

Historiographical Representations of Materialist Anthropology
in the Canadian Setting, 1972-1982

by

Robert Lorne Alexander Hancock
BA, McGill University, 1999
MA, University of Victoria, 2002

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to make a contribution to the historiography of North American anthropology in the 1970s. Specifically, it asserts that by focussing exclusively on academic literature, the historiographical representations of materialist anthropology in this period are incomplete. Starting with the work by Sherry Ortner and William Roseberry on the development of Marxist anthropology and their analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the political economy and structural Marxist / mode of production trends in the discipline, it then turns to the explication of two case studies, from the Canadian context in the 1970s, where these approaches confronted each other directly. In particular, it examines the application of anthropological theories to the representation of Indigenous economies in disputes about resource development projects in the Canadian North. In these two examples — a court case, *Kanatewat v. James Bay Development Corporation*, where the Cree of James Bay sought an injunction against the construction of a series of dams which would flood large parts of their homeland, and a tribunal, the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, where the Dene and Inuit sought to demonstrate that the construction of a massive gas pipeline would irrevocably damage the land and their societies and economies as a result — advocates for the projects adopted a political economy orientation to justify development in the regions, while those working on behalf of the Indigenous groups adopted an approach based on mode of production analyses to demonstrate the continuing vitality of Indigenous economies and social structures. More generally, I will show that the historiography of the period does not accurately reflect the relative impact of the two approaches on the wider world beyond the discipline; the conclusion includes a discussion of this problem as a problem shared by the historiography of anthropology more generally.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to make a contribution to the historiography of North American anthropology in the 1970s. Specifically, it asserts that by focussing exclusively on academic literature to the exclusion of work done in the “real world,” the historical and historiographical representations of materialist anthropology in this period is incomplete. Starting with the work by Sherry Ortner and William Roseberry on the development of Marxist anthropology and their analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the political economy and structural Marxist / mode of production trends in the discipline, it then turns to the explication of two case studies, from the Canadian context in the 1970s, where the anthropological political economy and mode of production approaches confronted each other directly. In particular, it examines the application of anthropological theories to the representation of Indigenous economies in disputes about resource development projects in the Canadian North. In these two examples — a court case, *Kanatewat v. James Bay Development Corporation*, where the Cree of James Bay sought an injunction against the construction of a series of dams which would flood large parts of their homeland, and a tribunal, the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, where the Dene and Inuit sought to demonstrate that the construction of a massive gas pipeline would irrevocably damage the land and their societies and economies as a result — advocates for the projects adopted an eclectic variety of theoretical orientations, including some which were congruent with the anthropological political economy

orientation, to justify the need for development in the regions while those working on behalf of the Indigenous groups adopted an approach based on mode of production analyses to demonstrate the continuing vitality of Indigenous economies and social structures. More generally, I will show that the historiography of the period does not accurately reflect the relative impact of the two approaches on the wider world beyond the discipline; the conclusion includes a discussion of this problem as a problem shared by the historiography of anthropology more generally.

I must clarify my usage of two key terms. Throughout this dissertation, the phrase *political economy* will refer specifically to the Marxist form of anthropology described by Ortner and Roseberry, which focussed on explaining the spread of capitalism around the world and the responses of Indigenous groups to the new economic form. This is an admittedly narrow conception of the field, which in its wider usage encompasses both Marxist and non-Marxist analyses of the relationships between labour, markets, politics, culture, and the state. While there are interesting questions about the connections between this form and “political economy” as more widely understood in the social sciences, including in the “New Canadian Political Economy” (e.g., Clement and Williams 1989: 10), I am unable to address them in this dissertation.

Similarly, I adopt in this dissertation a narrow, anthropologically focussed definition of the concept of *evolution* as applied to the explanation of cultural and social differences and changes (Trigger 1998). By this term, I refer specifically to the concept developed by Julian Steward. Marc Pinkoski has identified it as

coming directly from the work of Herbert Spencer. Pinkoski bases this identification on four lines of congruency between their theories: they drew explicit parallels between cultural and biological evolution, they took environmental determinist positions, they sought to construct hierarchical models of stages of development, and they placed Indigenous peoples at the bottom of this hierarchy (Pinkoski 2006: 108-114). In Steward's case, this constellation of assumptions provided the justification for his arguments in favour of American colonialism at home and abroad (Pinkoski 2006). In Chapter 2, I will demonstrate the profound continuity between Steward's colonialist evolutionary theory and Eric Wolf's political economy approach.

After this Introduction, this dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 2 outlines the main themes of the political economy approach by examining the contributions of Eric Wolf, whose work represents the archetypal development of this theory. Chapter 3 shifts the focus to mode of production theory, and discusses its development in anthropology. Chapters 4 and 5 are case study chapters, of the Cree and Dene examples, respectively, and demonstrate the divergences between the political economy and mode of production approaches in analysing the same situations. Finally, Chapter 6 compares the influence that the latter approach has had in affecting Canadian policy and political understandings of the Dene, Cree, and other Indigenous peoples with the limited impact the approach has had on the field itself, specifically the historiography of theory in this period. The focus is on the analysis deployed by Ortner and Roseberry and other historiographers of the discipline to account for the limited

attention they have given to the mode of production approach when compared to the political economy approach. In closing, I will address a few words concerning an alteration in that methodology.

Assessing the Marxist Theory of the 1970s

The 1980s saw anthropological theorists beginning to come to terms with the influence of Marxism in their discipline. In a widely-cited 1984 article, Sherry Ortner analysed paradigms in anthropological theory since the mid-1960s. Seeking to outline the relationships between various theoretical approaches, she offered what she admitted was a personal intellectual history of the discipline which at the same time could serve as a “universal” history of the discipline because “in some relatively objective sense, there was in fact a major set of revolutions in anthropological theory”(Ortner 1984: 126n, 127) beginning in that period.

Claiming that “[t]he anthropology of the 1970s was much more obviously and transparently tied to real-world events than that of the preceding period”

(Ortner 1984: 138), she asserted that “the earliest critiques” of this sort

took the form of denouncing historical links between anthropology on the one hand, and colonialism and imperialism on the other....But this merely scratched the surface. The issue quickly moved to the deeper question of the nature of our theoretical frameworks, and especially the degree to which they embody and carry forward the assumptions of bourgeois

Western culture. (Ortner 1984: 138)

The outcome, according to her formulation, was a turn to the theoretical insights of Marx. Recent work, however, has shown that even with the application of a Marxist critical approach, this questioning of anthropological theory has not led to an intense interrogation of its connections with colonialism and imperialism as these were experienced by Indigenous peoples in North America (Pinkoski 2006).

Ortner divided the Marxist-influenced anthropology of the 1970s into two basic camps: a “structural Marxism” on the one hand, and a “political economy” approach on the other. Describing structural Marxism as both the earliest application of that theory to the discipline as well as the only Marxist approach indigenous to the discipline, Ortner wrote that it applied Marx “to attack and/or rethink, or at the very least to expand, virtually every theoretical scheme on the landscape” (Ortner 1984: 139); she went so far as to claim that “Structural Marxism constituted a would-be total intellectual revolution, and if it did not succeed in establishing itself as the only alternative to everything else we had, it certainly succeeded in shaking up most of the received wisdom” (Ortner 1984: 139), although she eventually concluded that it was essentially a conservative approach, “the perfect vehicle for academics who had been trained in an earlier era, but who, in the seventies, were feeling the pull of critical thought and action that was exploding all around them” (Ortner 1984: 141).

Ortner located the structural Marxist approach, which she identified with

the work of Louis Althusser, Maurice Godelier, Emmanuel Terray, Marshall Sahlins, Jonathan Friedman, and Maurice Bloch (Ortner 1984: 139), as a direct challenge to earlier materialist theory, particularly the evolutionary approach of the cultural ecologists. In its emphasis on the location of “the determinative forces not in the natural environment and/or in technology, but specifically within certain structures of social relations,” the structural Marxist analyses “encompassed and subordinated” ecological factors “to the analysis of the social, and especially political, organization of production,” or the mode of production (Ortner 1984: 139). She took care to caution that these social relations are not the same structures that were the subject of British structural-functionalist approaches; instead, she asserted that structural Marxists see the latter as “native *models* of social organization that have been bought by anthropologists as the real thing, but that actually mask, or at least only partially correspond to, the hidden asymmetrical relations of production that are driving the system” (Ortner 1984: 139). One innovation she identified is the role that structural Marxists assign culture, under the guise of “ideology,” in the reproduction of social formations, and examining its role in “legitimizing the existing order, mediating contradictions in the base, and mystifying the sources of exploitation and inequality in the system” (Ortner 1984: 140). She argued, on the one hand, that

[o]ne of the virtues of structural Marxism, then, was that there was a place for everything in its scheme. Refusing to see inquiries into material relations and into “ideology” as opposed enterprises, its practitioners

established a model in which the two “levels” were related to one another via a core of social/political/economic processes. In this sense, they offered an explicit mediation between the “materialist” and “idealist” camps of sixties anthropology. The mediation was rather mechanical, ... but it was there (Ortner 1984: 140)

On the other hand, Ortner was quick to criticise the very aspects of structural Marxist she just finished praising, calling it not only mechanical, but, later, also structurally overdetermined to the point of denying human agency in shaping the world (Ortner 1984: 144). As well, she asserted that the conflation of culture with ideology led to “extreme” analyses of the relations between ideas and structures, while also tending to reify the very ideological and material “levels” they claimed to be mediating or collapsing (Ortner 1984: 141).

Ortner connected the approaches of structural Marxism and political economy through their common application of sociological insights to anthropological analyses. While in the former case she emphasised the “rich and complex pictures of the social process” afforded by the combination of Marxist theory and sociological categories — although in the next paragraph she critiqued the resulting “functionalist flavor” of the analyses — in the case of political economy Ortner stressed its development out of political sociology’s growing interest in theories of world systems and underdevelopment, which is then combined with traditional anthropological focus on individual communities to create a study of capitalist incursions into these locales (Ortner 1984: 140-141).

However, these differences in scope point to a crucial difference between the two: she presented structural Marxism, “which focused largely, in the manner of conventional anthropological studies, on relatively discrete societies or cultures,” as a more conservative, micro-level analysis in contrast with an innovative political economy orientation which analyses “large-scale regional political/economic systems” (Ortner 1984: 141).

In turning her attention to the political economy approach, Ortner drew an explicit connection between it and the earlier cultural ecological theory. Remarking that many proponents of anthropological political economy received their training from cultural ecologists, she contended that the connection lies in their common “emphasis on the impact of external forces, and on the ways in which societies change or evolve largely in adaptation to such impact” (Ortner 1984: 141). Her use of the word “evolve” seems almost accidental; although a discussion of an evolutionary emphasis is central to her earlier representation of cultural ecology (Ortner 1984: 132-133), and although she claimed a linear connection between the two approaches, she did not trace out the evolutionary aspects of political economy, even though an evolutionary approach is central to the latter’s theoretical understanding of the expansion of capitalism and its impact on Indigenous cultures and societies, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 2.

At the same time, she credited the anthropologists applying a political economy approach with being more willing than the cultural ecologists “to incorporate cultural or symbolic issues into their inquiries” (Ortner 1984: 142), particularly with regard to fields such as identity and ethnicity. Similarly, she

praised the political economists' widened scope of analysis, particularly their historical focus and their examination of the connections between villages or groups and the world around them, asserting that "[t]o ignore the fact that peasants are part of states, and that even 'primitive' societies and communities are invariably involved in wider systems of exchanges of all sorts, is to seriously distort the data" (Ortner 1984: 142), although she obviously accepted at face value some of the categories (peasants, states, primitives) used by the political economists.

Ortner's critique of anthropological political economy focused on two related aspects of its approach. First, she asserted that it places too strong an emphasis on the economic aspects without enough consideration of the political aspects, and the role of people in them. Second, she found that its privileging of capitalist expansion and encroachment as a universal experience of societies around the world had a deleterious effect on understanding and describing the history of other groups, as focussing on the arrival or imposition of capitalism fosters narratives about the impacts of the West and modernity on Indigenous societies and cultures rather than narratives about those societies and cultures themselves (Ortner 1984: 143). Responding to purported political economic assertions that the accuracy of anthropological depictions is heightened by the recognition "that much of what we see as tradition is in fact a response to Western impact" and the truly "Indigenous" aspects or components are irrecoverable, she argued passionately that it anthropologists' duty to *try* to see other cultures as complete and something other than the product of modernity or

capitalism (Ortner 1984: 143); she asserted that “it is our location ‘on the ground’ that puts us in a position to see people not simply as passive reactors to and enactors of some ‘system,’ but as active agents and subjects in their own history” (Ortner 1984: 143). Although she did not seem to realise it, these are exactly the aspects that a structural Marxist approach would add to the insights of the political economists, as I will demonstrate in chapters 4 and 5.

In Ortner’s analysis, then, the structural Marxist and political economy approaches examine the same things from different directions. The structural Marxist sought to offer a corrective to the paucity of material in Marx on non-capitalist societies by making these the centre of analysis and demonstrating that these groups had economic structures that were congruent with and amenable to Marxist analysis; they made an examination of the internal structures of groups rather than capitalism the focus of their attention, and they assumed that these structures were complete and functioning. As well, they tended to view these economies as bounded systems, and focussed on understanding their internal dynamics (Copans and Seddon 1979: 34-36). Thus, as I show below, they were criticised by the political economists for not recognising the full extent of the impacts of capitalism on Indigenous economies.

On the other hand, the political economists took the opposite approach. They started from capitalism, and assumed that once capitalism arrived nothing else matters, nothing significant of the other economic structures survived. In the cases that I examine in chapters 4 and 5, I will demonstrate that the anthropologists following this line of analysis assumed that after capitalism

arrived the Indigenous economies ceased to function. Given that, they then assumed that the hunting economies had ceased to function and thus focussed their attention on the attributes and activities which to them reflected the influence of capitalism rather than on those which still functioned in the Indigenous structures. For example, hunting and its role in the Indigenous economies is not examined; if hunting is a topic of analysis, it is in terms of its contributions to a cash or market economy. In way, the political economy approach focussed on external dynamics, the imposition of external forces on individual groups, and downplayed internal developments; these latter were of interest only insofar as they reflected the effects of external forces, such as the penetration of capital.

There is a third approach, however, which I address in chapters 3, 4, and 5: one which examines explicitly the articulations of different modes of production. The emphasis on an analysis of the interactions between two modes of production over time is precisely the point that the structural Marxist and political economy approaches come together: it combines the former's focus on internal structures and developments with the latter's awareness of the importance of external forces and creates the possibility for an analysis of the dynamics of cultural change. In this way, an explicit consideration of the effects of capitalism are introduced into the structural Marxist analysis, while individual agency and the possibility of differing local responses are introduced into the political economy one. Bridget O'Laughlin has described the potential that an approach focussed on articulations offers the anthropologist:

The notion that there *must be* more than a single mode of production is based, I think, on a confusion of concepts and concrete reality. In so far as all concrete reality is dialectical, then yes, there are always at least two modes of production — the being and the becoming. But analytically the dialectical concept of a mode of production is intended precisely to describe a dynamic evolving system. Only systems with distinctly different technical relations and relations of appropriation should be analyzed as separate modes of production. ... The base need not, therefore, contain more than a single mode of production, but it may do so. Such is the case, for example, when peasants become dependent on the production of export-crops and the purchase of manufactured tools, even though techniques of production do not resemble those of agrarian capitalism. In the present historical context capitalism is the dominant mode of production on a world scale. (O'Laughlin 1975: 365)

The last comment, seemingly coming out of nowhere, is where this dissertation begins to make its contribution to the debates about articulations of modes of production, particularly where Indigenous modes of production are concerned. It will argue that the over-emphasis on capitalism in the political economy approach leads to a neglect of the evidence about Indigenous modes of production and the ways that these modes interact with capitalism. As we shall see, there was and is an alternative approach, more sensitive to the articulation of modes of production, that has been neglected in the history of anthropology, despite its

practical influence in Canada.

But simply to identify this point of conjuncture is not enough; the neglect of the articulation of modes of production approach is actually connected to a larger and more significant lacuna in the discipline's historiography. Both Ortner and Roseberry laud the political economy approach because of what they perceive as its more thoroughgoing engagement with the "real world." However, they both neglect two important considerations in reaching this conclusion: the actual application of the theory to "real world" issues, and the impact of developments in the "real world" on the historiographical representation of theory. Neither of them ask how it has fared when applied in contexts beyond academic theorising.

In chapters 4 and 5 I will discuss two situations where the political economy and articulations of modes of production approaches were used in attempts to offer explanations of and insights into "real world" events, events where anthropological involvement went beyond mere ethnographic descriptions to offer interpretations which sought to have real impacts for real people. In both *Kanatewat* and the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, the two theories were deployed to analyse data about Indigenous societies and economies in order to shape decisions about developments affecting Indigenous nations.

The developments in these two cases show the fatal flaw of the political economy approach in the "real world." Its emphasis on capitalism as central to all analyses and explanations of Indigenous cultures and economies means that it is fundamentally unable to describe them as Indigenous, let alone provide justification for their defense and continued right to exist as they are. Its prima

facie denial of the possibilities of Indigenous cultures existing as anything other than totally subsumed in capitalism actually works to undermine the claims of groups on whose behalf it purports to advocate by writing them into the global history of capital. On the other hand, the articulations of modes of production approach has been successful in analysing and explaining the specific interactions of particular groups with capitalist penetration, success which has been mirrored by successes in “real world” situations where it has been instrumental in the recognition and defense of Indigenous interests in and rights to territory.

However, the relative strengths and shortcomings of the two approaches in the “real world,” an arena privileged by both Ortner and Roseberry, have not been reflected in the historiography of the discipline. The political economy approach, as I show below, has been celebrated for what is perceived as its radical nature and challenges to dominant thinking, while the articulations of modes of production approach has been written out of the historiography entirely. The main goal of this dissertation is to rectify this situation with regard to the work done in the “real world”: it is try to reclaim a space in the historiography for an approach which promised to make fundamental changes both to anthropological representations, and legal and public understanding, of Indigenous cultures.

In two articles written roughly fifteen years apart, William Roseberry, the leading theorist of anthropological political economy, presented an insider’s account of the theoretical approach and attempted to situate it in the wider history of the discipline. Beginning the earlier article citing Ortner explicitly,

Roseberry presented his work as “offering an alternative account of the history of anthropological political economy” (Roseberry 1988: 162). Identifying Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz as two of the early progenitors of the focus on political economy, Roseberry early on betrayed the ambivalent relationship of the leading advocates of that approach with the work of Julian Steward: he claimed both that in their early work “Wolf and Mintz explicitly distanced themselves from Steward’s cultural ecology” and also that their work was, methodologically and theoretically, influenced by Steward’s approach to the study of communities (Roseberry 1988: 163, 170). In his later article, Roseberry seemed to disarticulate the generations completely, asserting that “no full appreciation of the innovations of the first generation can ignore the influence of Julian Steward or Leslie White as writers, teachers, or inspiration” (Roseberry 2002: 60), but he was not willing to assert that there is any real identifiable intellectual connection beyond “influence” between these groups, although this was manifestly the case for Steward and Wolf, for example, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 2.

Roseberry was more consistent in his depiction of the work done by Wolf and Mintz, making two broad claims about the work they did throughout their careers:

1. It was historical, in the sense that it attempted to see local communities as products of centuries of social, political, economic, and cultural processes, and in the sense that it understood those processes in global terms.
2. Nonetheless, unlike later world-systems theories, the goal of

historical investigation was not to subsume local histories within global processes but to understand the formation of anthropological subjects (“real people doing real things”) at the *intersection* of local interactions and relationships and the larger processes of state and empire making.

