim of the middle-class environmentalism that preserving nature serves society’s larger goals. Preserving wilderness for posterity, whether couched in terms aesthetic, scientific or even spiritual, will have material effects on locals who have traditionally used the land for basic needs. And environmentalists have generally done a poor job at responding to those concrete realities and the concerns about local economies.

Throughout the 1980s, labour’s opposition to forest protection measures was a common source of conflict with preservationists on both sides of the border, as was noted earlier in the cases of northern Ontario and the U.S. Pacific Northwest. The political successes of middle-class environmental activism devoid of a class-conscious component contributed to the rise of Wise Use – a property rights movement that started in the American west but spread to Canada (Gerlach 2001). Wise Use, which borrowed Gifford Pinchot’s eponymous term and attendant utilitarian ‘conservationist’ ideology detailed earlier, is by many accounts largely a corporate front that works to create an incendiary politics of disenchantment and anger with environmentalists; the interests of industrial capitalism have successfully tapped into the “disaffection of rural and resource industry workers, farmers and small business people into

anti-environmental sentiment” (Beder 1997, 23). This success stems from enrolling thousands of disaffected mostly rural citizens who feel politically powerless and can readily be solicited to join ranks against the constructed trope of the ‘big city elites’. To the extent that there is a class war over natural resources, environmentalism is arguably losing it to industry, which has proven more capable of exploiting disenchantment and economic fear.

McCarthy (2002) claims that the insights and tools of political ecology have much to offer in viewing the Wise Use phenomenon. The movement’s central complaint is that the community is losing “access to and control over these lands and resources because of the ever more vigorous pursuit of the central government – a trend spurred on largely by the interventions of distant, highly bureaucratic, and professionalized environmental groups, virtually none of whose staff has even been to the particular lands in question” (1281). Locals assert their “superior knowledge and understanding of local environments, assert the historical precedence and legitimacy of their uses, and argue that local users should have greater rights than nonlocal claimants” (1281). And of particular interest here, they claim that what is called ‘conservation’ is merely a cover for government interference and the assertion of class privilege by elites.

These claims and counter-argument and the assertion of local culture are reminiscent of the arguments Dunk uncovered in northwestern Ontario, cited earlier. In so doing, affected locals explicitly question the hegemonic narrative of science-based expertise, which has been the bedrock ideology of preservationist arguments. McCarthy (2002) contends that these claims based in local knowledge and dependent access to the commons tend to gain the sympathy of leftists, academics and other progressives when applied in Third World contexts; these same

critics evaluate Wise Use with a different framework, and that “its failure [to engage academia] was partly the result of geography; Wise Use was located in...a late capitalist ‘First World’ country” (2002, 1282). Cultural politics were “crucial to forging and maintaining the class alliance at the heart of Wise Use...the movement was primarily an alliance between those classes with the most to lose in the erosion of certain property rights and relations on federal lands: small independent producers *and* large extractive corporations [and] the assertion of communities defined by *place* and *property relations* allowed them temporarily to unite despite strong class and other tensions *within* the movement” (1295). The critical point for McCarthy is that the cultural identities deployed by Wise Use were not those of a pre-existing class alliance, but were a crucial part of *forging* an effective political alliance in the first place.

The rise of movements such as Wise Use is but one consequence of environmentalism’s tendency to ignore the struggle of the working class, who are most affected by changes in regulatory regimes (Foster 2002; Gottlieb 1993) . The relative exclusion of working-class people from environmentalism – whether by intent or circumstance – cannot go unchallenged and uninterrogated. If environmentalists cannot mobilize beyond their middle-class constituency to engage the working class in political actions, and if they cannot find it in themselves to at least empathize – to enter into a conversation, as a bare minimum – with less privileged strata of society than their own directorships, they will be unable to build the political will and movement necessary to respond to the ecological crisis so inarguably upon us.

As Rose (1997) has shown, environmentalism is not the only social movements in which working classes are underrepresented. “Middle class domination of the mainstream peace, environmental, and women’s movements is well documented” (1997, 464). By measuring the variables of occupation, education, and income, Rose asserts, membership in organizations comprising the broader social justice movement has been definitively shown to be upper middle-class. From the perspective of what is termed “New Class” theory, Rose argues, “these movements are pursuing distinctly middle-class interests. Thus, the class make-up of these movements reflects the motivations of these movements themselves” (464). That does not invalidate the work ‘new class’ movements do: the work of pacifism, feminism and environmentalism is beneficial to all classes. But if one assumes this view, this has implications for the legitimacy and democratic nature of the work being done: it determines where the resources flow and where power inheres. And here, Marx’s notions of ‘false consciousness’ and Gramscian notions of hegemony come into play. This sort of ‘false consciousness’ is a creation of “moral domination through the subject positions in which people from a variety of class backgrounds could identify themselves” (Dunk 1994, 17). For these reasons NSMs – despite mounting campaigns for morally compelling policy – have largely failed in their goals (Dunk 1994).

As a category, class has a legacy to it, both a spatial and a temporal one. Environmentalists need to learn to recognize and talk about power, specifically their own middle-class privilege, of which so few are self-aware. As Dunk claims, it is only by recognizing “all the forms in which

power is exercised and against which subordinate groups define themselves can they hope to constitute subject positions which transcend narrow categories such as worker and environmentalist" (1994, 30). An all too common truism is that "blue-collar labor in the woods is bad [while] white-collar labor in the city skyscrapers escapes notice" (DeLuca and Demo 2001, 553). Blue-collar workers, especially unionized ones, represent potential allies for the environmental movement. The movement cannot afford to squander potential allies; preservationists must start paying attention and exhibiting some sympathy for the issues of work and employment. One issue on which the two groups can join forces and resources is in the nature of jobs that are being created. In the absence of such cooperation, Schwab (1994) warns, and as recent events in the Pacific Northwest have shown over the matter of logging, "the fear and anger that result when workers feel used up, useless and irrelevant can only spawn an anti-environmental backlash that will severely retard the growth" (411) of ecological consciousness. Reactionary and conservative coalitions such as the Wise Use movement have proved that the divisions in the movement, between preservationists and frightened workers, can be exploited to the benefit of capital. It is of central importance that the movement "based on expanding the nation's dialogue on environmental issues maintain a serious, open and ongoing dialogue with the labor movement over issues for worker displacement" (416).

Employers continue to use job blackmail to persuade blue-collar unions to oppose environmentalism (Foster 2002; Obach 2004a; Obach 2004b; Rose 1997; Gordon 2004). If labour continues to offer support to new forms of popular environmentalism, ENGOs may be able to wean themselves off of elite dependence (Obach 2004b) thus allowing them to legitimately address social justice issues and transform themselves from organs of middle-class

activism to a greater engagement with broad-based coalitions that have arisen in other popular movements, especially in response to trade deals and meetings of the various Bretton Woods institutions – the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc.

While there will always be a disparity of interests under inegalitarian capitalism, there is corresponding room for improvement. Absent a greater class awareness and analysis on the part of mainstream environmentalists, working people can be expected to resist policies that are enacted 'on them' without due diligence, attention, engagement and respect.

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