(Roseberry 1988: 163; emphasis in original)

Having distinguished them from the world-systems theories associated most prominently with Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein, Roseberry then set to the task of critiquing the structural Marxist, or as he terms it, the “mode of production” approach.¹ Associating it explicitly with the work of Louis Althusser, he asserted that “the mode of production concept offered the possibility of a more differentiated understanding of capitalism than did the extreme versions of dependency and world-systems theory” (Roseberry 1988: 167-168):

In historical surveys, rather than subsuming all parts of the world within a global capitalism from the 16th century onwards (as both Frank and Wallerstein had done), scholars working within a mode-of-production perspective saw a more prolonged and uneven transition to capitalism. The incorporation of regions within colonial or mercantile empires did not necessarily impose upon those regions the laws of capitalist development. Rather, scholars postulated a complex relationship, between the dynamics of noncapitalist and capitalist modes. Likewise, work with current populations would concentrate on groups who seemed to fall outside of a

¹ See also Roseberry (1989[1988]) for a similar discussion of the mode of production approach.

strictly conceived capitalism because they did not fit within a capital/wage-labor relationship. Here, too, a concept of the “articulation” between noncapitalist and capitalist dynamics was important. (Roseberry 1988: 168)

When he came to his critique of the mode-of-production theorists — and also, at some points, the work of the advocates of the world-systems approach — Roseberry levelled the same critiques as Ortner: they relied on functionalist reasoning in their depiction of “traditional or noncapitalist features in terms of the functions they served for capital accumulation,” and their emphasis on structural factors was overdetermined to the point of neglecting the actual contributions of individual people (Roseberry 1988: 170). He also accused them of operating at unacceptable levels of abstraction, focussed on discerning the laws of the interaction of structures as apart from the actions of people, and undertaking a mode of analysis that “too often served as an end in itself” (Roseberry 1988: 170). In an article written at roughly the same time, he argues that its application in the Latin American context tended to take two forms: “[i]n the worst of the literature, mode of production analysis became an end in itself, a labelling exercise. In the best, it became a means to another end—class analysis” (Roseberry 1989[1988]: 161), that is, the form of political economy analysis advocated by Roseberry. Structural Marxist analysis, then, is always partial and incomplete, and needs to be supplemented by a political economy analysis to have any impact or import.

He also accused the mode of production researchers of imposing Western historical and economic analyses on “noncapitalist” groups. From his perspective, “[t]he problem was too often stated as one of assessing the ‘impact’ of capitalism on noncapitalist modes, as if those noncapitalist modes had their own history, structure, and logic that preceded the intervention of ‘capitalism’ and could be understood apart from its history, structure, and logic” (Roseberry 1988: 172). In light of his application of the mode of production approach to his earlier critique of the world-systems theory, this is a curious turn; whereas earlier he had castigated the world-systems analyses for their positing a universal moment of engagement with capitalism, here he argued that capitalism is universal, although it did not take root at a single moment around the world. It seems that his quibble is less with the universality of capitalist penetration than with the details of the processes it took in its march around world.

After these critiques, Roseberry returned to Wolf’s work as the exemplar of an radically engaged, viable Marxist approach. Positing it as both a return to the concerns of his earlier works from the 1950s and “as an enabling text for a variety of political economic studies,” Roseberry positioned it as a critique of both the world-systems and mode-of-production approaches (Roseberry 1988: 173) and asserted, that in the latter case, “mode of production becomes a tool for thinking about the history of capitalism outside of Europe without imposing evolutionary labels upon that history” (Roseberry 1988: 173). Interestingly, Roseberry is willing to consider (Roseberry 1985; 1988: 173) that it is Wolf’s work that is predicated on a social evolutionary theory seeking to identify and classify

cultures on a hierarchy of developmental levels. In any event, he asserted that “in practice, Wolf avoids both the unilateral imposition of capitalism upon anthropological subjects and the illusory search for cultural authenticity” (Roseberry 1988: 173) and that “[h]e traces the imprint of a series of intersections of world and local histories in the very constitution of anthropological subjects, calling for a radical reformulation of the way we think and talk about history” (Roseberry 1988: 173). While it may be true that Wolf does not posit a single, universal narrative for the penetration of capitalism around the world, allowing for the possibility that it took different shapes at different times in different places, for him capitalism is central to a universal, teleological narrative in the sense that it is inevitable that at some point its reach will be total and universal, inescapable.

This notion of political economy’s radical engagement with the real world has been taken up by other scholars. In spite of the disconnect between Roseberry’s depiction of political economy’s superiority and its obvious shortcomings in comparison with structural Marxism and parallel Canadian developments, the former has managed to eclipse the latter both in terms of understandings of the current state of materialist anthropology and in terms of the discipline’s history. Most recently, Anthony Marcus and Charles Menzies, in their call for a class-struggle anthropology — “an anthropological practice that can be linked to the ultimate goal of achieving a classless society” (Marcus and Menzies 2005: 13) — cite Wolf and Eleanor Leacock as the “intellectual progenitors of Marxist anthropology in North America” (Marcus and Menzies

2005: 16). In particular, from their perspective as Trotskyites, they laud Wolf as a founding figure of American Marxist anthropology for having forced the discipline to honestly engage the historical profession and for having published foundational Marxist, Marxian, and crypto-Marxist anthropological analyses over six decades Though Wolf was engaged in a variety of forms of political activism ... his principle contribution was in making Marxist anthropology theoretically viable. Unashamedly Marxist in methodology, Eric Wolf's work in the last two decades of the short 20th century provided an intellectual guide book for scholars seeking their own Marxist explorations and explanations. (Marcus and Menzies 2005: 16)

Marcus and Menzies draw upon the insights of Wolf's work as the foundations for their proposed anthropology, an oppositional if not always confrontational assault on behalf of the working class around the world. While they claim to reject the teleological inevitability of either capitalism or the "worker's utopia" (Marcus and Menzies 2005: 21), their continued assumption of the inevitability of the proletarianisation of all peoples and their faith in the desirability and inevitability of a Trotskyian world revolution leading to a classless society leave them and their worldview in stark contrast to the alternative offered by scholars such as Feit and Asch.

Wolf and his work is feted as being radical (Heymans 2003; Marcus and Menzies 2005), even though his analysis is rooted in a form of evolutionary theory that suggests that Indigenous peoples will inevitably be assimilated into a

“superior” capitalist civilisation. There are obvious echoes of social Darwinism in his progressivist Marxism; clearly, his approach offers Indigenous peoples none of the liberatory potential ascribed to it. It offers no way to understand the agency of Indigenous peoples except in terms of a reaction that is doomed to failure, and passive assimilation or futile resistance are the only possibilities available. In this reading, the actual efforts of Indigenous peoples to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the modern world are ignored in favour of a social evolutionary analysis that stereotypes cultures, ignores the complex relations between different modes of production, and prejudges the outcome of cultural interactions. Perhaps it is inevitable that scholars who are wedded to a reading of history as the history of class conflict will read that into situations that need to be interpreted in other terms.

Although it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove, I would contend that Ortner’s article played a role in the eclipse of the anti-evolutionary mode of production approach in the discipline’s collective memory. She presented it as a conservative, largely French phenomenon, citing mostly French anthropologists and political theorists in her substantive assertions, and not citing any source later than 1979. On the other hand, she stated explicitly that “political economy is very much alive and well in the eighties, and it will probably thrive for some time” (Ortner 1984: 144). Roseberry sought to demonstrate and justify the dominance of the political economy approach at the expense of other Marxist-influenced materialist theories, asserting that this dominance is a result of its superiority in explaining phenomena relating to Indigenous encounters with capitalism. He also

argued that the French Marxist anthropologists were victims of a process of enclosure and colonisation, whereby they “had set out to undermine or appropriate the terrain of social anthropology and had instead been captured by it,” meaning “that the French Marxists made the central questions and objects of inquiry of social anthropology their own, subsuming rather different Marxist questions to them, rather than transforming social anthropological practice via Marxist critique” (Roseberry 2002: 69). However, as I demonstrate in Chapters 4 and 5, when one compares the political economy approach with those derived from an articulation of modes of production perspective, and it is this latter approach which offered a radical critique not only of narratives of capitalist expansion but also the entire philosophical tradition which motivated and grounded those stories.

Chapter 2: The Political Economy Approach

Whereas in his earlier article Roseberry offered only a basic definition of the term “political economy” — simply counterpoising it to “neoclassical economics” (Roseberry 1988: 162) — in his later article he went into greater detail, dividing the history of North American anthropology since the Second World War into a series of generational groups: he avoided giving them descriptive names, but I would term them the evolutionary (often known as the neo-evolutionary; Steward and Wolf), the critical (Wolf, Sidney Mintz, Marvin Harris, Eleanor Leacock, June Nash, Marshall Sahlins), and the postmodern (James Clifford, George Marcus, Fischer) (Roseberry 2002: 59-60). He provided a positive, multifaceted explication of political economy in both narrow and wider senses. In the narrow case, he asserted that the concept has referred to two aspects that differ but are connected:

On the one hand, it refers to the study of capitalism, its formation as a structured and hierarchical system, and its economic, social, and political effects on particular regions and localities and the people who live in them. On another hand, it refers to the explicit use of Marxian perspectives in anthropology. The second hand offers a particular theoretical approach to the substantive questions juggled by the first hand; the first hand may reach out for various theoretical approaches as it manipulates these questions. (Roseberry 2002: 61)

This move on his part is both obfuscatory and imperial; by claiming a convergence of Marxist perspectives and a political economy approach, Roseberry outlined a position which simultaneously sought to assimilate all Marxist-influenced theories under the rubric of one subset of a wide range of thought while also disavowing and discounting the individual histories of those other theories, inferring that all Marxist theories accepted all aspects of Marxism whole hog. It is both everything and, therefore, almost exactly nothing, in its grasp and reach.

Roseberry's posited wider sense of political economy has similar problems in terms of reference and scope. Again, he expanded the definition so far that it became meaningless in the context of anthropological research:

But if by political economy we mean something a bit more broad, as, say, the study of the formation of anthropological subjects within complex fields of social, economic, political, and cultural power, then each of the [three] generations has been involved in the history of anthropological political economy. The concern here is with the emergence of power relations more broadly, not solely under capitalism. For this, earlier moves toward the study of complex society, toward the study of civilizational processes in general, and toward a more differentiated understanding of culture, were critical, as are more recent questions regarding the kinds of narratives that can be constructed concerning the history of capitalism, the complex character of power and its effects through and beyond institutional loci, and the many forms and effects of inequality.

Furthermore, the history of an engagement with Marx's work is somewhat more complex than a simple identification of a period of *explicit* Marxism would suggest. (Roseberry 2002: 61-62)

Roseberry's exemplar of this political economy approach was Eric Wolf; for the purposes of my analysis I will also focus on Wolf's work as the archetypical expression of this perspective.

Eric Wolf's Political Economy

In his distinguished lecture to the American Anthropological Association meeting in the fall of 1989, Eric Wolf described four ways of thinking about *power*. He offered capsule summaries and critiques of three of these as a way of setting the stage for the fourth:

One is power as the attribute of the person, as potency or capability, the basic Nietzschean idea of power Speaking of power in this sense draws attention to the endowment of persons in the play of power, but tells us little about the form and direction of that play. The second kind of power can be understood as the ability of an *ego* to impose its will on its *alter*, in social action, in interpersonal relations. This draws attention to the sequences of interactions and transactions among people, but it does not address the nature of the arena in which the interactions go forward. That comes into view more sharply when we focus on power in the third mode,

as power that controls the settings in which people may show forth their potentialities and interact with others. ... This definition calls attention to the instrumentalities of power and is useful for understanding how “operating units” circumscribe the actions of others within determinate settings. I call this third kind of power tactical or organizational power. (Wolf 1990: 586)

Wolf’s fourth mode of power was based on his reading of Marx, with a nod to Foucault,² calling it “structural power,” and asserting that it “not only operates within settings or domains but ... also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and ... specifies the distribution and direction of energy flows” (Wolf 1990: 586), he wrote that

This term rephrases the older notion of the “social relations of production,”

² Ashraf Ghani, in a later analysis of Wolf’s “Anthropological Quest,” similarly draws a connection between Wolf’s approach and that found in Foucault’s work, using explicitly Foucauldian terms: Wolf’s agenda for writing a history of the is clearly anthropological. A listing of some key areas of divergences in the intersecting approaches of Wolf and Michel Foucault, who stated that he was engaged in “writing the history of the present” (1979: 31), should make this clear. Despite the centrality of discourse / practice in his work, Foucault did not explicitly confront the question of culture(s) in the history of the present. Wolf, by contrast, explicitly focuses on the relation between cultural forms and human maneuvers in these histories. Wolf, like Foucault, is interested in the micro-physics of politics. But whereas Foucault turned to analyze governmentality toward the end of his life, Wolf has long been engaged in a systematic attempt to explore the articulation between the micro-physics of politics and the macro-politics of the state. Wolf shares Foucault’s interest in social space as an arena of power, but, unlike Foucault, is interested in the process of production of uneven development of regions or social spaces. Like Foucault, Wolf is interested in the genealogy of modern European practices. But, unlike Foucault, Wolf writes the history of the present as a history of interconnected cultural processes. (Ghani 1995: 33)

Ghani seems to have misread Foucault, or interpreted him only partially, in this representation. The Foucault he depicts does not take into account works later than *Discipline and Punish* (1979, in English; but 1975 in French), such as “What is Enlightenment?” (Foucault 1997, first published in English in 1984 and originally in French in 1983), where Foucault offers an intensive and wide-ranging critique of “modern European practices,” *including* but not specifically the notion of “culture” as one of these practices.

and is intended to emphasize power to deploy and allocate social labor.

These governing relations do not come into view when you think of power primarily in interactional terms. *Structural power shapes the social field of action so as to render some kinds of behavior possible, while making others less possible or impossible.* (Wolf 1990: 587: emphasis mine)

Wolf linked the analytical insights offered by this formulation to those offered by dependency and world-systems theorists and argued, against Ortner, that such research described “a lot of what goes on in the real world, that constrains, inhibits, or promotes what people do, or cannot do, within the scenarios we study” (Wolf 1990: 587).

In this chapter, I will apply Wolf’s notion of structural power in a slightly different way: rather than using it to examine and understand “the real world,” per se, I will shift its focus to anthropological theory and representations of Indigenous societies and economies and to the ways in which these theories operate in the “real world.” I am interested in elucidating the ways in which theory, particularly Wolf’s version of Marxist-influenced mode of production approach, constrains, inhibits, or promotes analyses, and what analyses its renders probable, possible, or impossible (cf Foucault 1997: 315). My particular focus is on the implications of Wolf’s theory for his analysis and representation of Indigenous peoples, specifically in this case the hunting cultures of northern North America.

In his contribution to a special issue of *Critique of Anthropology* in honour

of Eric Wolf, Josiah Heyman advances the claim that Wolf was an “ethical-political humanist” *par excellence*. Conceptualising this standpoint as an “intellectual and moral” commitment to “all people, in all places and times” (Heyman 2005: 14), Heyman constructs an explicitly liberal value system which “does not deny the complexity of individual subjectivity and agency, nor the urgent ethical-political questions surrounding collective rights that might enable individuals to thrive, but ... resists the erosion of individual moral personhood in the face of collective forms of power” (Heyman 2005: 18). He asserts that

Wolf’s approach is notable in the debates over human nature and humanity in two regards. First, the three modes of production [that Wolf identifies in *Europe and the People without History*, that is, capitalist, tributary, and kin-based] point to a comparative and generalizing enterprise, one that admits foundations and experience-distant conceptualizations, although he demands of comparative anthropology that it compare situations within an interconnected historical stream rather than juxtapose decontextualized cases. More importantly, the very concept of people as relational and transformational demands a sense of complexity in the study of human design. Human beings always have at least two possibilities, ones that can only be expressed in combination with other, inverse possibilities. (Heyman 2005: 16)

Wolf’s *Europe and the People Without History* is one of the most significant social-science books of the past quarter-century. Read far beyond the confines of

anthropology, it has attracted audiences amongst historians, political scientists, and area-studies researchers, and scholars working in diverse fields applying world historical, political economy, or Marxist approaches, although its influence might not always have been positive in that it reinforces the perceived dominance of capitalism and elision of localised contexts, and that it serves to deal with Indigenous peoples in a way that other studies can continue to ignore them. It has also been enthusiastically received by anthropologists, including even the postmodernists, such as George Marcus and Michael Fischer, who called it “a powerful statement of the political-economic perspective in contemporary anthropology” (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 85).

But, as I will demonstrate, Heyman’s analysis presents only a part of the story. Wolf’s work needs to be read and understood not only in terms of its intent, but in terms of its concrete implications for further research, and for the peoples who conventionally form the subjects of anthropological inquiries. I will focus on Wolf’s *Europe and the People Without History*, including the preface he appended to the text when it was reprinted in 1997 to illustrate the serious, and negative, implications of his analytic frame for understanding and representing Indigenous societies, both in the discipline of anthropology and in wider political and legal discourses. It is in this context that I will describe Wolf’s theory as a colonialist one, on the side of development; in order to do this, I must begin by making explicit its links to the earlier cultural ecology approach.

The Influence of Steward

In a discipline whose most recent theoretical and methodological innovations had been Geertzian interpretivism, as outlined in *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) and developed by Paul Rabinow in *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), Wolf's *Europe and the People without History* (1997[1982]) offered a rejuvenated universalist alternative, a comprehensive analysis of the world and its history as a unified system, and reinscribed an evolutionary framework on Indigenous peoples (cf Coronil 1996: 61-62).

In this way, Wolf returns to the approach first developed by his supervisor, Julian Steward. It is generally well-known that Wolf was a student of Steward's. What is not as well known, however, is the extent to which Wolf's work subsequent to the Puerto Rico research (cf Wolf 1977) recapitulates some of the central problems of Steward's approach. Wolf's contributions are often seen as a development upon, or a critique of, his supervisor's method and theory; for example, Sydel Silverman, Wolf's spouse, has argued that Wolf's approach, and the approaches of his colleagues who were also trained by Steward, "were encouraged by Steward but were by no means outgrowths of his [Steward's] own work" (Silverman 1979: 62). Strangely, immediately prior to this assertion she claims that although the theoretical approach adopted by Wolf, Sidney Mintz, and other Puerto Rico researchers "differed considerably from Steward's, it nevertheless remained close to his basic theoretical orientation" (Silverman 1979: 62).

In contrast to this representation, both Jane Schneider, whose research

after her Ph.D. was influenced by Wolf, who was also her husband's supervisor at the University of Michigan, and William Roseberry, whose dissertation research was heavily influenced by Wolf, recognise the connections between Steward's work and that of Wolf. Schneider argues, in a discussion of various conceptualisations of peasantry, that

[w]hat concepts can do depends on where they come from and the uses they serve, peasantry being a telling example. It matters whether peasants are apprehended through the lens of a Kroeber-Redfield world, a Chayanov-Narodnik world, or the world that Wolf shared with his mentor Julian Steward and colleague Sidney Mintz. Understanding the difference means learning about these separate worlds — their historically particular academic institutions and the concerns of their wider publics. (Schneider 1995: 12)

In a related vein, Roseberry argues that Wolf's contributions throughout his career represent a single trajectory of theory and analysis:

One can clearly trace ... a continuity from Wolf's early work to his most recent, even as the theoretical and historical material grows in sophistication and elaboration. Theoretically, *Europe and the People Without History* represents Wolf's clearest and most explicit use of Marxist concepts, although such concepts also influenced his early work.

(Roseberry 1985: 141)

Clearly, Wolf's intellectual connections with the methods and theory developed by Julian Steward are much more complicated, and of longer duration and higher intensity, than Silverman represents.

Wolf's own view of his relationship with Steward is ambivalent when assessed over the total length of the former's career. In 1952 he followed Steward to the University of Illinois and took a position as a research associate (Friedman 1987: 109), although his precise role in Steward's research at this time, for example in the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) research, remains unclear; Wolf had completed his PhD and seems to have been allowed independence in setting his research priorities, while Steward had other graduate students as his research assistants. In a letter to Mintz written soon after he accepted a position at the University of Virginia, Wolf wrote that

[e]ver since my strategic discussion with Julian on how I was going to become a teacher and give up being his research associate, I have had the curious feeling of freedom and liberty and being my own boss.

Autonomy does something for you, after all, and it isn't all Erich Fromm's invention. (ERWP, Box 1, 25 March 1955).

An earlier example of a growing theoretical distance from Steward comes in a letter Wolf wrote to Stanley Diamond, at the beginning of the Puerto Rico research:

If we attempt to see the world about us as materialists and anthropologists, we must attempt to see it historically. Had we lived sixty

years ago, we might have come by this notion with some difficulty. As products of our times however, we have been impressed, through the increasingly rapid appearance of inventions and concomitant social results, with the reality of historical change. (ERWP, Box 1, 22 May 1947, emphases in original)

By the end of his career, however, he had come back to Steward, as shown by his comments on a draft of an interview to be published in an Italian journal:

Let me say first that there are various ways of conceptualizing cultural ecology and cultural materialism. I think of myself as someone who uses the methodology of cultural ecology and cultural materialism, but I do not subscribe to a theory of cultural ecology and materialism that would explain everything. In this I follow Julian H. Steward who defined cultural ecology as a 'discovery procedure,' that would allow the investigator to trace connections, to see what was linked with what, and to push this search for connections as far as possible in particular circumstances. Thus Steward, in studying the Shoshone Indian antelope [*sic*] hunting drive, included the role of the antelope shaman who attracts the antelope by singing, as a functional part of his organizational picture of Shoshone ecology. This Marvin Harris would have objected to. Harris wanted a theory, and not just a method. (ERWP, Box ?, Wolf to Jaco Starul, 1993)

What strikes me as particularly interesting about this quotation is his emphasis

on cultural ecology as a method first and foremost, without a significant theoretical component.³ At roughly the same time, in an interview with Jonathan Friedman, Wolf speaks warmly and quite fondly of his supervisor, and goes to some length to avoid criticising Steward's politics or the way they played out in his research, discounting Steward's work in the ICC as motivated less by racism than by a faith in science:

F: What were Steward's politics? I remember Stanley Diamond repeatedly hammering away at how he testified against American Indian rights-that they had no concept of property and could not make territorial claims. Is all that true?

W: It's true, all right. It was less the outcome of anti-Indian politics than a belief in the truth of science. If anything, he certainly had fellow feelings for the Indians.

F: This is, I think, relevant to the whole identity of American anthropology. I remember Stanley [Diamond] at one point maintaining that he saw a

³ Compare this to Wolf's comments in an interview with Ghani published in 1987, where he seems to portray Steward as a proto-mode of production thinker:

What I liked about Steward is his engagement with processes of work. I think that Murphy is perfectly right in saying that that was his way of talking about production; that is, processes of work organization, how you collect piñon nuts and what the implications of this are for social groupings. So I think that the Basin Plateau book is still, to my mind, the high point of the Stewardian effort. I think that Julian had a very fertile mind but I don't know whether he stayed away from problems of class and class struggle and the state on purpose, or whether that was just not the way he thought about things. I don't have any sense that he consciously decided that he wasn't going to be interested in class, but the effect of that was to send him off in sociological directions. (Ghani and Wolf 1987: 356-357)

break between the first generation of American anthropologists, up to people like Goldenweiser, Radin, Densmore, etc., who in one way or another espoused a critique of civilization, and a second generation of evolutionists, whom he saw as a reaction or adaptation to American-style developmentalism. The new evolutionism might be argued to have lost its oppositional and alternative character, being steeped in a modernist optimism of worldwide social transformation. I have always found that standard histories have either fought, like Harris, for the theoretical good guys against the bad or, like the Chicago people, simply avoided the question of social and political context.

W: Sure! But one needs to know a lot more about the individuals involved. Certainly, with respect to Steward, it's no simple black-and-white situation. Marvin [Harris] has a letter from him that he goes around showing to people claiming that he was, of course, acquainted with Marxism from Berkeley

...

I have always had the impression that Steward didn't read anything, so if anybody tells me that he read Marx and Engels, I have my grave doubts. Bob Murphy could tell you a lot about it. We both worked for Steward, and we used to laugh about the fact that we could never get him to read anything. But you could talk to him, and if you wanted to plant an idea in

his head, you could whisper in his ear where it would reverberate. He could go for days worrying about it and working it over in his mind. But he was strictly oral and auditory. He read cowboy stories, but I don't think that Marx was ever on the docket.

...

I think Steward is, in one sense, a complex person, in a very American sense. (Friedman 1987: 110)

Pinkoski's (2006) research has done much to challenge this view and to show the extent to which the methodology is a direct result of the theoretical conceits which directed its development.

Europe and the People without History

Perhaps the best place to enter *Europe and the People without History* is at its end. The final paragraph of the text neatly summarises, I think, Wolf's approach and intent:

Capitalist accumulation ... continues to engender new working classes in widely dispersed areas of the world. It recruits those working classes from a wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds, and inserts them into variable political and economic hierarchies. The new working classes change these hierarchies by their presence, and are themselves changed by the forces to which they are exposed. On one level, therefore, the

diffusion of the capitalist mode creates everywhere a wider unity through the constant reconstitution of its characteristic capital-labor relationship. On another level, it also creates diversity, accentuating social opposition and segmentation even as it unifies. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 383)

The striking thing about this passage — and in this, this passage is symptomatic of the book as a whole — is the fact that the most prominent actor is a mode of production, capitalism, an abstract concept, rather than actual living people. In this way, it is hard to reconcile Heyman’s emphasis on the individual moral agency and the potential power in the necessity of making choices between a series of possibilities. It soon becomes apparent, in Fernando Coronil’s words, that “the history of the peoples without history appears as the story of a history without people” (Coronil 1996: 63).⁴ Coronil points out the fetishised nature of Wolf’s narrative, how it “focuses on the inexorable movement of capitalism as a system of production of things, obscuring how capitalism itself is the product of

⁴ Compare this to Marcus and Fischer’s similar critique of the same aspect of *Europe and the People Without History*, in terms of *culture* rather than what might loosely be called *human agency*:

While this work is an excellent survey of the traditional subjects of ethnography — tribes and peasants of the third world as well as Europe — placed in the context of the history of capitalism, attention to culture is systematically elided. Perhaps this is because Wolf associates it with the kind of anthropology that in the past has obscured the historic dimensions of its subjects’ lives, which he wishes to reclaim. In a short afterword, Wolf places the interpretive view of culture, seen as a form of idealism, within the category of ideology, thus relegating it to its superstructural position in classic Marxism. After so sophisticated a global analysis, this treatment of culture is hardly satisfying. (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 85)

Clearly, Coronil’s “human activity” and Marcus and Fischer’s “culture” are two sides of the same coin; what they are all critiquing is his lack of attention to human agency as structuring and structured by culture / ideology. In a sense, Wolf’s teleological narrative of capitalist expansion notwithstanding particular local conditions is much more structuralist than the alternative mode of production analyses he critiques.

human activity” (Coronil 1996: 63). Roseberry offers a presumptive defence of sorts against this line of criticism in an extensive review of the book in *Dialectical Anthropology* three years after its publication (Roseberry 1985). In dealing with this aspect of Wolf’s analysis, that is, the micro-, human-, or, in his term, “event”-level perspective, Roseberry says that this weakness “is a consequence of [the book’s] strengths” (Roseberry 1985: 144). According to Roseberry, in his representation of “The World in 1400,” the second chapter of *Europe and the People Without History*,

Wolf is very good at presenting the long cycles that have produced, say, a China, but he can pay little attention to the short cycles, the conjunctures of event and trend that are shaped by and shape the structural changes that seem to take centuries to emerge. This is, of course, a necessary consequence of the author’s object in the chapter, but it implies a theoretical understanding of history that leaves history-making out of the account. That this is not Wolf’s understanding is clear, not only from the whole body of his work but from the other sections of the book. His discussion of the emergence of Europe and the creation of anthropological subjects in the periods of mercantile accumulation and capitalist development shows sensitivity to the conjuncture of event and trend. But even with such care, attention to regional differentiation must suffer. Wolf is at his best in analyzing the main lines of, or more important regions in, a process, e.g., the nuclear areas of Latin America or the westward movement of the North American fur trade from the northeast to the

northern plains. As he turns his attention to divergent lines or less central areas, his analysis weakens. At times it seems to be directed to a more complete sense of the variety of types encountered. At other times, as Wolf discusses particular populations, one gets lost in a list of names without the sociological analysis one has come to expect from his other discussions. (Roseberry 1985: 144)

To a certain extent, I agree with Roseberry's analysis that Wolf is unable to treat both the micro and the macro, the human and the structural, as significant parts of a coherent whole. However, at the same time I reject his conclusion that "these matters are relatively trivial" and that "[o]f more importance are theoretical issues suggested by Wolf's analysis of modes of production" (Roseberry 1985: 144). In my reading, this characteristic inability of Wolf's narrative to deal with actual human activity and history as opposed to the external economic structures is a direct result of the theoretical frame he applies to his narrative. Wolf is writing a history of capitalism; as a Marxist, perhaps there were no other viable options for him to pursue. When he writes in the 1997 Preface that his "objective in writing this book was not to present a record of world history that would encompass the globe nor to develop a history of capitalist expansion as such" but rather that "[t]he idea was to show that human societies and cultures would not be properly understood until we learned to visualize them in their mutual interrelationships and interdependencies in space and time" (Wolf 1997: x), Wolf appears to offer the possibility of a narrative in

which capitalism represented but one strand among many. However, it soon becomes apparent that in his analysis the only way to “visualize” Indigenous societies “through their mutual interrelationships and interdependencies” since the fifteen century is through the lens of capitalism. For example, in his chapter on the fur trade, he offers a narrative about trade and interaction which appears to begin with the arrival of Europeans, with no discussion of the “mutual interrelationships and interdependencies” of the various Indigenous groups before then (Wolf 1997[1982]: ch.6). Given that Wolf’s theoretical frame allows for but two conditions for the rise and expansion of capitalism — feudalism or colonialism (Wolf 1997[1982]: 403) — it is no stretch at all to read his discussion of capitalism as necessarily one of colonialism, even though the latter concept only appears infrequently in his text.

One commentary observes that this book was “the ‘high point’ of American Marxist anthropology” and goes on to call it “a magisterial inquiry into the complex economic, cultural, and political effects of colonialism on the peoples studied by anthropologists” (Eriksen and Nielsen 2001: 119). There is a significant problem with this statement which, taken at face value, seems to represent a common perspective on the book today: colonialism, *per se*, does not explicitly appear in the book (Asch, personal communication). It is unworthy of an entry in the index, and a search of the full text using Google Scholar shows that the word appears once in the bibliographic essay, several times in the citations, and only once in the body of the text, in the introduction: in a critique of what he saw as modernization theory’s tendency to downplay the relationships

between societies at different levels of development, he wrote that

each society was defined as an autonomous and bounded structure of social relations, thus discouraging analysis of intersocietal or intergroup interchanges, including internal social strife, colonialism, imperialism,⁵ and societal dependency. The theory thus effectively precluded the serious study of issues demonstrably agitating the real world. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 13)

But Wolf clearly did not deal with one of the major “issues demonstrably agitating the real world,” as much in his own times as in the period covered by his research: his discussion avoids colonialism, one of the central concrete factors affecting indigenous peoples worldwide.⁶ So we see that this major work which is often taken as, or at least read as, an analysis of colonialism actually appears to fall into the same lacuna which Pinkoski (2006) has so compellingly exposed.

This is not to say that Wolf had been entirely ignorant of the reality of colonialism for Indigenous peoples. In a paper prepared for a 1968 conference, he wrote that

We must thus face the uncomfortable fact ... that our work as anthropologists has gone on largely and primarily under the imperialist

⁵ While *imperialism* does have an index entry, it fares little better than *colonialism*: seven of the eight entries deal with the concept on only a theoretical level, with a single one (dealing with European involvement in the West African oil trade [Wolf 1997(1982): 332]) addressing the topic in a concrete way.

⁶ Although, of course, it had local manifestations in each individual case; I am not arguing that colonialism was a monolithic force, but I am willing to argue that it was in its individual manifestations a significant component in the historical change of individual indigenous societies (cf Tsosie n.d.).

umbrella, in what Balandier has referred to as the *colonial situation*. Our studies “in principle, could not (or should not) ignore such an important fact as colonialism, a phenomenon which has imposed, for a century or more a certain type of evolution on subjugated populations. It seemed impossible not to take into account certain concrete situations in which the recent history of these people evolved. And yet it is only now and then that anthropologists have taken into consideration the specific context inherent in the *colonial situation*” (Wolf 1980: 458).

But Wolf’s focus in his later work is on capitalism, to the exclusion of colonialism, and this highlights his return to the theory of Steward: whereas Murphy and Steward asserted that Indigenous groups immediately and willingly gave up their Indigenous technologies and adapted their modes of production in the face of the growing dependency on Western technologies (Murphy and Steward 1956: 339, 353), Wolf argues that the Indigenous peoples were largely passive victims of the imposition of capitalism, unable to sustain their economies and the corresponding lifeways in the face of Western economic encroachment. But rather than simply resurrecting Steward’s emphasis on the arrival of Western technology and its immediate, irreversible and devastating impact on Indigenous societies, Wolf, a good Marxist in the Trotskyian vein, focussed his analysis on capitalism and its immediate, irreversible, and devastating impact on Indigenous modes of production.

Wolf held on to this approach even at the end of his career; he wrote to

Andre Gunder Frank in 1997 that

I also thought back on how I waded into all these global problems, instead of sticking to my anthropologist's last. I think I always wanted to show how the diverse peasants and primitives of the world got caught up in capitalism, and that has been my focus since - on the local victims and participants, rather than on the nature of the "system." I always thought that "culture" matters, though I still don't know what "culture" is. The more you try to describe and analyze it, the more heterogeneous and unbounded that idea seems. So, at this late hour, I am no longer sure of any of these concepts: culture, capitalism, consciousness. (ERWP, Box ?, 03 March 1997).

What I find most striking here are his conflation of "primitives" and "peasants," and his representation of both groups as passive victims of the encroaching world system. Also noteworthy is his desire to describe the effects of the system without developing a comprehensive understanding of the system itself.

The presence of these theoretical constraints on the narrative also challenges Heyman's depiction of Wolf's analysis of human interaction as fundamentally relational. Writing from the perspective of capitalism, Wolf offers no possibility that people living outside or beyond capitalism could possibly choose the extent to which they were willing and able to engage with capitalism. Coronil notes that "[w]hile Wolf starkly depicts" capitalism's impact, "his account of this interaction gives the impression that agency is located predominantly at

one end” (Coronil 1996: 62), in capitalism. Wolf asserts in his Preface that

Contrary to the claims of some commentators, I have not argued ... that this incorporation into capitalist networks necessarily destroys peoples’ distinctive, historically grounded cultural understandings and practices or renders their cultural schemata inoperative and irrelevant. I did portray commodity gatherers and producers as “agents of capitalism,” just as I portrayed the various populations of laborers in capitalist enterprises as wage-earners offering their labor for sale under capitalist conditions. I did this because I was persuaded that the lives of people the world over have been increasingly dictated by capitalist markets, including markets that offer labor power for sale. ... Capitalist expansion may or may not render particular cultures inoperative, but its all-too-real spread does raise questions about just how the successive cohorts of peoples drawn into the capitalist orbit align and realign their understandings to respond to the opportunities and exigencies of their new conditions. (Wolf 1997: xii)

Here again Wolf returns to a description of the victims of capitalism in the passive voice, rather than as real actors. But Wolf’s narrative is about *how* capitalism expanded and assimilated groups, not *whether* it did; his analysis begs the question, taking as its premise (the eventual utter and total absorption of all other economies into capitalism) something it actually has to prove. It is perhaps hopelessly heterodox to suggest that Marx’s work on the encounter between capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production read more like hypotheses

which need to be tested and verified than accurate representations of actual historical events (e.g., “the corrosive influence of commerce” on the economies of China and India in *Capital* III, cited in Asad 1987: 596).

Wolf explicitly draws upon the then-emergent mode of production literature to frame his analysis of the impact of capitalism on Indigenous peoples, arguing in his “Bibliographic Notes” that it provides “a way of thinking about relationships” which “allows us to move away from mechanical, linear causalities” (Wolf 1997[1982]: 401). In terms of the articulations of the capitalist mode of production with other modes, he asserts that an article by Barbara Bradby, “The Destruction of Natural Economy” (1980[1975]), “represents a lucid and important contribution” to the debates (Wolf 1997[1982]: 404). Her introduction to that paper sets out in stark terms her analysis of these articulations, and helps to show the theoretical frame within which Wolf claims to be working. It begins, in the very first sentence, with the assertion that “[t]he establishment of capitalism in a social formation necessarily implies the transformation, and in some sense the destruction, of formerly dominant modes of production” (Bradby 1980[1975]: 93), although she does not cite any evidence to support this claim, or even define “establishment of capitalism.” Drawing upon Luxemburg’s definition of “natural economy” as having its basis in “the production for personal needs and the close connection between industry and agriculture” (cited in Bradby 1980[1975]: 93), Bradby goes on to write that

[n]atural economy is therefore opposed to economies of expanded reproduction, and to all commodity economies. Its destruction implies the

progressive socialisation of labour processes that can be separated from the land as immediate objective condition of production, and the growth of a commodity economy, in which production is no longer in order to satisfy a direct need of the producer, but in order to create and realise exchange-value. The process of destruction is completed when land, and, most importantly, labour-power itself, become commodities, and the end of production comes to be the creation of surplus-value for capital. The term “natural economy” is therefore used to mean those characteristics of pre-capitalist modes of production which are essentially opposed to capitalist relations of production, and which must be destroyed for the development of capitalism to be possible. (Bradby 1980[1975]: 93-94)

While she allows that different modes of production pose different challenges and resist the incursion of capitalism in different ways, the end is always “the historical necessity underlying the seemingly erratic process of destruction and assimilation of natural economies by capitalism” (Bradby 1980[1975]: 94). It is hard not to read this as a mechanical process —

$$\textit{capitalism} + \textit{mode } x + \textit{time } y = \textit{capitalism}$$

— or as a linear, teleological narrative of inevitable capitalist dominance. The possibility of resistance is limited to a delay in the assimilation to capitalism, not the ability to reject or reshape the incursion to create something different. One drop of capitalism is enough to taint the other mode of production entirely. This is the narrative put forward by Steward in the Indian Claims Commission (ICC)

cases in the US in the 1950s (Pinkoski 2006), and it is the narrative put forward by agents of the Canadian state in court cases and other fora from the 1960s onward (chapters 3 and 4, below). It is the narrative which allows contemporary ethnographers to be surprised to find that subsistence hunting still exists as a viable mode of production for any number of Indigenous societies today (e.g., Nadasdy 2003; see also Chapter 5) — according to Wolf, these people are peasants or proletarians rather than hunters.

Wolf devotes the third chapter of *Europe and the People Without History* to an explication of his deployment of the concept of mode of production. He begins this by situating his analysis in the context of Marx's concept of production, which Wolf describes him as defining as "this complex set of mutually dependent relations among nature, work, social labor, and social organization" (Wolf 1997[1982]: 74), while cautioning that Marx's emphasis on the technological aspects needs to be understood in the context of his materialist critique of Hegel's notion of *Geist* (Wolf 1997[1982]: 74-75). In this vein, Wolf also asserts that

It is important to note that Marx's concept of production incorporates his insistence that the human species produces with both hand and head. In contrast to other animals, humans conceptualize and plan the labor process. Labor thus presupposes intentionality, and therefore information and meaning. Just as labor is always social labor, information and meaning are always social. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 75)

From this base, Wolf develops his model of *mode of production*:

The concept of social labor thus makes it possible to conceptualize the major ways in which human beings organize their production. Each major way of doing so constitutes a mode of production — a specific, historically occurring set of social relations through which labor is deployed to wrest energy from nature by means of tools, skills, organization and knowledge.

(Wolf 1997[1982]: 75)

His description of modes of production having at their cores a sense of human agency is at odds both with his discussion in the 1997 “Preface” and his later depictions of Indigenous cultures in the fur trade.

Wolf describes the utility of the mode of production approach for his analysis in terms of its “capacity to underline the strategic relationships involved in the deployment of social labor by organized human pluralities,” rather than for its ability to offer a means to classify various modes (Wolf 1997[1982]: 76). He asserts that his methods of analysis “should not be taken as schemes for pigeonholing societies,” on the grounds that “[t]he two concepts — mode of production and society — pertain to different levels of abstraction”; specifically, [t]he concept of society takes its departure from real or imputed interactions among people. The concept of mode of production aims, rather, at revealing the political-economic relationships that underlie, orient, and constrain interaction. Such key relationships may characterize only a part of the total range of interactions in a society; they may

comprehend all of a society; or they may transcend particular, historically constituted systems of social interaction. Used comparatively, the concept of mode of production calls attention to major variations in political-economic arrangements and allows us to visualize their effect. The use of the concept enables us, above all, to inquire into what happens in the encounters of differently constituted systems of interaction — societies — predicated upon different modes of production. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 76-77)

This approach, combined with Wolf's particular focus, also offers the benefit of requiring only a skeletal classificatory system:

Since we want to deal with the spread of the capitalist mode and its impact on world areas where social labor was allocated differently, we shall construct only those modes that permit us to exhibit this encounter in the most parsimonious manner. For this purpose we shall define but three: a capitalist mode, a tributary mode, and a kin-ordered mode. For other problems and issues it may be useful to construct other modes drawing further distinctions, or to group together differently the distinctions drawn here. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 76)

For Wolf, each mode of production creates the possibility for a constellation of social relationships and structural organisations; each contains “a conjunction that embodies its dynamic and reproduces the conditions for its proliferation” (Wolf 1997[1982]: 386). At the same time, each mode of production “creates its

own characteristic fissures and oppositions” (Wolf 1997[1982]: 386). Wolf asserts, for example, that

The kin-ordered mode is predicated upon oppositions between those who “belong” and those who do not, and engenders distinctions of gender, rank, and privilege favoring some kin over others. ... The capitalist mode acts to accumulate capital through the hiring of labor power, but it is marked by the cyclical alternation of labor mobilization and labor displacement; each intake of labor power uproots some prior adaptation, while each sloughing off of labor power creates a new cohort of the disemployed. Since the key relationships governing the mobilization of social labor differ for each mode, and since each mode produces its own disjunctions, the encounter of different modes spells contradictions and conflicts for the populations they encompass. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 386-387)

Both Wolf and Roseberry take care to assert that the analytical frameworks put forward in the book are not intended to be, and should not be taken as examples of, an evolutionary argument. At the close of the chapter outlining his deployment of the mode of production analysis, Wolf cautions that

[t]he three modes of production I have outlined constitute neither types into which human societies may be sorted nor stages in cultural evolution. They are put forth as constructs with which to envisage certain strategic relationships that shape the terms under which human lives are constructed. The three modes are instruments for thinking about the

crucial connections build up among the expanding Europeans and the other inhabitants of the globe, so that we may grasp the consequences of these connections. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 100).

In his review of the book, Roseberry claims that this chapter, and the earlier paper on which it was based, both “eschew evolutionism and begin with capitalism, arguing that our understanding of tributary and kin-ordered modes of production is colored by our understanding of capitalism” (Roseberry 1985: 144). As either an ontological or an epistemological basis for anthropological research and engagement with Indigenous cultures, societies, and economies, this standpoint is profoundly lacking. This is particularly apparent in Roseberry’s summation of Wolf’s work at the end of his review, where he asserts that capitalism should not be the only focus of analysis, but still remains at the centre of anthropological understandings of other cultures and economies:

I do not mean to imply, nor does Wolf suggest, that our understanding of anthropological subjects should be reduced to an analysis of the capitalist mode of production. Shanghai did not become Kansas City, however much some capitalists and Congressmen might have desired such an outcome. Noncapitalist relations shaped, and in many cases continue to shape, the lives of most of the peoples anthropologists have studied. One of the paradoxes of the history of capitalism has been its development in noncapitalist milieux. Such situations are not unaffected by the encounter with capitalism, however, and in many cases *noncapitalist* relations have

been created as a direct or indirect result of capitalist development. Anthropologists turn such situations into visions of our past, into *precapitalist* relations, at the expense of a more profound historical and political understanding. It is with pleasure, then, that one reads a critical analysis that rejects pseudo-historical oppositions and explores with such care the historical processes by which *primitive and peasant pasts have become a fundamentally altered primitive, peasant, and proletarian present*. (Roseberry 1985: 151, emphasis added)

For my purposes here, the most important of Wolf's three modes of production is the kin-ordered one. He begins his depiction of this mode by asserting that while in 1400 (the arbitrary beginning of his narrative of capitalist expansion) kin-ordered groups lived at the margins of tributary-organised horticulturalists, it is incorrect to label them "primitive" (Wolf 1997[1982]: 88). After discussing the anthropological literature on kinship, Wolf offers a definition of the kin-ordered mode of production, writing that it can be understood as a way of committing social labor to the transformation of nature through appeals to filiation and marriage, and to consanguinity and affinity. Put simply, through kinship social labor is "locked up," or "embedded," in particular relations between people. This labor can be mobilized only through access to people, such access being defined symbolically. *What* is done unlocks social labor; *how* it is done involves (a) symbolic constructs ("filiation / marriage; consanguinity / affinity") that (b)

continually place actors, born and recruited, (c) into social relations with one another. These social relations (d) permit people in variable ways to call on the share of social labor carried by each, in order to (e) effect the necessary transformations of nature. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 91)

Wolf expands upon this definition by outlining the characteristics of two distinct types of kin-ordered modes of production. The first, which he states “is best exemplified in the anthropological literature by food-collecting ‘bands,’” comprises groups which “do not transform nature, but gather up and concentrate for human use resources naturally available in the environment” (Wolf 1997[1982]: 91). For groups of this type,

the aggregation or dispersion of people, each embodying a share of social labor, follows ecological constraints and opportunities. Upper limits to pooled social labor are set by the interaction of the technology with the local environment, as well as by the group’s ability to manage conflict through consensus formation and informal sanctions. Kinship then works primarily to create relations among persons — partnerships among shareholders in social labor — through marriage and filiation. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 92)

This kin-ordered mode resembles much more closely Steward’s family level of social organisation than the band level (1955; cf Pinkoski and Asch 2004; Pinkoski 2006: 108-111), given that for the peoples living in this system the

“natural environment is not a means for humanly controlled organic transformations, as in cultivation or herding; it is the ‘object of labor’ but not its ‘instrument’” (Wolf 1997[1982]: 91). These groups seem much more like animals ranging over a territory and foraging, and seem, in comparison with the second type, to lack any form of social structure which could organise their land use or production.

The second type of kin-ordered mode of production, which Wolf does not name in the same way, takes a more active approach to its environment, actively laboring to reshape it as a productive force. Wolf writes that in this case,

[a] segment of nature is transformed by a set of people — equipped with tools, organization, and ideas — so as to produce crops or livestock. In such a society, social labor is distributed in social clusters that expand labor cumulatively and transgenerationally upon a particular segment of the environment, accumulating at the same time a transgenerational corpus of claims and counterclaims to social labor. Where conditions tend toward ecological closure, relations among these clusters need to be more closely defined and circumscribed, and the clusters readily become exclusive groups. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 92)

In these groups, “the idiom of filiation and marriage is used to construct transgenerational pedigrees, real or fictitious,” which allow them to “include or exclude people who can claim rights to social labor on the basis of privileged membership” (Wolf 1997[1982]: 92).

In further contrast to the first type, Wolf asserts that groups of the second type are typically equipped with mythical charters defining culturally selected and certified lines of kin connection:

These charters fulfil a number of functions. First, they allow groups to claim privileges on the basis of kinship. Second, they serve to permit or deny people access to strategic resources. Third, they organize the exchange of persons between pedigreed groups through their definition of ties of affinity; marriage, instead of being a relationship between bride and groom and their immediate relatives only, becomes a tie of political alliance between groups. And fourth, they allocate managerial functions to particular positions within the genealogy, thus distributing them unevenly over the political and jural field — whether this be elders over juniors, as seniors over cadet lines, or as lines of higher over lower rank. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 92).

This distinction between kin-based modes serves to create a hierarchy where some groups, with “extended” forms of kinship, have political structures and social organisation while others are less organised, or organised at a lower (e.g., familial?) level. Wolf makes the contrast between the two types explicit:

The “extension” of kinship is therefore not the same as kinship on the level of filiation and marriage; it is concerned with jural allocation of rights and claims, and hence with political relations between people. On the level of filiation and marriage, kinship sets up individuated linkages among

shareholders in social labor; extended kinship, in contrast, organizes social labor into labor pools and places controls over the transfer of labor from one pool to another. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 92-93)

While he cautions against defining kin-based modes in terms of what they lack in comparison to the tributary and capitalist modes (Wolf 1997[1982]: 88-89), in the case of the kin-based mode he undertakes precisely such a definition in his differentiation of the filial or marriage-based and “extended” types.

Roseberry, however, senses problems with Wolf’s depiction and analysis of the kin-ordered mode of production, writing that it “leaves one confused,” because it “is never clear whether he is trying to reconstruct the structure and dynamics of kin-ordered modes in pre-state situations or of kin-ordered modes in a world of tributary states and mercantile accumulation” (Roseberry 1985: 146). Even though he accepts for the time being Wolf’s injunction about reading the discussion of modes of production as an evolutionary narrative, Roseberry detects a series of issues with Wolf’s depictions which make it hard to hold to this reading: at first glance, Wolf seems to be presenting the kin-ordered societies as pre-state formations with actual historical roots, but in fact

all of Wolf’s sources are based upon ethnographic analyses of kin-ordered societies of the present as if they were indeed our contemporary ancestors. Wolf is, of course, well aware of this problem with classic anthropology. The whole book is a largely successful attempt to address it. ... But nowhere in the kin-ordered mode section does Wolf engage in a

critical dialogue with the sources of his reconstruction. (Roseberry 1985: 146)

The result, in Roseberry's reading, is that in Wolf's "discussion of the kin-ordered mode, he suspends this critical appraisal and seems to revert to a kind of evolutionism" (Roseberry 1985: 147). But in sum, it appears that this evolutionism does not trouble Roseberry much given what he sees as the book's general contributions to an understanding of the formation of the modern world.

Wolf framed his work as an explicit counter to the underdevelopment and dependency theories of Andre Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein. For them, "the principal aim was to understand how the core subjugated the periphery, and not to study the reactions of the micro-populations habitually investigated by anthropologists," with the result that they "omit consideration of the range and variety of such populations, of their modes of existence before European expansion and the advent of capitalism, and of the manner in which these modes were penetrated, subordinated, destroyed, or absorbed, first by the growing market and subsequently by industrial capitalism" (Wolf 1997[1982]: 23). In contrast, *Europe and the People Without History* takes as its focus these overlooked peoples, and attempts, according to Wolf,

to delineate the general processes at work in mercantile and capitalist development, while at the same time following their effects on the micro-populations studied by the ethnohistorians and anthropologists. My view of these processes and their effects is historical, but in the sense of history

as an analytic account of the development of material relations, moving simultaneously on the level of the encompassing system and on the micro-level. ... In this account, both the people who claim history as their own and the people to whom history has been denied emerge as participants in the same historical trajectory. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 23)

Analysing Northern Economies

Now, Wolf only writes two paragraphs on the Dene (whom he calls Athabascans), and mentions the Cree only in passing in his depictions of the expansion of the North American fur trade.⁷ However, there is enough in these short passages to discern the ways in which Wolf deploys his theoretical apparatus in crafting his representations of Indigenous peoples.

In Wolf's depiction, the crucial development for the Dene was the arrival of the horse in their territories in the 1730s, and their subsequent transformation into "fully specialized horse pastoralists" (Wolf 1997[1982]: 175). In a single paragraph he is able to describe both the material and social shifts the Dene experienced; after the Dene began to ride,

[t]he fur traders now attempted to carry the trade to the trappers, rather than letting the trappers carry the trade to them. The demands of hunting caribou and fishing were at odds with the tasks of trapping beaver. The fur

⁷ However, in her monograph on Montagnais-Naskapi hunting territories which formed the basis of the analyses of that group by both Murphy and Steward and Wolf, Eleanor Leacock included materials collected from the Cree of the James Bay region (e.g., Leacock 1954: 36); thus, in a sense, both later analyses were also dealing with Cree in addition to Montagnais-Naskapi.

traders, therefore, tried increasingly to convert “caribou eaters” into “carriers” (the distinction drawn by the Chipeweyans) by advancing food, guns and ammunition, traps, cloth, blankets, liquor, and tobacco both to “chiefs” and to individual Indians. In the course of the eighteenth century, advances of food staples such as flour, lard, and tea led to a decline in the autonomous hunting activities of the trapping populations. As people came to rely less on the large-scale caribou drive and on group fishing, the “great man whom we all follow,” who organized the large caribou-hunting bands, lost his function. The fur traders now hired hunters to provide their forts with meat, or dealt with “trading chiefs,” who gained a measure of influence over their followers by drawing on advances of hunting equipment and staples from the trading posts. Some kin-based groups began to hunt and trade on their own, especially when competition among traders for furs multiplied both the numbers of chiefs eager to enter into alliance with them, and the conflicts between such chiefs. Thus the relationship of trader and trapper became individualized, favoring the formation of small bands, based on interlinked conjugal pairs, over the larger hunting aggregates of earlier times. (Wolf 1997[1982]: 175)

Wolf, then, depicts the Dene encounter with capitalism, as embodied by the fur trade, as an event which undermined both their economy and their society.

There are several issues raised by Wolf’s description which need to be unpacked. At a superficial level, the scare quotes around “chiefs” calls into

question the existence of Dene social structure and political organisation at the time, inferring that they lacked leadership. At a more fundamental level, the entire discussion betrays the ongoing influence of Steward's method and theory on Wolf's analysis, both directly and as filtered through the work of other cultural ecologists. On the one hand, directly, this description of the fracturing of an "Aboriginal" mode of life and social organisation directly parallels that offered by Murphy and Steward in "Tappers and Trappers": the arrival of trade goods superior to Indigenous ones, and the shift away from subsistence hunting to hunting for trade, is precisely the same as the one Murphy and Steward put forward for the Montagnais (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparing Murphy and Steward with Wolf

| <i>Murphy and Steward's Categories</i> | Murphy and Steward's Description of the Montagnais | Wolf's Description of the Dene |
|--|--|---|
| 1. <i>pre-fur</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous culture and society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a |
| 2. <i>marginal involvement</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Trade by family heads — leaders do not trade for followers." • "Trapping secondary to subsistence hunting — subsistence still gotten traditionally, basic social patterns persist." ... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The fur traders now attempted to carry the trade to the trappers, rather than letting the trappers carry the trade to them" |
| 3. <i>transitional</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Further displacement of native crafts, increased need of trade goods, increased dependence on trader." • "Increased fur production interferes with subsistence hunting." • "Individual trade conflicts with group solidarity." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The demands of hunting caribou and fishing were at odds with the tasks of trapping beaver. The fur traders, therefore, tried increasingly to convert 'caribou eaters' into 'carriers' (the distinction drawn by the Chipeweyans) by advancing food, guns and ammunition, traps, cloth, blankets, liquor, and tobacco both to 'chiefs' and to individual Indians. In the course of the eighteenth century, advances of food staples such as flour, lard, and tea led to a decline in the autonomous hunting activities of the trapping populations." |
| 4. <i>convergence and culmination</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Fur trapping now predominant; winter provisions purchased." • "Winter groups not necessary with end of collective hunt...." • "Shift of economic interdependencies from group to trader." ... • "Nuclear family basic unit at all times of year." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "As people came to rely less on the large-scale caribou drive and on group fishing, the 'great man whom we all follow,' who organized the large caribou-hunting bands, lost his function. The fur traders now hired hunters to provide their forts with meat, or dealt with 'trading chiefs,' who gained a measure of influence over their followers by drawing on advances of hunting equipment and staples from the trading posts. Some kin-based groups began to hunt and trade on their own, especially when competition among traders for furs multiplied both the numbers of chiefs eager to enter into alliance with them, and the conflicts between such chiefs. Thus the relationship of trader and trapper became individualized, favoring the formation of small bands, based on interlinked conjugal pairs, over the larger hunting aggregates of earlier times." |

source: Murphy and Steward 1956: 348-349; Wolf 1997[1982]: 175.

It is immediately apparent that Wolf barely needs any ethnographic data about the Dene to make his arguments about the effects of the expansion of the fur trade on them — all he needs is the theoretical framework laid out by Murphy and Steward, and he can make the argument he needs to bolster his history of capitalist expansion into the world's peripheries.

On a secondary level, Wolf's discussion draws implicitly on Elman Service's representation of the Dene⁸ in his *Primitive Social Organization* (1971). Service describes the Dene social structure as based on "a loose confederation of families which form a large composite band," which reflects the fact that "the fur trade had created an increased independence of the nuclear families" (Service 1971: 76). These families, according to Service, comprise the "basic unit in the social structure," and they have their "closest social relationships with near relatives in a few other families" (Service 1971: 76). Nuclear families, in this formulation, come together to form bands, but Service asserts that "Steward's idea that this band [organisation] is explained by the collective hunting of caribou and musk oxen is difficult to uphold, however, for I can find no evidence that the band itself is normally the hunting group" (Service 1971: 76).

Instead, Service offers an explanation of this form of social organisation that is based on external structural and economic factors. Rather than being based on a techno-environmental response to their environment, he argues that

[t]he causes of the modern fluid, informal, composite band clearly lie in the

⁸ Like Wolf, who referred to these peoples as "Athabascans," Service uses the term "Athabaskans," and explains in a footnote that "[t]he composite big-game hunters at issue are the following: Hare, Dogrib, Bear Lake, Yellowknife, Chipewyan, Mountain, Kaska, Slave, Sekani, and Beaver" (Service 1971: 76n10).

initial shocks, depopulation, relocation, and other disturbances in the early contact period which produced refugee-like groups of unrelated families among the Indians even before the time of the American Revolutionary War. Depopulation owing to European diseases had the first and most devastating social effects. ... Athapaskans who survived the early disasters became employees (or, more accurately, debt-peons) of European fur-trading companies almost 200 years ago. The “peace of the market” has prevailed since the coming of Europeans to the subarctic, and bands as functional units have become mingled, indistinct, and unimportant. Before this, it is clear, warfare among unrelated groups had been an enormously important consideration in causing firm residential entities, marriage alliances among them, and the formation of adult male sodalities for defence as well as hunting — all of which cause strong social divisions as well as bonds and militate against the kind of amorphous organization called “composite.” (Service 1971: 77-78)

In his shift toward an economic argument away from a strictly technological one, Service appears to be the theoretical link between Murphy and Steward and Wolf in the description and analysis of Indigenous societies. Service offers the intellectual rationale for the behaviour of the Dene reflected in Wolf’s discussion of them. Some may read Wolf’s work as ethnographic evidence bolstering the theoretical constructs of the earlier authors, but serious problems with his data are readily apparent.

Wolf's bibliographic essay cites a 1976 special issue of the *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, edited by Charles Bishop and Arthur Ray, as containing "[u]seful papers dealing with the [fur] trade" (Wolf 1997[1982]: 409). In a later volume of that same journal, Michael Asch examined "Some Effects of the Late Nineteenth Century Modernization of the Fur Trade on the Economy of the Slavey Indians" (Asch 1976b). Asch's discussion in this short paper answers both Murphy and Steward and Service — and pre-empts Wolf's depiction of the Dene — by documenting, using archival and ethnographic data, the specific nature of Dene engagement with the fur trade. His premise is that changes to Dene society were due more to their engagement in the emerging fur trade economy than to the introduction of any particular technology. In this sense, Asch is able to document the fact that the Dene had to be induced to participate in the fur trade, with favourable terms for desirable items, and that up until World War Two they maintained the ability to remove themselves from the trade and return to an Indigenous economy should they have desired to in the face of declining returns from the trade in furs. Acknowledging growing Dene use of Western technology during the first half of the twentieth century, Asch argues that the Dene remained reliant upon subsistence resources from the bush, rather than from the traders, until the 1950s. Importantly, however, his focus remains on the agency of the Dene: trade goods might have been increasingly important to them, but only because the Dene chose to use them in the context of other developments, not because these goods were inherently superior or were forced on the Dene by the exigencies of capitalist expansion.

This is one small example, but it points to critical deficiencies and inaccuracies in Wolf's data and analysis. Wolf's theoretical framework — an evolutionary model, based on the work of Steward in combination with a particularly disempowering Marxist analysis — limits which interpretations and explanations exist in the realm of the “possible” or “probable.” His narrative places simultaneous constraints on Indigenous cultures as they encounter capitalist expansion: they lack agency due to their evolutionary stage of development, and they lack agency due to the nature of the economic structures in which they find themselves.

Summary

From this analysis, the similarities between the analyses of the political economy approach and the arguments put forward by proponents of development in the James Bay and Mackenzie Valley cases become apparent. The political economy analyses and the arguments in favour of development both have roots in a cultural ecological social evolutionary theory which assumed the inevitable collapse of Indigenous economies and societies and offered assimilation as a panacea. They both presumed a low level of Indigenous social organisation in the period before the fur trade, and saw this as contributing to the inevitable implantation of capitalism and European goods in communities unable to mediate their adoption into Indigenous life ways. At the same time, both avoid taking colonialism into account in talking of social change; they both identify that

changes have occurred but neglect to deal with the concrete historical contexts, that the impetus for widespread developmental change in Indigenous societies in many cases was part of a larger state project of assimilation. As well, both approaches reject or avoid dealing with empirical data which demonstrates the continuing vitality of hunting economies and their central positions in Indigenous societies.

In this way, the political economy emphasis on the proletarianisation of Indigenous peoples as a result of the fur trade actually supports the notion that development of natural resources benefits Indigenous peoples: if the arrival of capitalism meant that the Indigenous economy faltered and failed, then anything that promised more jobs in the capitalist system is a benefit to people who have no economy of their own.

Chapter 3: The Articulation of Modes of Production Approach

When attention is turned to the actual anthropological work done in the 1970s and 1980s, it immediately becomes apparent that both Ortner and Roseberry neglected what was perhaps the most crucial aspect of the Marxist debates in that period. That is, the Marxist anthropology of the period was fundamentally concerned with what happens when two cultures (i.e., two economies or modes of production) come into contact with each other; although the term was rarely used in the anthropological context, either at the time or in later commentaries, Marxist anthropologists were interested in the articulations of modes of production.

The debates about the concrete changes that occur when modes of production come into contact were especially prominent during the middle years of the 1970s. The anthropologist Bridget O’Laughlin has described the concept of “mode of production,” as the “product of a dialectical relationship between forces and relations of production” in the following way:

Analysis of any problem requires a specification of the mode of production, understood as a dialectical unity of forces and relations of production. Technical relations between people and nature always imply corresponding forms of social relations. Forces and relations of production cannot therefore be analyzed in isolation from each other, yet the difference between them must be conceptualized as well. The basis of this dialectical relationship is the unity of people with nature and the opposition

of people to nature in production. (O’Laughlin 1975: 354)

Later, she expands her conceptualisation by asserting that

[t]he concept of mode of production is used both to define conceptually a particular dialectical (and therefore dynamic) unity of forces and relations of production and, at a different level of abstraction, to delimit a period of history dominated by a particular mode of production. At this second level we may choose to distinguish certain periods or stages of development of the mode of production. (O’Laughlin 1975: 359)

O’Laughlin’s definition of “mode of production” can be contrasted with that offered by Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst in their groundbreaking volume, *Pre-capitalist Modes of Production* (1975), published in the same year as O’Laughlin’s article. They offered this explication of the concept:

a mode of production = an articulated combination of a specific mode of appropriation of the product and a specific mode of appropriation of nature. A mode of production is a complex unity of *relations and forces of production*: the mode of appropriation of the product is determined by the relations of production, that is, by the distribution of the means of production and the relation this established between the labourer and the labour process. The relations of production are the dominant element of the combination forces/relations of production. The form in which the *surplus-product* is appropriated (which defines the distribution of the whole

social product) is determined by the distribution of the means of production and by the control this confers over the process of production to certain agents. Hence the mode of appropriation of the surplus-product varies with the forms of distribution of the means of production in the different modes of production — it is an effect of the structure of the relations of production. A distinct mode of appropriation of the surplus-product supposes a distinct structure of relations of production. A distinct structure of relations of production supposes a set of forces of production which correspond to the conditions of the labour process it establishes. It is for these reasons that the mode of appropriation of the surplus-product can serve as an initial index of the existence or non-existence of a mode of production In the first instance, therefore, the existence or non-existence of a mode of production may be examined in terms of the existence or non-existence of a mode of appropriation of the surplus-product. (Hindess and Hirst 1975: 183-184, emphases in original)

At the same time, however, they urged caution in application of the concept of mode of production, and warned that

the concept of mode of production as an articulated combination of relations and forces of production precludes the construction of the concept of a particular mode of production by means of the simple juxtaposition of a set of relations and a set of forces. On the contrary the concept of a particular mode of production is the concept of a determinate

articulated combination of relations and forces of production. This means that there can be no definition of the relations or of the forces of production independently of the mode of production in which they are combined. (Hindess and Hirst 1975: 11)

At a certain level, the most prominent theoretical approach to these questions of articulation, not only in anthropology but in the related social sciences, has been the conceptualisation of the “Third World” as representative of “underdevelopment,” existing at a level of an imperfect or incomplete assimilation of capitalist economic forms. As one commentator, Aidan Foster-Carter, has argued, for Andre Gunder Frank, one of the leading theorists of “underdevelopment,” the analysis is quite simple: “it is just capitalism” (Foster-Carter 1978: 49):

In particular, as everyone knows, Frank will have none of any suggestion that the penetration of capitalism is in some sense partial or incomplete, so that underdevelopment should be understood as a form of combination of capitalism with something else. ... For Frank, as more recently for [Immanuel] Wallerstein, there is but a single “world-system”; and it is capitalist through and through. (Foster-Carter 1978: 49)

So, in this analysis there is no “articulation” as such; when capitalism encounters another mode of production, the end result is capitalism, unperturbed and triumphant. This approach is taken even by authors identified with the

articulations of modes of production approach, such as Barbara Bradby (1980[1975]; see also Chapter 2), and, as I have demonstrated, Eric Wolf. For these theorists, the question is not whether capitalism becomes dominant but the processes by which it establishes its (inevitable) dominance.

The world-systems approach, and its emphasis on the resiliency of capitalism in its encounters with other modes of production, did not go uncriticised. For example, Foster-Carter characterised Ernesto Laclau's critique of Frank as demonstrating "[t]he essential conceptual differences between the 'dependency' and the recently fashionable 'mode of production' approaches" (Foster-Carter 1978: 50). In contrast to Frank's depiction of capitalism as "ubiquitous and homogenous," Foster-Carter asserted that

Laclau posits *not* a dualistic model (he, too, speaks of an "indissoluble unity"), but a structured and differentiated whole, the "economic system" — others will call it "social formation" — which is indeed capitalistic. However, this level of operation is constituted by market relations: for Laclau, what is more important are relations of production, and on this basis he maintains that there were and are substantial elements of feudalism in Latin America. Yet — and here is the twist — these exist not exogenous to capitalism, nor as pockets of decline, but as an intrinsic and structured part of a wider system. (Foster-Carter 1978: 50, emphasis in original).

That is, the feudal aspects of Latin American adaptations to capitalism exist as

essential components of capitalism in its ascendant position; they do not represent pockets untouched by capitalism, or the devolution from capitalism to a prior, more primitive system.

In Foster-Carter's view, these alternative interpretations of capitalist expansion contained an internal contradiction in their depictions of the patterns and processes of growth:

We thus have the paradox of capitalism's relation to other modes of production being conceived not (or not simply) as *succession* or *evolution* (as in the "stages" model: primitive communal, ancient, slave, feudal, capitalist modes of production, with the "Asiatic" awkwardly at a tangent). Nor yet as some kind of dialectical *transcendence* and *dissolution* (one could debate whether internal or external, interstitial or marginal ...). Nor even as a *transition* (unless prolonged to the point of analytical vacuity). On the contrary, this capitalism neither evolves mechanically from what precedes it, nor does it necessarily dissolve it. Indeed, so far from banishing pre-capitalist forms, it not only coexists with them but buttresses them, and even on occasions devilishly conjures them up *ex nihilo*.

(Foster-Carter 1978: 51; emphases in original).

In his view, the way out of this contradiction was the emergent literature on the articulation of modes of production.

Foster-Carter demonstrated that the concept of "articulation of modes of production," contrary to popular misconception, did not originate in the work of

Louis Althusser or Etienne Balibar, but rather in the work of an anthropologist, Pierre-Phillipe Rey, whose work was influenced by Althusser's theory;⁹ consequently, in this section I will focus on his contributions rather than those of other contributors, such as Maurice Godelier, Maurice Bloch, or Jonathan Friedman. Foster-Carter argued that Rey's work set a benchmark for conceptualising and describing the articulation of modes of production which few analysts who have followed have been able to reach:

For one thing, it is not a static state but a *process in time* As such, it is essentially a reformulation and specification of the problematic hitherto known as the *transition* to capitalism. ... Moreover, to emphasize the diachronic aspect of articulation, in Rey's account it has its own *periodization*. Whereas much other work is content to talk of articulation, but leave unspecified any internal content or dynamic, Rey distinguishes three stages of articulation: 1. an initial link in the sphere of exchange, where interaction with capitalism *reinforces* the pre-capitalist mode; 2. capitalism "takes root", subordinating the pre-capitalist mode but still making use of it; 3. (not yet reached in the Third world) the total disappearance of the pre-capitalist mode, even in agriculture. (Foster-Carter 1978: 56; emphases in original)

In the first stage, capitalism relies on the pre-capitalist mode of production for raw materials, without affecting — and, in fact, strengthening — the pre-capitalist

⁹ None of Rey's major works have been translated to English; as a result, I have relied in this section on Foster-Carter's translations of Rey's argument.

relations of production. In the second stage, capitalism has achieved dominance, modifying the other mode of production in ways to suit the needs of capitalism. The third stage, found only in the United States, is marked by the ability of capitalism to provide and protect its own supply of labour (Foster-Carter 1978: 59-60). In Rey's analysis, all pre-capitalist modes of production other than feudalism "are fiercely resistant to the spread of capitalist relations; or, more concretely, an alliance of capitalist and pre-capitalist ruling classes is not possible" (Foster-Carter 1978: 60). Therefore, "extra-economic means" are required to disrupt the "unity of 'natural economy'"; in Rey's case, violence is inevitably necessary to move from the first stage and the second stage, except, again, in the case of feudalism; for non-feudal pre-capitalist economies, this violence represents an intermediary stage between the first two (Foster-Carter 1978: 60).

Rey made clear his argument that in the first stage the imposition and dominance of capitalism is never an instantaneous event. In a rebuttal of the world-systems approach, he asserted that

[c]apitalism can never immediately and totally eliminate the preceding modes of production, nor above all the relations of exploitations which characterize these modes of production. On the contrary, during an entire period it must reinforce these relations of exploitation, since it is only this development which permits its own provisioning with goods coming from these modes of production, or with men driven from these modes of production and therefore compelled to sell their labour to capitalism in

order to survive. (Foster-Carter 1978: 59)

However, this analysis operates only from the perspective of capitalism: it seems unwilling or unable to consider the notion that the people living in pre-capitalist relations of production (or “relations of exploitation,” if we follow Rey) could choose the extent to which, and the means by which, they would engage with the arriving capitalist mode. In this sense, the capitalists are the only people with agency; the pre-capitalists can resist, but Rey argued that violence, particularly in quelling resistance to changes in the relations of production, is an inevitable result of the shift from non-feudal pre-capitalist relations to capitalist dominance. The result is that capitalism is always superior, and its eventual dominance, although with sometimes high costs, is always inevitable.

Given his attempt to develop and describe a theory of articulations of modes of production which can account for the processes experienced by both feudal and non-feudal pre-capitalist modes (Foster-Carter 1978: 57), Foster-Carter argued that Rey’s analysis falls short in its treatment of the non-feudal (i.e., non-Western) modes, characteristic of what Foster-Carter called “the Inside/Outside Distinction”:

In the case of the transition from the feudal mode of production to the capitalist mode of production, it seems to go without saying that one studies the necessity of that evolution on the basis of feudalism, since capitalism here is born out of nothing. By contrast, in all other known historical examples of the development of capitalism in the womb of a

non-capitalist social formation, the capitalism has been imported from elsewhere, already fully grown. One is then tempted to analyse the necessity of its development solely from the point of view of its own laws. We shall see however that it is not possible to be content with this one-sided vision, and that the transition phase can only be understood on the basis of the internal characteristics of the mode of production dominant before the intrusion of capital. The social formation has to bring forth its own form of the transition towards capitalism. Thus is the transitional social formation subject to a double history, where the contradiction bursts forth between two orders of necessity: on the one hand the history of capital itself, which for the most part is written outside such social formations; on the other hand the history of the transition, specific to the modes of production which are there articulated. (translated and cited by Foster-Carter 1978: 64)

However, Foster-Carter was not satisfied with the way that Rey shifted between the experiences of feudal and non-feudal pre-capitalist modes of production in his analysis of the ways in which these articulate with capitalism. Accepting that capitalism everywhere has common components, or else it would not be able to be identified as such, Foster-Carter asserted that an accurate analysis of capitalist expansion outside of the West must take place

at the level of social formations and *their* interrelationships, in a *world system*, which gives analytical pride of place to what Rey blithely grants

en passant: that capitalism comes to the “Third World” from the outside, as *foreign* capitalism, indeed as *colonial* capitalism; and the *extraversion* thus created *persists*, defining the character of *contemporary* underdevelopment, viz. as an *externally oriented, distorted*, and indeed *disarticulated* “part-economy” subordinated (now, as ever), to *metropolitan* capital. (Foster-Carter 1978: 66, emphases in original)

In Foster-Carter’s reading, the analytic framework Rey outlines is unable to address the issues unique to non-Western or “Third World” articulations with and transitions to capitalism. He asserted that

[t]he only concession Rey makes to the specificity of the Third World is to the particularity of its pre-capitalist modes of production, and hence its paths of transition to capitalism. Of course, he is right to stress this, and to criticise those (from Marx to Luxemburg) who see capital always as principal actor and pre-capitalism always as passive and formless victim. It is perfectly true that the character of the resulting social formation reflects not only the dynamics of capitalism but also those of the pre-capitalist mode — precisely, it is constituted by their articulation. Where Rey goes wrong concerns the manner of insertion of such social formations into a wider system. For the “history of capital itself” *continues* to be “written outside such social formations.” (Foster-Carter 1978: 66, emphasis in original)

While Foster-Carter allowed that up to that point there had been no theoretical analysis which dealt with these issues comprehensively and successfully, he allowed that some approaches, outside of the articulation of modes of production literature, pointed in the right direction by conceptualising the numerous extant capitalisms “as not merely processual and developmental, but also *relational* and interactional” (Foster-Carter 1978: 66, emphasis in original).

After his analysis, Foster-Carter concluded that the innovative questions raised by the articulation of modes of production analysis represent in themselves an important contribution to the discourse, even if the answers to those questions remain unsatisfactory or incomplete. He outlined a series of research orientations which in his opinion represent a way to create a synthetic analytical framework out of the varied aspects he has identified. Asserting that “there are entities both greater and smaller” than “‘modes of production’ and ‘social relations’” that must be accounted for theoretically, he argued that a better understanding of both the “world system” and the relations “on the farm,” or “‘at the point of production,’” are essential to fostering the analysis of articulations of modes of production (Foster-Carter 1978: 75). At the same time, he called for the area between those two levels to be better theorised and analysed, recognising that this middle “is *not* in fact a homogenous hierarchy” and that the “links at each level are not likely to be homologous, either in form or in content” (Foster-Carter 1978: 76, emphasis in original).

In conclusion, he offered two cautionary suggestions for future research, to avoid “twin reductionisms that current debate has not always avoided” (Foster-

Carter 1978: 76). First, he called for the rejection of “the sterile assertion of the analytical priority of relations of production over those of exchange and indeed all else” (Foster-Carter 1978: 76). Second, he called for the rejection of the “narrow economism” that “has characterized much recent debate, thereby contributing to the curiously unreal and cerebral nature of some ‘modes of production’ literature” (Foster-Carter 1978: 77). However, this is not to be read as a fundamental rejection of the Marxist project:

Reification aside, too little attention has been paid to other “instances” and “practices” than the economic: notably the political, not to mention those areas (ideology, religion, kinship, ideas) which correspond to peoples’ own consciousness of their position. This is not a plea for ethnomethodology. But it is most certainly a clarion call for *class*, seen as the key mediator between (to oversimplify) modes of production and human action (and the latter not merely as puppetry, with modes of production playing God). (Foster-Carter 1978: 77, emphasis in original)

The French debates about mode of production did not go entirely unnoticed by Anglo-American anthropologists at the time. For example, David Seddon wrote in 1978 that

By the beginning of the 1970s the crisis in anthropology and the other social sciences had begun to lead to a search for alternative approaches; one manifestation of this was a preparedness to look outside the conventional confines of the disciplines and outside the conventional

literature, in particular towards what some have called the “new” Marxism. My discovery of the French Marxists’ work on pre-capitalist formations was thus part of a general rediscovery of Marxist theory clearly reflected in Britain and the USA in the growing number of translations of Marxist works from French and German during the past five or six years. (Seddon 1978: viii)

However, the most thoroughgoing anthropological analysis of the mode of production approach, in all of its guises, appeared in an article by Bridget O’Laughlin on “Marxist Approaches in Anthropology” (1975). There, O’Laughlin offered a comprehensive description and analysis of the approach, at the same time recognising its shortcomings and some of the difficulties faced by anthropologists who have tried to apply it to pre-capitalist or non-capitalist social formations. On the one hand, she offered some basic and general statements to orient the notion of mode of production, asserting that

[a] particular conceptualization of a mode of production is analytically useful only as long as it describes the essential forces and relations of production of the economic base of a particular form of society. The base, furthermore, is not self-reproducing; it only can be realized within a social totality. In that sense every mode of production describes not only a base but corresponding forms of superstructure. (O’Laughlin 1975: 358)

As well, she was careful to note the dialectical relationship between theoretical

abstractions and specific examples in the development of analyses which focus on modes of production:

Since the purpose of theory is to develop those abstractions through which the concrete (always historically specific) can be understood, a set of universal concepts cannot define any particular mode of production. Analysis of a mode of production must be movement from abstract general determinations to observation and conception at the level of the concrete and then back to the theoretical articulation of general and specific categories. (O'Laughlin 1975: 351)

After analysing relevant passages from Marx on pre-capitalist societies, O'Laughlin pointed out the difficulty of developing a positive definition of the modes of production found in such societies. In fact, she went so far as to assert that

[t]he principal lesson one can learn from Marx's work on precapitalist modes of production therefore seems to be that they are the same only insofar as they are not capitalist; there is no positive basis for distinguishing them as a theoretical object of knowledge. Given Marx's analysis of the historical specificities of capitalism, we should be able to determine which categories should not be extended to precapitalist modes of production, but we cannot thereby establish a set of concepts amenable to the analysis of the specific dynamics of all precapitalist modes of production. To say that societies are classless or characterized by a low

level of development of the productive forces tells us what they are not but not what they are. To speak of precapitalist economies as dominated by relations of personal dependence tells us nothing of what these particular relations are. (O’Laughlin 1975: 354)

But O’Laughlin recognised the crucial role that these relations, and in fact all relations and relationships, play in the analysis of modes of production at any level. Drawing again on Marx’s work dealing specifically with pre-capitalist societies, she wrote that “in defining surplus one cannot assume that the individual is an independent unit of production. Human production is social; surplus must be defined in relation to a particular social division of labor, not the activities of an individual subject. Third, surplus must be defined in relation to the necessary reproduction of the means of production” (O’Laughlin 1975: 363). She went as far as to expand the focus on relations to an all-encompassing one:

We know that forces and relations of production can be conceptually distinguished, but in analysis there must be a constant dialectical movement between them. Similarly the conceptualization of a mode of production does not permit a narrow focus on productive process; eventually the entire social totality must be encompassed. Since we are analyzing a mode of social reproduction rather than a simple labor process, patterns of consumption, distribution, and exchange within the base, as well as the role of superstructure, must always be considered in any analysis of a mode of production. (O’Laughlin 1975: 360)

She later asserted that the mode of production exists in a prior dialectical relationship with all other aspects of the society being examined, offering an example from a contemporary capitalist society to illustrate her point:

The concept of a mode of production describes a statement of systemic tendency, the dialectical working out of the relationship between forces and relations of production over time. At a more historically precise level of abstraction, the mode (or modes) of production must be analyzed as the base of a social formation that includes a juridical-political and ideological relations as well. The elements of this system must always be conceptualized as relations, not as institutions such as kinship or the state. If we wish to understand racism in contemporary American society, for example, we do not immediately assign it to the level of ideology, but instead define the relations — economic, political, and ideological — that determine it. (O’Laughlin 1975: 367)

Her equivocation in the second sentence of this quotation — the recognition that there may be more than one mode of production in operation in a given society at a given time — becomes crucial to a discussion of the articulation of modes of production.

Given for her the dialectical relationship between forces of production and relations of production, and the historical specificity of each of these, she asserted that “[t]here are no all-encompassing typological schemes through

which all possible modes of production can be described” (O’Laughlin 1975: 364). O’Laughlin stressed the historical specificity of each encounter between capitalism and a non-capitalist system, and went so far as to assert plainly that, given this,

there can be no general theory of articulation of all modes of production. Looking specifically at the articulation of capitalism with precapitalist modes of production, we can see that linkages within the sphere of circulation of capital and political domination tend to precede the development of wage-labor relations. The exact nature of these linkages will depend, however, both on the historical stage of capitalist development and on the character of the precapitalist mode of production. (O’Laughlin 1975: 365)

She outlined two more theoretical issues which confront researchers attempting to analyse a mode of production: “(a) it may be necessary to describe the articulation of more than a single mode of production within the base; (b) one may wish to speak of dominant and accessory relations of production” (O’Laughlin 1975: 364). In any event, the decisions the researcher makes in this regard, to see their object of research as a single mode, or as multiple modes with or without a dominant one, “depends on what it helps you to understand” (O’Laughlin 1975: 365).

Applications

The articulation of modes of production approach was deployed in support of Indigenous groups in their battles to protect their homelands and their ways of life from massive resource development projects in Northern Canada during the 1970s. Adrian Tanner, working for the Cree, and Michael Asch, working on behalf of the Dene, were explicit in their application of this theory in their expert reports and testimony. While Harvey Feit, for the Cree, and Peter Usher and Scott Rushforth, for the Dene, did not explicitly rely upon this theory to shape their research, they still produced analyses consonant and consistent with its main themes and assumptions.

These analyses shared a perspective that the establishment of a capitalist mode of production, or even of a foothold of capitalism in any given place or situation, was not a given in interactions with Indigenous economies. Instead, this was something that had to be analysed and explained, taking into account the historical circumstances and the agency of the Indigenous people. Instead, these analyses assumed that the Indigenous economies and societies were complete, functioning systems which continued to function even as they began to adapt aspects introduced by capitalism; these were narratives of maintenance and adaptation, not of loss or destruction. As well, these analyses were based on extensive empirical data, gathered both on the land with people and in archival and historical documents, which demonstrated the ongoing vitality of Indigenous systems and their continuing reliance on the bush economy — something that the political economy approach would have been unable either to predict or to

explain.

In this sense, the debates about development became struggles over land. If, as the proponents for the projects argued — and the anthropological political economists would have concurred — the Cree and Dene are in the process of becoming further and further implicated in the capitalist system at the expense of their own economies, then it would benefit them to have the opportunity for skills training and wage labour in the industrial economy. To that extent, the land would be more valuable to the Indigenous people as a medium for development and cash incomes than as a central part of their bush economy. Thus, the anthropologists working on behalf of the Cree and the Dene needed to demonstrate that the anthropological political economy analysis was incorrect, and that the Indigenous groups still relied to a great extent on the products of the land, products which would be lost forever if development were to go ahead.

Chapter 4: “They wish to continue their way of life”: Anthropology and the Representation of the James Bay Cree in Court

In the spring of 1971, the Government of Quebec announced the creation of a Crown corporation, the James Bay Development Corporation, to oversee the multi-billion dollar construction and operation of a series of hydroelectric dams on several rivers draining into James Bay. Construction on the first series, on the La Grande River, had begun without any environmental impact assessments or consultations with the Cree who lived in the area, even though the plans were to divert four rivers and create seven massive reservoirs flooding thousands of square kilometres of land (Richardson 1975: 20). As well, the would require the construction of a massive infrastructure, including thousands of kilometres of roads and power transmission corridors (Feit 2004: 113). Concerned about the impact that the construction and the changes to the environment, the Cree took the Corporation to court seeking an injunction halting construction until their rights to the land could be determined; to do so, “they had to prove that they had a *prima facie* claim to rights in the territory, that the project would damage their exercise of these rights, and that these damages would be irreversible and irremediable” (Feit 2004: 113). To help them prove these facts, the Cree relied on a number of anthropologists to provide expert testimony about the importance of their homeland and their reliance upon it. The anthropological testimony, both that on behalf of the Corporation and that on behalf of the Cree, provides an opportunity to analyse the engagement of the two streams of anthropological thinking I have identified in this dissertation. Because each side’s position was

crafted with the other's in mind, an analysis of the testimonies of anthropologists offers the chance to counterpoise the position taken in favour of development with that seeking to protect the Cree way of life, and to demonstrate the ways each approach conceptualised Indigenous economies. Although other anthropologists participated in the court case — for example, Edward Rogers testified on behalf of the Cree, and Richard Salisbury produced a report on the potential impacts of development on the Cree¹⁰ — my focus in this chapter is on the testimonies of anthropologists which spoke specifically to issues of the Cree economy and the potential impact of hydroelectric development on it.

Background

On 15 November, 1973, Justice Albert-H. Malouf of the Quebec Superior Court read a startling judgment in a court case, *Kanatewat et al. v. The James Bay Development Corporation et al. and the Attorney General of Canada*,¹¹ involving the Cree who lived in the James Bay region of the province of Quebec. In granting their petition for an injunction against the construction of a series of massive hydroelectric dams and related infrastructure, Justice Malouf drew the following conclusions about the Cree and their way of life, based to a large extent

¹⁰ Rogers, then at the Royal Ontario Museum, used archaeological data to testify to the history of Cree land use patterns. Salisbury, from McGill University, “had been hired both by the [Cree] and by the James Bay corporation to study the likely effects of the project on Indian life”; based on his research, he “had written two reports, both based on the same facts, but on different assumptions. For the Indians he assumed that the Indian cultural life, based on hunting, would continue. For the corporation, he assumed the project would be built” (Richardson 1975: 245).

¹¹ The English translation of the judgment is unreported; this chapter is based on a copy of the translation in the James Bay cabinets of the Canadian Indian Rights Collection of Library and Archives Canada (hereafter CIRC-JB). The judgment in French is reported as *Gros-Louis et al. v. la Société de développement de la Baie James et al.* (1974) Que. P. R. 38.

on the testimony on their behalf by a number of anthropologists:

a) The Cree Indians and Inuit populations occupying the territory and the lands adjacent thereto have been hunting, trapping and fishing therein since time immemorial.

b) They have been exercising these rights in a very large part of the territory and the lands adjacent thereto including their trap lines, the lakes, the rivers, and the streams.

c) These pursuits are still of great importance to them and constitute a way of life for a very great number of them.

d) Their diet is dependent, at least in part, on the animals which they hunt and trap, and on the fish which they catch.

e) The sale of fur-bearing animals represents a source of revenue for them; and the animals which they trap and hunt and the fish which they catch represent, if measured in dollars, an additional form of revenue.

f) The hides of certain animals are used as clothing.

g) They have a unique concept of the land, make use of all its fruits and produce including all animal life therein and any interference therewith compromises their very existence as a people.

h) They wish to continue their way of life. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 55)

Based on these facts about Cree life in northern Quebec and the central importance of the land to it, Justice Malouf ordered the James Bay Development Corporation (JBDC) and its “officers, directors, employees, agents, servants, and

those operating under their authority and pursuant to their instructions”:

a) To immediately cease, desist, and refrain from carrying out works, operations and projects in the territory described in the schedule of Bill-50¹² including the building of roads, dams, dykes, bridges, and connected works;

b) To cease, desist and refrain from interfering in any way with petitioners’ [i.e., the Cree and Inuit] rights, from trespassing in the said territory and from causing damage to the environment and the natural resources of the said territory.... (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 170)

With this injunction, Justice Malouf brought to a halt a massive, multi-billion dollar project, and his judgment offered a sensitive, careful analysis of Cree, as well as Inuit, life and worldview. This analysis was possible, in no small part, because of the careful, sensitive work of a number of anthropologists who worked with the Cree to present their case — and their world and worldview — in terms comprehensible to the court.

The case had begun in early November 1972, when the Cree and Inuit challenged the constitutionality of Bill 50 in a motion to the Quebec Superior Court (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat* Motion). Asserting that the actions of the Quebec government in creating and developing the hydroelectric projects in unceded Cree and Inuit territory was *ultra vires*, and “encroaches upon the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada by dealing with matters falling

¹² The act of the Quebec legislature creating the JBDC and providing for the construction of the hydroelectric projects.

within the class of subjects Indians and lands reserved for Indians” (CIRC-JB, Kanatewat Motion, 5), the Indigenous peoples claimed

11. That the Legislature of Quebec has no constitutional rights in respect to the territory contemplated by the James Bay Region Development Act and all of Northern Quebec until a surrender has been obtained from the Indians and Inuit of Northern Quebec and until the Province of Quebec has fulfilled its obligations under the provisions of the 1912 Quebec Boundaries Extension Act.

12. That Bill 50 is further unconstitutional since it deals with legislation relating to the exclusive use and occupation of the Indians and Inuit of Quebec in Northern Quebec and interferes with their personal, territorial, usufructuary and real rights, particularly those rights flowing from Sections 91, head 24, and 109 of the British North America Act and the legislation and acts thereunder, the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the act and Order-in-Council transferring Rupert’s Land to the Parliament of Canada and the Quebec Boundaries Extension Act of 1912, all of which fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada.

13. That in any event the persons and contractors carrying out works pursuant to the authority of the said Bill 50 including all of the Defendants in the present case are acting illegally and unconstitutionally by affecting Indian and Inuit rights by their works and proposed works and Indian and Inuit hunting, trapping and fishing rights, which are within the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada, are unconstitutionally

affected by Bill 50 and the works and proposed works thereunder.

14. That the Legislature of Quebec has no other legislative jurisdiction in the said territory contemplated by Bill 50 than to respect existing Indian and Inuit rights, which rights are irreconcilable with the development scheme which is the object of the said Bill 50 and hence the said Bill 50 is unconstitutional. (CIRC-JB, Kanatewat Motion, 5-6)

After the motion was approved in a preliminary hearing, the case began on 05 December 1972. General expectations were that it would take perhaps two months at the longest; by the time it was over, on 21 June, it had taken 78 days of testimony, comprising 167 witnesses and 312 exhibits in over 10 000 pages of transcriptions (Richardson 1975: 20). Boyce Richardson, a filmmaker and contemporary commentator, argued in retrospect that

[t]he case was one of the most remarkable ever heard in a Canadian court. It had profound implications for almost every aspect of Canadian society. At the heart of it was the confrontation between the non-acquisitive, sharing ethic of the hunting culture and the individualist ethic of the technological culture of North America. That confrontation called into question not only the survival of the hunters but also the human qualities (or lack of them) of the powerful technology embraced unquestioningly by the white man. (Richardson 1975: 20)

This competition was reflected on a smaller scale by the competing

representations of the Cree and their way of life by anthropological expert witnesses working on behalf of both the Indigenous peoples and the JBDC. It is this debate, and its context in wider anthropological theory, which forms the focus of this chapter.

The case in favour of the project was made by the Premier of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, in a book published in 1973. Writing in florid language about the bounty of the North and the duty of Quebeckers to take their rightful place on the world stage, he outlined the need for the hydroelectric project as one way to unlock the wealth of Quebec's rightful territory, and he made an argument that Quebec was under threat and must reclaim its pioneer, or perhaps more apropos, *habitant* ethos:

Quebec's territory is huge, and to a large extent, unexplored. While the United States and the Soviet Union compete in space exploration, Quebec has a fascinating challenge to meet, close by, within its own territory: the conquest of northern Quebec, its rushing, spectacular rivers, its lakes so immense they are veritable inland seas, its forest of coniferous trees concealing fabulous mineral resources of all kinds. Too, there is its fauna, virtually unknown in the south; its flora, which must be inventoried and protected; there is the irresistible unknown to be discovered. The whole history of Quebec must be rewritten. Our ancestors' courage and will must live again in the twentieth century. Quebec must occupy its territory; it must conquer James Bay. We have decided the time has come.

First and foremost, the incredible energy and resources must be

developed and made available to all Quebecers. Energy is one of the vital assets of our economic development and the soundness of our energy policy for the coming decades must be assured.

Our economic, social and cultural future must no longer, can no longer, be based on weak and unplanned intentions. Quebec has paid too high a price for negligence and the lack of vision of some elites which maintained the system for a long time with meaningless words. With the unbridled acceleration of technological change, Quebec today must take decisions which will govern the coming decades.

Should we lack the courage to cope with the many challenges which lie ahead, fate perhaps will not give us a second chance. We must boldly build tomorrow's society today. (Bourassa 1973: 10-11)

These passages — and the use of concepts such as *unexplored*, *conquest*, and *conquer* to describe the movement into the North — must have been very unsettling to certain segments of the population, who did not see themselves included in the concept of Quebeckers (not, at this point, or in English, as predominantly Québécois). Bourassa spoke directly to the concerns of one of these groups, the Indigenous peoples whose homelands were envisaged as also becoming the home of these economic development projects, seeking to allay fears and emphasise the benefits of development to the region:

... *not a single Indian village will be touched or displaced* by the development project. Furthermore, the decision to develop the north —

namely, the La Grande — will leave intact water routes which the Indians have used since time immemorial — the Nottaway and Broadback rivers.

...

A similar policy of cooperation and exchange of views has been adopted in regard to the hunting and fishing territories of the Indians even though the most recent studies show that income from these activities counts less and less in their total revenue. A report by professors Hawthorne and Tremblay, published after six years of research, pointed out that only a tiny minority of Indians live solely off hunting and fishing in the James Bay territory. This is understandable since social benefits from both the federal and Quebec governments make up a relatively important portion of the Indians' income.

The situation is not in itself a happy one. A study conducted by the Department of Anthropology of McGill University concludes that a grave crisis threatens Indian society in the coming years even if there were no development in the region. ...

Aware of this basic economic reality, I directed that absolute priority be given to the native peoples in hiring for the James Bay development. Concurrently, courses in technical and professional training are being given to Indians in the territory in order to enable them to obtain general and specialized jobs. ...

The new roads and airports, in addition to improving communications considerably, will indirectly affect supplies as a whole by

appreciably reducing the cost of different consumer products — food, clothes, furnishings, etc.

Furthermore, the creation of reservoirs will allow easier access to hunting and fishing grounds. It will also enable the Indians to develop commercial fishing. Catches could be sent to the large southern consumer centres by rapid road.

The production of power opens up another local advantage, encouraging the establishment of a handicrafts industry as well as a better-structured primary processing industry.

The new means of communication, while facilitating and accentuating exchanges and meetings, will promote better understanding of respective lifestyles, mutual cultural enrichment and, it should be added, increased respect and comprehension among all Quebecers.

(Bourassa 1973: 83-85; emphasis in original)

Bourassa here outlined what his government thought was happening, and intended to have happen, in the James Bay region. It fell to the Cree, their lawyers, and experts testifying on their behalf, to describe and demonstrate what was actually happening, and what they feared would happen, if the project went ahead. In the words of Billy Diamond, then chief at Rupert House (now Waskaganish) and later Grand Chief of Cree,

[i]t was clear to us that the government of Quebec intended to proceed with the project regardless of our position. The plan for this massive

project demonstrated to us beyond any reasonable doubt that the government of Quebec believed that we had no aboriginal rights and even if such rights did exist they were subordinate to the province's right to develop our traditional lands and territory, even without our consent. ... The issue for us was not merely a land claim settlement: It was a fight for our survival as a people and the survival of our way of life. (Diamond 1985: 266-267)

For the Petitioners

In response to the project, the Cree and their legal advisers embarked on an extremely ambitious project to project their rights to occupy and use their homeland. Richardson, citing the arguments at the preliminary hearing put forward by James O'Reilly, the lead lawyer for the Cree, outlines the tasks the Indigenous peoples set for themselves by going to court:

O'Reilly said: "There are many things which we will have the burden of proving. We will attempt to show that the areas in the north covered by Bill 50 are occupied fully by Indian bands and to some extent by Inuit settlements. They have been occupied traditionally for hundreds of years in exactly the same way. We will show the way of life of the people, anchored on a hunting, fishing and trapping economy, and depending on all those resources." They would show the effects of the work already done, and produce expert opinion as to the likely future effects. They

would produce the plans of the corporation, and prove the damage already done to the environment through the cutting of trees, the building of roads, the interference with rivers and streams.” (Richardson 1975: 31)

The crux of the Cree’s case rested on the testimony of individual hunters, who testified in their own language through translators about the importance to their families and communities of hunting, trapping, and fishing in the areas threatened by flooding and dam construction. The task of systematising the descriptions of Cree resource and land use, and their crucial roles in supporting and defining Cree culture, fell to anthropologists who had done fieldwork with various Cree communities. The first called by counsel for the Cree was Harvey Feit, then a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at McGill and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton. Feit had done field research with the Cree of Waswanipi for several months in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and was called to provide testimony regarding hunting and trapping practices of the people at Waswanipi. Working in the context of an approach he calls “ethno-ecology,” Feit sought to understand the interplay between Cree agency and their environment through an analysis of hunting practices (Feit 1971a, 1971b). His testimony,¹³ led by O’Reilly, began with a description of the level of Waswanipi participation in winter trapping:

Q Now, could you describe how the hunting and trapping territory of

¹³ The testimonies are quoted from copies of the court transcripts found in CIRC-JB. They were recorded by a variety of transcriptionists, which accounts for certain differences in spelling and punctuation, which I have maintained here. As well, I have not edited the transcripts in terms of removing false starts or asides in the responses of witnesses, although I have silently corrected obvious spelling mistakes.

the Waswanipi Band is used by Waswanipi Band members?

...

A I found that the primary method by which these traplines were used was that heads of families would leave the summer settlements ... in the middle to the end of October and would go out to their traplines where they would live in the bush on the trapline until usually late May. In other words, for roughly a seven month period. They would return, I should say, during the later half of May. I found that of the adult family heads of families in the region I studied, 52.6 percent of the men followed this pattern and during the seven months, they would generally make two visits to town; one for the Christmas-New Year holiday, during which time men would return to town from the middle of December to the middle of January. In other words, during that period people would be returning to town but the average length of stay would be under two weeks for any given hunter. And then they would return again in a similar pattern at Easter time. The rest of the seven months would be spent on their traplines. There were also 17.3 per cent of the men who did this during part of the seven months, that is, they would go with some hunter who was there for the whole seven months but wouldn't themselves stay the entire period. Finally, there were 8.7 percent of the men who resided in the settlements of Matagami, Waswanipi River, Miquelon and Demaraisville during the entire

winter but would go out on short daily excursions using traplines that were near the town sites.

ME O'REILLY:

Q So, are you able to indicate in general terms how many adult Indians were hunting and fishing at that time?

A That would be, that would, the figures I've just given, would add up to 78.6 per cent of the family heads and that would be my, that would be the total number of family heads who were involved in hunting and catching their own game. (CIRC-JB, Feit Testimony, 83-85)

Feit was then asked to discuss the activities of the Cree during the summer months when they were off of their traplines and living in town:

Q Now, what would these people do during the summer, those who return from their traplines in the winter, the Waswanipi Band members?

A Of the fulltime of the men who were heads of families who are fulltime hunting and trapping during the winter, approximately half would take jobs during the summer, while half would simply reside in the settlement during the summer without employment. If I describe, I think I can best describe the total family head pattern for the, head of family pattern for the summer and during the summer, there would be 8.7 percent of the men had fulltime jobs and those

jobs would continue all year through the summer. 66 percent of the men were working part time. 66 percent of the family heads. So that the, that would give a total employment of, during the summer time of approximately 74.7 percent of family heads. The remainder, the other 25.3 percent did not have any employment during the summers.

...

Q ... during the summer, while these people had jobs, did you ever observe them hunting and fishing?

A Yes, people would go out on, people would have nets set for fish which they would simply use their canoe to go and check either early or late in the day. Many of the jobs were parttime jobs so that men were free every, whatever days they wanted to go hunting and trapping. Some men were only employed intermittently and would go for several weeks fishing and hunting during the summer and then would take a job for several weeks. So that during the summer, I would say, nearly 100 percent of the people, of the heads of families were in some way gathering fish or game from the bush. (CIRC-JB, Feit Testimony, 85-87)

Feit described a group of people who structure themselves around their hunting, trapping, and fishing. This was the case even amongst those who held wage-paying jobs, as evidenced by the general preference amongst the Cree he

worked with for terms of employment which would permit the men to spend some time in the bush during each season.

Having described the levels of Waswanipi members' participation in hunting, Feit was then directed to give evidence on their diet:

Q Have you any idea what kind of food the members of the Waswanipi Band eat?

A Yes, they kill and eat the big game, moose, caribou, beaver, and bears. They also trap and some men eat otter, marten, muskrat, weasel, mink, lynx, hare. They also snare and get partridge, geese, loons and ducks and they catch and net the fish primarily, walleyed pike or doré, sturgeon, northern pike, whitefish and the red and white suckers and the barbotte.

Q Now, which percentage of the diet comes from country food or bush food and which percentage comes from store-bought food?

...

A The results were that 82.4 percent of the food available to these people was food that they caught in the bush and 17.6 percent was food that they purchased for themselves. (CIRC-JB, Feit Testimony, 88)

Once again, Feit depicted a situation wherein the Cree find ways to adapt their diets to the food which was most readily available at a given time. They were not dependent on store food, which both reflects and is explained by their choices

regarding involvement in wage labour. They were clearly a group of people intensely connected to their homeland.

This fact became particularly apparent in Feit's discussion of the sources of income among the Waswanipi. He found that only 10% of their income came from the sale of furs, while over 50% was comprised of the cash equivalents assigned to the bush food they procured. As well, roughly 10% came from each of direct transfer payments and welfare administered by the band, and 20% came from wage labour (CIRC-JB, Feit Testimony, 87-90).

Feit described a society where the vast majority of families are involved in the hunting and trapping economy for most of the year. This hunting and trapping was not subsumed into the capitalism of the fur trade; the Cree managed to adapt their engagement with wage labour and the trade to accommodate their own needs and desires, and to provide the food and goods necessary to maintain their way of life. Trapping and hunting were not solely about earning cash incomes, but also were also about procuring the bush materials the Cree needed to survive in their territory and which might not have been available in comparable forms from the stores.

This evidence about hunting and food was followed by a discussion of the ecology of the traplines and of the history of white contact with the people of Waswanipi. Feit concluded his testimony by considering issues of changes in Cree culture, both those already occurring and those foreseen as resulting from the infrastructure development associated with the construction of the dams; this was also the focus of much of the cross-examination by the lawyers for the

JBDC. O'Reilly's questions focussed on the adaptation of the Cree to changing external influences:

Q And, according to your studies, has there been an increase or decrease in trapping in Waswanipi Band members or has it remained stable, what is the situation in terms of numbers over the years?

A The figures I've seen from anthropologists who were making studies in the region from 1964 on, that is among the Waswanipi people, from 1964 on, indicate that from that period on, approximately 50 percent of the men have been full time hunters and trappers in the bush during the trapping season. My own figure was 52.4 or something like that and I would therefore conclude that the situation has been very stable between 1964 and 1970. If anything, I suspect there may have been a slight increase in part time hunting and trapping from the records.

Q And, do you know when approximately Waswanipi Band members moved from one specific place, from the Waswanipi Reserve?

A People started to move during the summertimes, during the late 1950's. They would go to the towns that were being established as the railway and roads were built into the region, in order to live more cheaply during the summer and to buy supplies more cheaply. The towns that were established in the early 1960's in this region could be supplied by railway and by road and you could get

supplies cheaper at the stores in those towns than you could at the Hudson Bay Company store at Waswanipi post, which still had to have some sort of freighting system between the road and the post and that increased the cost so that people started to make use of the towns in the region in order to purchase goods more cheaply during the late 1950's. The decline in trade to the Hudson Bay pose, made the post unviable as an economic proposition for the Hudson Bay Company and in the spring of 1965, the Hudson Bay Company closed its store at Waswanipi post. At that point, the great majority of the Waswanipi people made a more or less permanent change of summer residence from their Reserve adjacent to the Hudson Bay store to Settlements around the towns of Matagami, Miquelon, Waswanipi River, Desmaraisville and Chapais. (CIRC-JB, Feit Testimony, 98-100)

Feit described a group of people who had changed their residency pattern not because they were losing their culture but because it allowed them better and more efficiently to practice their own culture. He also pointed to an increasing number of people hunting part-time, pointing to efforts to maintain ties to both bush culture and wage labour.

In his cross-examination, Jacques Le Bel, the lawyer for the JBDC, tries to get Feit to describe the changes brought to the Cree by the arrival of whites as uniformly positive, and to admit that any infrastructure which facilitates this

contact further could only contribute to Cree progress. Le Bel focused on putative benefits of schooling, wage employment, and access to commodities:

Q Now, according to you, sir, the introduction of schooling in the band, has it considerably changed the way of life of Indians?

A I have figures ... I have tried to look into that question and my figures are, the last figures that are, would be complete in order to see whether people are, young people are using, going into hunting and trapping, significantly different amounts, are for the, all of the young people who were born between 1940 and 1949. I have to use those figures because most of the people who were born after 1949 are still in school. For those people, 45 percent were full time hunters and trappers during the winter season and 20.4 percent were parttime hunters and trappers, that is, 65.4 percent were involved in hunting and trapping, whereas 34.6 were not hunting and trapping during the two seasons that I studied the Waswanipi situation. I've also taken a look at how many of those people have experience in the bush, that is, how many of them might hunt and trap some years which I didn't record as opposed to those who have had no experience at all in the bush and could not go hunting and trapping and the figures there are that 12 percent have no experience hunting and trapping and 88 percent either did hunt and trap during the time I was there or hunted and trapped prior to that time and had experience as hunters and trappers. So that my

general sense is that there is no major swing among young people away from hunting and trapping although there is a slight decline.

Q On the other hand, isn't it true that the Indians who have attended school are more apt to salaried work, right?

A I have figures on how many of them have taken jobs too, and I can tell you that 10.2 percent of the same group of young people had fulltime jobs and, well, I won't breakdown the partimes but the total involvement, fulltime and partime in wage employment was 77.5 percent and 22.5 percent had no wage employment during the two years. I would say that 100 percent of them have had no **{check this}** experience earning wages. (CIRC-JB, Feit Testimony, 101-103)

Even with the arrival of schooling, Feit was still able to document that young people continue to participate in the hunting and trapping lifestyle of their parents and ancestors.

Le Bel then asked Feit to consider the impact of technology on Cree culture and to acknowledge the positive contributions outside commodities have made to their lives. He focused his questioning on transportation and the movement of commodities, two areas highlighted by Bourassa in his justifications for the project:

Q Now, all the changes brought in by the use of planes, ski-doo's, other modern commodities, do you consider that these

commodities have affected the Indian way of life?

A Yes, the Indian way of life has changed from what people said to me. It's become easier for them to continue the way of life that they have in the past, that is, new technology, new traps, ski-doo's, to a limited degree, outboard motors, make it easier to be a hunter and trapper than it was formerly.

Q It's easier for them to keep their way of life by the use of modern commodities?

A Yes.

Q And do you consider the existence, and I'm talking about the road under construction right now, that this road will be of some help for the Indians? Do you consider, in other words, that the road could be one of the modern commodities I'm talking about?

A The road, my experience with the road that was built through Waswanipi is that people, people say that the road has, the road makes hunting and trapping in the lands on either side of it very difficult and my own experience with recording the catches of white hunters, for example, in moose, who hunt during the Provincial hunting season, shows that the road has a number of detrimental effects. For example, during the 1969-70 season, white hunters used the roads in the region to get to areas where they could hunt moose and they killed 33 moose, whereas the Indians of the region during the whole year have killed only 105. So that, somewhere on

the order of one-third of the moose, one-quarter of the moose being killed now, are being killed by whites. On the other hand, my figures do show that some people do use the road as a means of access and ...

Q Those would be the positive effects, I was going to ask you the question. What you mean that you mentioned the detrimental effects of the road, on the other side they are, I presume, positive effects.

A There are.

Q Can you name them?

A I think that one is that again some commodities, the commodities that people now buy can be brought more cheaply into the region and people have easier access to some parts of the land. But I should say that my own judgment on the balance between these two, I can only present the judgment that was made to me by the Waswanipi themselves and that is that they consider roads a very dangerous thing to their way of life. (CIRC-JB, Feit Testimony, 103-105)

At first glance, and at a purely superficial level, Feit's testimony that the arrival of white technology helps preserve Cree lifestyles and the Cree culture seems counter-intuitive, if one is fixated on notions of cultural purity and authenticity. This fixation might explain Le Bel's seeming incredulity that aspects of one

culture could actually be used by a second to improve and strengthen their own culture, and would appear to belie a crucial aspect of the JBDC's case: because the Cree use white technology they are something less than Cree and therefore they should be assisted in their continuing acceptance both of white technology and a white way of life. Feit adopted a much more nuanced view of the impacts of the roads, based on his experience on the land and in communities with Cree, than was offered by Bourassa and his glowing assertions that everything will be more than fine, they will be much better than ever imagined, with the arrival of construction.

The second anthropologist called to provide expert testimony on behalf of the Cree was Adrian Tanner, then completing a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto and a lecturer at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. His dissertation research comprised ethnographic fieldwork amongst the Nitchequon group of Mistassini Cree. In later years, Tanner relied on the fieldwork upon which he based his testimony, which dealt with the characteristics of Cree hunting and its role in their cosmology, in writing a monograph on Cree hunting; my discussion of his contributions in this section are based largely on this publication because he explicitly outlined his theoretical approach in it. The only witness in this case to develop an articulation of modes of production analysis, based on his reading of Jonathan Friedman, Marshall Sahlins, Maurice Godelier, and Emmanuel Terray (Tanner 1979: 10), Tanner argued in *Bringing Home Animals* that there were two general approaches to the theoretical understanding and explanation of the contact between two economic systems or structures, one

focussing on *domination* and the other on *distinction*. The first type, domination, is based on

the assumption that where there is an articulation between two social systems the relationship of domination enables one of them to impose its conditions of existence on the other. To what extent, however, must the subordinate system alter its character? Is it sufficient that it merely removes the most obvious contradictions between the two social systems, but is able to retain its autonomy in areas irrelevant to the operation of the dominant system? The more thoroughgoing implications of a dominance model of the articulation between two systems of production is that in all spheres the dominant society tends to impose its own conditions on the subordinate one, whether or not this is necessary to the continued functioning of the dominant one. (Tanner 1979: 4)

Tanner's analysis of Mistassini hunting and its social and ideological contexts formed a trenchant critique of this way of thinking, which was made more explicit as his discussion proceeds. His own approach followed much more closely the second theoretical frame, focussed on distinction rather than domination:

Another approach to this question is to recognize the existence of more than one system of economic production in use within those native communities which are involved in the fur trade, by stressing the distinction between one system which applies to the subsistence production and another to the production of furs for the market. Since

market production in this model is seen as entirely within the Indian society, it is not necessary to assume that it must have a dominant position over the subsistence activities. In other words, in external exchange relations using the open market the Indian has an overall subordinate position *vis à vis* the merchant, but within his own society production which is directed towards the market itself is kept subordinate to the demands of subsistence production. This kind of model of the articulation between the European merchant and industrial economic system and the Amerindian subsistence-based economy points towards a necessary contradiction between the two, particularly in regard to the production of fur. The European system has a dominant power position with respect to the market trade, but at the same time market trade is also subordinate to the demands of subsistence production. Moreover, the European economy cannot entirely dominate subsistence production. The production of furs, however, continues despite the contradictory pressures upon it. Such an explanatory outline requires a careful examination of the actual internal relationships between subsistence production and market production. (Tanner 1979: 5)

Based on this, he reached an important conclusion about the relationship between economics and social structure in Cree society: “within the system of production used by hunters, it is the organization of subsistence production which establishes the framework within which furs must be produced, and not the other

way around” (Tanner 1979: 6). In this way, the Cree are no less Cree for participating in the fur trade or benefiting from the goods which the trade has made accessible to them.

Tanner was explicitly engaging with the theoretical apparatus of Murphy and Steward, entering through their use of Eleanor Leacock’s ethnographic data from her research amongst the Innu of Labrador, neighbours of the James Bay Cree. His goal was not simply to assess the validity of her assertion that the Cree groups had reached a point where subsistence hunting was subordinated to hunting for trade, but rather to see if the predictions of Murphy and Steward about the effects of contact held for the Cree he worked with:

by starting with the observation that the Mistassini have reached some degree of accommodation to the fur trade, we ask in what way this “culmination” [i.e., at the present time] is different from that predicted by the above theories [i.e., assimilation]? More important, in this respect, than whether or not this culmination involves land or wild animal resources being considered “private property” ..., is the assumption by Leacock of a conflict between *subsistence hunting*, requiring multi-family production groups and communal rights to resources and production, and *trapping for trade*, which requires individual (family or solitary trapper) production, and individual rights to resources and production. Is such a conflict in evidence at Mistassini, or has it been resolved? (Tanner 1979: 10)

Tanner was also dissatisfied with the hypotheses of Murphy and Steward, again

based on Leacock's data, about the inevitability of the disintegration of Indigenous cultures upon the arrival of Western technology or economic structures. To this end, he asserted that

[o]n the more general question of the breakdown of Indian culture, it is always difficult to find objective criteria for such an assessment. However, I do not believe this to be the case for the Mistassini who have managed to retain control of their major economic base, the land. In this study I will show that there has also continued to exist a religious system of some complexity, with a systematic ideology. Since this system is not part of the non-Indian pattern, this suggests a considerable degree of cultural autonomy and cultural continuity. In the present study I feel that a convincing case can be made both that the economy does not exhibit the hypothesized tendency to individualization, and that the religion does not exhibit the acceptance of the non-Indian world view. These two demonstrations alone suggest that we stop looking at the Mistassini as a group in conflict between traditional and modern elements, or between the contrary demands of hunting and trapping, and try to understand it as a social form in its own right. (Tanner 1979: 10)

Tanner outlined a reconceptualisation of Indigenous economies and cultures, suggesting that they take many forms and, simultaneously, undermining the entire discourse around authenticity and survival of cultures. He also took aim at what he calls "gradual acculturation" models of community change, put forward

by Murphy and Steward, which

are used to explain a supposed tendency for fur trade communities to become progressively more involved in production for trade, and to finally adopt an individualistic pattern of trapping, in which women and children remain at the post, and men make quick tours of a trapline, carrying a minimum of supplies, staying overnight in cabins, and engaging in little or no subsistence activities (Tanner 1979: 63)

Rather, in his perspective, a “more accurate picture of the process may be obtained with the use of a ‘transformational’ model, by introducing a separate intermediary structure, into which the ‘traditional’ system has to be transformed before the capitalist mode of production is able to interact successfully with it” (Tanner 1979: 63). Later, he offered a more detailed discussion of the nature and characteristics of this model:

A “transformational” model of social change can be used to explain what happens following contact between an aboriginal population and a more powerful group of newcomers, and such a model is to be contrasted to a conventional “acculturation” approach to the same situation. In the acculturation approach aboriginal traits and cultural patterns are seen as being gradually replaced by new ones introduced from the dominant society over an extended period of time. The transformational approach analyses the post-contact stage or stages as distinct from either that of the aboriginal society or of the dominant group. The post-contact society has

a mode of production distinct from the aboriginal society due to technological innovations and trade acquisitions, but it is a mode of production that is also distinct from that of the dominant society. The Mistassini band has such a non-aboriginal, non-capitalist mode of production based on the organization of production by hunting groups linked through a “putting out” trade relationship with the dominant society. The mode of production of the dominant society can be used to represent the final stage of a transformational model. The model does not predict that change from the aboriginal to the post-contact stage, or change from the post-contact to the dominant group stage must always occur. (Tanner 1979: 66)

With this in mind, Tanner offered his own analysis of the relationship between the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Cree, and the impacts this relationship has had on Cree social, cultural, and economic structures. In this vein, he continued his critique of the framework put forward by Murphy and Steward:

While it is clear that the fur trade enterprise, as represented, for example, by the Hudson’s Bay Company ..., operates on the basis of the ... capitalist ... mode of production, it is also clear that in organizing the trapping of raw fur by Indians, the H.B.C. adapted its capitalist methods so as to be able to interact with the Indian system of hunting production which was (and, I will argue, still is) based on entirely different principles.

Leacock's analysis suggests that a conflict between these two systems was introduced into Indian life. In other words, when an Indian was hunting, he was involved in the first mode of production, while as a trapper he was subject to the entirely contrary presumptions concomitant with his participation in the capitalist mode of production. The conflict between the two, and the ultimate dominance of the fur trapping (capitalist) mode both explain for Leacock the dilemma in which Indian communities are involved, and indicate to her the direction in which change must take place. However, Leacock's contention that production for trade broke down the links of sharing and dependency between hunters and led to private acquisition and accumulation of wealth (or, in other words, that the Indians adopted the essentials of bourgeois economic motivations) (...cf Murphy and Steward 1956...) is questionable on both empirical and theoretical grounds. ...

At Mistassini, then, we find two modes of production: a capitalist one found mainly in the settlement, which includes industrial wage work, the local H.B.C. operation, and the activities of the local government agencies; and a second mode, that of the hunting group, a "domestic" mode of production..., based on subsistence hunting and fur trapping. The settlement economy dominates over that of the hunting group, primarily because of the dependence on the H.B.C., but aided recently by the presence of the government agencies. The capitalist fur trade, on the other hand, in adapting itself to the local situation and to assure its own

reproduction as a major organizer of the hunting group's activities, has been forced to adopt "non-capitalist" methods....

Thus, even though the hunting group is subordinate to the capitalist mode of production and to the Hudson's Bay Company, it is still in a position of relative autonomy. This autonomy is, in part, the result of material conditions — the need to hunt for subsistence as well as to trap for purchased goods, and the necessity for groups to be scattered and thus isolated from the settlement and direct means of control — but it also derives from the requirements for the maintenance of hunting group social relations, as well as the operation of systems of land tenure and religious ideology, both of which are closely related to the process of production in the hunting group. Despite this relative autonomy, however, it is essential, in attempting to understand the hunting group mode of production, to take into account the fact that this subordination by external capitalist influence has its own history. The autonomy of the hunting groups results not from the ability of the hunting sector of the economy to *resist* this historical process of externally-caused change, but to *modify* its mode of production in a way that enables the hunting group to retain control of the means of production, and ensure the conditions for its own reproduction despite the existence of these powerful external influences. (Tanner 1979: 11-13)

This process of gradual change is due, Tanner argued, to the particular relationship between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Cree, continuing

during the time he was working with them and based on a system of long historical standing, and showed an alternative outcome to that posited by Murphy and Steward:

The “putting out” system can in fact be understood as a transformation of the traditional system of Indian gift exchange, and it is therefore easy to understand why in the early days of the fur trade transactions with Indians frequently followed an established ceremonial pattern. The trader made a gift in goods; the Indian repaid it in furs, as well as in the production of the goods given to the Indians. ... This continuation of a pre-capitalist system of production explains why, after nearly 400 years of involvement in the fur trade, the Mistassini hunting groups have yet to reach the situation which would be expected, using Murphy and Steward’s model of acculturation due to the fur trade. (Tanner 1979: 66)

Having made this argument, Tanner offered a comprehensive refutation of the narrative presented both by Murphy and Steward and, in retrospect, by the anthropological witness for the JBDC who testified against the Cree.

For the Respondents

Anthropological evidence in support of the JBDC’s case was provided by Paul Bertrand, an employee of the corporation who held an M.A. in development anthropology from the Escuela Nacional de Anthropología in Mexico. His thesis

research focussed on “les problèmes occasionées par l’industrialisation dans les groupes marginaux” including “l’absentéisme, l’ivrognerie, et d’autres problèmes” (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 33) amongst more that a dozen Indigenous groups in Mexico. After completion of this work, he spent over a year working for the Direction Générale du Nouveau-Québec (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 35), and then went to the JBDC to create an audio-visual system for the Indigenous peoples of James Bay, that they would have “à leur disposition pour se renseigner eux-mêmes sur ce qui se passait dans le Sud et aussi sur leur, dans les différents villages et pouvoir se renseigner d’une façon communautaire” (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 36), before he took a position responsible for overseeing the social components of the hydroelectric project.

Bertrand and the lawyers for the JBDC introduced a completely new vocabulary and discourse to the proceedings. Where the lawyers and witnesses for the Cree spoke of change, those for the JBDC spoke of development; where the former spoke of the Cree, the latter spoke of a marginal society. This marginal society existed, and could be spoken about, only in relation to a dominant society, a colonising one, outside of whose structures it is impossible for a marginal society to survive. Development, in this model, was at its end inevitably a one-way street, assimilation of the marginal to the dominant; as well, in this formulation, agency existed only on one side, with the dominating colonisers working to reshape, intentionally or accidentally, a largely passive, undifferentiated Cree population (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 39-42).

Le Bel then asked Bertrand to discuss the social organisation of the Cree

and the ways in which it has changed over time. To Bertrand, the Cree were a nomadic, frequently acephalous society who seemed simply to have followed animals around, until their society was given some kind of structure with the arrival of fur traders, missionaries, and government agents. But, with these arrivals, and adoptions of structure, the Cree became less than Cree (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 45-47).

Le Bel's questioning also touched upon the nature of the Cree economy and the changes it underwent due to the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company. Le Bel and Bertrand's use of language in this exchange is particularly interesting for what it reveals about the perceptions of the JBDC side and how these shaped the arguments being made about Cree culture and society. According to Bertrand, the fur trade "implanted" certain things in Cree society — a cash economy (as distinguished from one where people have a direct relationship with the production of food, what Bradby [1980(1975)] for example would have called a "natural economy"), and the notions of competition and credit. In the case of the last, Bertrand admitted that this was used by the Hudson's Bay Company to guarantee its profitability, but the Cree still seemed in this formulation to have had no choice but to accept it. As well, Bertrand's repeated use of "naturellement" — meaning either "by nature" or "of course" — opens an intriguing line of analysis in his argument. Why was hunting "by nature / of course" predominant before the arrival of the fur traders? He offered no evidence, but seemed to rely instead on the innuendo that because it had value to the Hudson's Bay Company it could not have had value to the Cree before

their contact with the traders (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 49-51).

After a discussion of the impact of the arrival of missionaries on the Cree, Le Bel turned his line of questioning back to general characteristics of Indigenous life as they are expressed by the Cree. Again, “by nature / of course” the establishment of the fur trade forts led to an increase in the number of sedentary (although he also refers to them as “lazy”) Cree, and “by nature / of course” the missionaries with their “free time” would begin to educate the Cree because it would have been clear, one suspects, that they knew nothing about how the world actually worked and it fell to the missionaries to provide this knowledge (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 57-60).

Bertrand was then directed by Le Bel to testify about changes in Cree hunting, although at the beginning this testimony was frequently interrupted by objections by the lawyers for the Cree because Bertrand could not recall the names of the authors upon whose works he was relying for his historical evidence. His substantive testimony, when it got underway, focussed on the difficulties the Cree apparently had in maintaining steady food resources. (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 85-89)

In this exchange, Bertrand actually offered an explanation for the changes in Cree lifestyle from “nomadism” to “sedentarisation”: if the Indigenous way of life “fails” to meet the needs of the people, they will have to find other ways to live. But Bertrand is not clear how the Cree were let down by their way of life. He might have been making a Stewardian assumption about the immediate, overwhelming superiority of the Western technology arriving in the form of trade

goods, which made the Cree dissatisfied with their own material culture; however, it should have been clear from their testimony about the importance of the products of the bush that they still felt some centuries later that their own technology remained superior than the imported one in important areas and ways. So, according to Bertrand, they sought to meet their needs through their connections with the Hudson's Bay Company posts, reshaping their culture and economy to be better able to purchase goods. He also emphasised the role of education in the changes to Cree culture, focussing on its ability to import and impart the cultural heritage of the whites to Cree territory and to Cree people.¹⁴

¹⁴ Richardson quotes, without citing the source, some of Tanner's observations about the nature of the educational system introduced to the Cree and the effects it has had and will likely continue to have:

To help the Cree to develop the present way of life to a more satisfactory level ... we would have to start by ridding ourselves of this notion that trapping, or the bush, or the wilderness, or a place away from roads, that any life in such a place is archaic and inevitably doomed. That is what children are being taught in school. The children come out of school believing that their parents are living a meaningless way of life leading nowhere. The education system has never been thought out in terms of Indian life. The presumption has always been of eliminating Indian life and creating a system geared to the turning out of red white men.

The parents try to keep their options open by having at least some of their children who are highly skilled in the bush way of life. And the only way they can do this is by taking them out of school. They don't want to, but it's a decision forced on them by the present set-up, where a kid either gets a white man's education or an Indian education.

The Indians, I think quite correctly, see the bush as a system of education, and it is one that is more important to the culture, to the value system, than the white man's education. We have to understand that just appreciating, getting the feel of the bush itself — whether one is trapping or cutting lines for a mining company, being in the bush is itself a value. The children who have gone through our schools come back not only totally unequipped to go into the bush, but with a negative feeling toward the bush which has been imposed on them by our culture.

They learn that the wilderness is something to be conquered, and not something to be accepted on its own terms. For many of them this creates a conflict. I don't think they actually reject their parents' values or the values of the bush. But there is a psychic conflict set up over this problem....We should accommodate the culture as it is now, rather than cramp the Indians into a system which is designed for an entirely foreign culture, urban-based and with totally different traditions. (Richardson 1975: 235-236)

Tanner's interpretation is not all that far removed from Bertrand's, in terms of the common recognition of the mental and emotional conflict introduced into Cree minds by the two systems in which they find themselves trying to operate. Where Tanner's perspective differs from Bertrand's

And, he saw the arrival of white health care as a double-edged sword: it reduced mortality, but such a reduction will lead to a demographic boom which would send the Cree into crisis by the 1980s.

In Bertrand's analysis, the crisis facing the Cree was inevitable and all-encompassing. Arising from a division between school-educated young people and their parents still attached to the bush, and accelerated by the growing influx of whites into the Cree homeland, this crisis would be both a total shock to and a total recreation and renewal of Cree culture and society. It would, he thought, cause a certain degree of "disintegration" of the Cree culture, in part because the bush lifestyle and resources would not be able to support the demographic boom. In any event, it would be positive for the Cree because the shock and disintegration would finally shake them loose from their shackles to their land and their old ways of doing things, allowing for the "neo-synthesis" he advocated to emerge under the leadership of younger, white-influence Cree would seek closer ties to the dominant culture because they were more comfortable with it than their parents and grandparents were (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 94-103).

is in his rejection of the notion that such changes are inevitable and will benefit the Cree. Another significant difference which becomes immediately apparent when comparing the frameworks applied by the anthropologists for both sides is summed up by a comment, made by Tanner later in the discussion cited by Richardson, about the impact of white technology and ideas on the Cree:

You know, the Indians themselves have always tried to take advantage of elements from the white society. They have been doing it for hundreds of years. They have introduced guns, steel traps, all sorts of things, which they use in an Indian fashion, and which are now part of the Indian ceremonial, not alien things considered part of a foreign culture. (Richardson 1975: 236)

This interpretation of a thriving Cree culture absorbing useful aspects of white technology and making sense of them in a Cree way runs totally counter to the dominant, Murphy- and Steward-influenced assumption that the adoption of technologies from a European culture immediately and irrevocably undermines the Indigenous one, leaving the latter in some sort of no-man's-land, neither Indigenous nor white.

To conclude his testimony, Bertrand was asked by Le Bel to comment on the nature of the evolutionary processes experienced by the Cree. In his responses, Bertrand relies upon an explicitly Stewardian analysis, introducing concepts such as *techno-environment* and *acculturation*, betraying the actual theoretical underpinning of his research and, by extension, the perspective of the government toward the Cree. However, Bertrand used the term “techno-environment” in an idiosyncratic way, which was not totally in accordance with the standard Stewardian understanding of it as the particular constellation of technology utilised by a group in a particular physical environment depending on their evolutionary state. Rather, he applied it in the sense that the Cree live in an environment which is completely surrounded by rapidly encroaching Western technology which will overwhelm them by force unless they willingly adopt it. But, as they do that, they start the process of becoming less Cree and more white, to the end that eventually they will be assimilated into the “Indo-European” or “Western” world around them. He also offered a rather weak definition of “acculturation,” as being simply a state where a dominated culture assumes the traits of the dominant culture, without an understanding of the forces at play between the two groups or the actual process by which it occurs. It appears to have been enough, for Bertrand, that the dominant culture arrived; once it was there, the Cree started to be less than truly Cree. One single feature from the dominant culture, if deemed important enough by an anthropological observer, is sufficient to call a culture “acculturated”

The next day, the lawyers for the petitioners cross-examined Bertrand.

O'Reilly began by asking Bertrand to clarify his statements about the awakening of the Cree and the role of the JBDC project in this process. Bertrand seems to have been reluctant to speculate about the actual impacts of the specific project under discussion — perhaps because he did not know enough about the Cree to be able to do so — preferring, instead, to speak in generalities about the benefits of development. He presented the Cree as simultaneously being able to choose how and to what extent to participate in the white society and being forced to recognise that as a small minority population their choice is really to assimilate (i.e., create a “neo-synthesis” of their culture and that of the whites) or die. The needs of the majority, in his formulation, have to take precedence over the desires of a minority community to continue a traditional way of life, particularly one which is not especially traditional anymore and which will in any event be unsustainable in less than a decade. The way for the Cree to thrive, he seemed to suggest, is to participate in white culture and institutions on the whites' terms, and in return the whites will try to accommodate the Cree as long as these accommodations did not undermine the white way of life. In fact, Bertrand went so far as to say that the Cree needed the whites and the mechanisms that the latter have introduced in Cree society (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 6-12).

Bertrand cannot offer any insight into the perspective of the Cree, because it is clear that he has had no real interaction with them and consequently he has no understanding of them, or their way of life, with which to start an analysis of the project's impacts on them. He hypothesises about the psychological impacts the Cree might face, based on his theoretical approach and his understanding of

the Latin American materials, but he is unable to speak to, or even consider the possibility that there might be, real material consequences for the Crees' way of life (CIRC, Bertrand Testimony, 14-23).

O'Reilly continued to try to elicit Bertrand's specific interpretations of the impacts of the project on the Cree of the region. Bertrand did not believe that the Cree could truly oppose the plan, and that what appeared to be opposition on their part was simply the result of their being misinformed about the true benefits they were about to receive. In this sense, he again betrays simultaneously how little he actually knows about the Cree themselves, and how much his analysis proceeded in a baldly deductive fashion from his theoretical presuppositions about both Indigenous peoples, their cultures and their lifeways, and the inevitable benefits flowing from "development" programs (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 26-28).

After the questions from O'Reilly, the cross-examination was then taken over by Max Bernard, the lawyer retained by the Inuit. He began his component by asking Bertrand about the details of his theories of development. Clearly, Bertrand was also defining "development" in an idiosyncratic way, as a "socio-cultural neo-synthesis" whereby Cree participate successfully in all segments of society. Society, and success, as defined by whites, however. Consultation with the Cree themselves seems to have been focussed on meeting this goal, and not on constructing the goal or the terms of participation in dialogue. At the end of Bernard's line of questioning, he seemed to tease out of Bertrand the admission that "development" in this context — and the processes undertaken to reach this

goal —constitute some kind of massive social experiment, with the Cree as objects, variables, rather than as full participants in meaningful exchanges with government officials (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 38-41).

After a brief adjournment, O'Reilly resumed his cross-examination of Bertrand, before it was wrapped up by Bernard. O'Reilly asked about the Cree desire to maintain their way of life:

Q Monsieur Bertrand, je vais rephraser ma dernière question. N'est-il pas vrai que ce qui est aussi important aux Indiens c'est le pouvoir de pouvoir continuer leur façon de vivre ancrée sur la chasse et la pêche. Je vous réfère particulièrement au rapport Salisbury à la page 46 qui dit textuellement : « But at least as important for the Indians is [as?] the cash income from furs, is the income in kind, the subsistence income provided by the hunting way of life. »

R Je crois que il est important pour les Cris, d'une façon totale, de conserver certains modes de subsistance qui sont traditionnels. Maintenant, le grade de conservation, je peux pas le définir. Il est évident par exemple que, s'ils veulent continuer à survivre et d'une façon, d'une façon vivable, il va falloir qu'ils fassent une synthèse des deux modes de vie et puis là-dedans y'a des modes traditionnels et y'a des modes de vie qui ne le sont pas. (CIRC-JB, Bertrand Testimony, 70)

Where Bertrand and the Cree differed was in the analysis of the inevitability of

the change, represented by the developments undertaken by the JBDC and others, in the process of Cree culture change. Bertrand saw it as totally inevitable and outside of Cree control, and envisions his role as asking the Cree, given the outside influences, what they want. The Cree, and the anthropologists working on their behalf, questioned the inevitability of the developments put forward by the government and defended by Bertrand, and demanded to be involved in the discussions at the first point, to shape them, rather than being asked to respond to a fait accompli.

Some three and a half weeks after Bertrand's testimony, Harvey Feit was requalified and led in questions responding to some of the assertions made by Bertrand. Under the direction of O'Reilly, Feit was asked to speak to what he saw as the impact of the project on the future of the Cree:

Finally, on the cultural side, I think that the project has had a, has so far had a very significant effect on cultural development in this region. All the white men who came to this region previous to this time, the government agents, the Hudson's Bay traders and other traders, the missionaries, all came because they had an interest in the Indian people. This is the first group of white people who have entered this region, whose primary interest is not the white, is not the Indian population as such, the native people of the region have for the first time realized that they cannot assume that white people are going to do things that will be beneficial to them. So far, all of the changes have been beneficial to them and they have been,

welcomed them and accepted them and integrated them. But for the first time, they're aware that their way of life may not be able to continue indefinitely, and this, I think, has been, has led to a new cultural awareness and a number of political developments within the Indian communities that have been very beneficial. The result of this though is that the native people now are watching very carefully to see what the response of the white people will be; they're watching very carefully to see if their interests will be protected and upheld, and the Cree people, insofar as I know them and the way they think, they observe people very carefully, they observe their responses to situations very carefully and they quickly evaluate whether a man has respect for them and has concern for them, or whether an institution does. And I think that they're watching very carefully now to see if their interests can be upheld and protected in the present situation. They see themselves as threatened and if they...I think that if they gain a sense that there is no institution that can protect their interests and uphold them, they're going to suffer a very severe blow, a blow that will reduce the integrity and the self-confidence that people have, that will, in fact, break the control that they've been able to maintain for these hundreds of years and I... That is the kind of blow that I think people do not respond to well, that breaks the core issue of their culture and their success so far. On the other hand, if they have a sense that their interests are

being looked after, that there are institutions in white society that can look after them that they will not be run over, I think that their growth and development will continue and they will respond to the possibilities of the future as successfully as they have up until now. So that, culturally I see them as, at a critical stage and in terms of quantification, I don't see a way to put values on these things that can be made numerical. There's something...there's a very precious and successful way of living up there and it needs not to be destroyed by any of these means, and if it is, I...as an anthropologist, there's no way to quantify that.

ME O'REILLY:

Q But in your opinion, can you compare it in terms of value?

...

A For me, this is very precious. For me, each human group that is able to successfully meet the problems of living and come up with a unique way of life, is a very precious thing for the whole of mankind, and the destruction of each of these things is very tragic and sad, and I can say no more.

ME O'REILLY:

Q But if you were faced with a figure of five hundred million dollars, would you say that this is the worth of the Cree culture?

[Le Bel objected to this question, and Justice Malouf upheld it]

...

Q What role does land have in respect of value to the Cree?

...

A My studies of the Cree, understandings of their world, centered on their understandings of their own world and the role that land and animals play in it. And in their view, the Cree people live from day to day and survive from generation to generation, because there are powers in the world that give them the animals on which they feed and they live, and they see the animals and the land, the trees as in a sense holy gifts, holding that they're holy in a reserved sense, I suppose, and to that extent the destruction of animals is taken as a very meaningful act to the Cree and a very threatening act. Throughout my experience with them, I always had comments on when an animal was found dead, that apparently it had not been killed by anything, these were taken as acts of great foreboding of interests and of concern by them, and I think anything that they would see as a destruction of land or destruction of animals would fit into that same category; it would be very threatening and dangerous for them and for their confidence in their own future.
(CIRC-JB, Feit Re-Examination, 100-116)

In this testimony, which concluded his re-examination and was not followed by a cross-examination, Feit described in detail the connections between the Cree and their homeland and the threats posed to these relationships by the proposed

hydroelectric development. The most significant distinction to be drawn between his testimony, along with that of Tanner, and that of Bertrand, is the level of specific detailed knowledge of the Cree and their way of life; after ostensibly studying the Cree, Bertrand could offer no analysis more than the simplistic platitudes offered by Bourassa in his glowing, self-congratulatory justification of the project.

The Judgment

It was this sort of argument which appears to have swayed Justice Malouf to make the ruling he did in granting the Cree the injunction against construction they sought. Early in his judgment, he comments on the length of the trial, and notes that the parties called 167 witnesses and produced 312 exhibits (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 3). He then outlines precisely what the Cree and Inuit were seeking by taking the JBDC to court:

In their application for an interlocutory order of injunction, petitioners seek an order refraining respondents from carrying out certain major works in the territory and adjacent thereto on the ground that such works are interfering with and causing prejudice to the personal and usufructory rights which Cree Indians and Inuits have exercised and are presently exercising in all of northern Quebec including trapping, hunting and fishing rights. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 5)

That the Cree and Inuit lived in the territory they claimed was not at issue in the trial, as both parties filed admissions that this occupation had been the case since at least 1850 (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 10). As well, the parties agreed that, with three exceptions, the petitioners named in the writ held powers of attorney which permitted them properly to represent their people in the proceedings (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 12).

In Part II of his judgment, Justice Malouf outlined the contemporary jurisprudence on the nature and extent of the rights of the Cree and Inuit. Significantly, he referred to *Amodu Tijani* and *Re. Southern Rhodesia* to establish the precedent that the Indigenous people do possess a usufructuary right to land, and that their rights, based on the existence of their own legal systems are amenable to protection under English law (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 20-21). Before turning to the Canadian jurisprudence, he took care to point out the special, distinguishing nature of the case before him:

However in examining the following jurisprudence it must continually be kept in mind that this particular case differs from all the others on a very important point. In this case there is a statutory condition present, namely, the obligation assumed by the Province of Quebec in the legislation of 1912 [which transferred territory to the province], which does not exist in any of the other cases decided by the Courts prior to this day.

Notwithstanding this difference the jurisprudence is helpful in determining in what manner and to what extent the Indian title exists in Canada.

(CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 31)

Justice Malouf then undertook what has come to appear as a relatively standard discussion of Canadian jurisprudence in this area. He began with *St. Catherine's Milling*, discusses briefly two cases from western Canada related to hunting on unoccupied Crown land and the applicability of the *Royal Proclamation* to the lands of the Hudson's Bay Company, and then turned his attention to the then-recent Supreme Court of Canada ruling in *Calder*. After summarising the main points considered by the justices in their competing judgments, he identified an important distinction between *Calder* and the case before him:

The *Calder* case is distinguishable from the present case. The Supreme Court was not dealing with any statutory provision which could benefit the Indians. I refer to the statutory provision contained in the Law of 1912 by virtue of which the Province of Quebec undertook to recognize the rights of the Indian inhabitants to the same extent and obtain surrenders of such rights in the same manner as the Government of Canada had previously recognized such rights and obtained surrender thereof. Secondly I refer to the statement of Judson J. who stated that the Sovereign authority in the *Calder* case elected to exercise complete Dominion over the lands in question. In the present case the Sovereign authority has never elected to exercise such complete Dominion over the lands in question. On the contrary it decided to recognize the rights of the Indians in the manner stated above. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 37).

Given this fact, and given fact that the Cree and Inuit were seeking an interlocutory injunction, Justice Malouf found it “unnecessary to define the exact nature and intent of the Indian title to the land” (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 38).

Justice Malouf then turned his attentions, in Part III, to the relationship between the Cree and Inuit and the land in question. The Indigenous groups and the JBDC agreed on a series of admissions in this regard:

The parties filed an admission on January 15th by virtue of which it was admitted that the Cree Indians and Inuits living at Fort Chimo, as well as their ancestors, hunted and fished and have hunted and fished since at least 1850 in the regions mentioned and in the immediate vicinity thereof. The said admission of January 15th also contained reference to the fact that Cree Indians and Inuit use at least a portion of the animals which they hunt and fish for at least part of their subsistence. All the admissions filed in the present case, were made subject to the rights of the parties to produce further proof in respect thereof (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 42)

The judge then listed the facts proven by the petitioners through the course of the trial:

The testimony of the Indian and Inuit witnesses reveals that:

- 1.- they, their fathers and in some instances grandfathers trapped, hunted and fished in most of northern Quebec. ...;
- 2.- the diet of the Indian and Inuit population consists mostly of food which they trap, hunt, and fish, which they refer to in their testimony as

country food. The proportion of country food consumed by them in relation to food purchased from the store varies according to different witnesses from a slight majority to as high as 90%. I will return to this subject later when discussing testimony given by witnesses produced by respondents;

3.- the Indian and Inuit population eat all the animals that they trap and hunt and all the fish which they obtains from the rivers and lakes. The variety is great. They refer to caribou, moose, bear, marten, rabbit, fox, squirrel, ptarmigan, lynx, loon, and otter. From the sea they obtain seal and whale in small quantities, and a great variety of fish such as trout, salmon, whitefish, arctic char, wall-eye, pike and sturgeon. They also hunt many birds mainly geese;

4.- many heads of family are full time hunters and trappers, some are part time hunters and trappers, and most if not all of the remaining members of each band hunt and trap around the settlement on a part time basis. ...;

5.- they fish in many of the rivers and lakes amongst which are the following rivers namely, Nottaway, Rupert, Ercadback, Eastmain, Opinaca, Kanaaupscow, La Grande, Great Whale River, Caniapsicau, Koksoak, Tunulik and False, and the following lakes Sakami, Opinaca, Bienville, Caniapiscou, Delorme, Nachikapau and Diana. ...;

6.- the rivers are used as highways thereby permitting them to go to their trap line and elsewhere with facility during summer and winter;

7.- many of them work for salary;

8.- many of their dead are buried along the rivers, close to lakes and in their trap lines;

9.- their religion revolves around the game animals and the killing of all animals has a strong religious significance to them;

10.- they are happy with their own way of life and are violently opposed to the hydroelectric project. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 42-43)

In these findings, Justice Malouf accepted nearly all of the points raised by the Cree and their experts, and rejected the evidence put forward by the JBDC.

After summarising the evidence offered for the Cree by Feit, Tanner, Rogers, and the biologist John Spence, and that of the witnesses for the JBDC — mainly white residents of the area, government agents, and bureaucrats — except for Bertrand, Justice Malouf critically assessed the validity of this latter evidence in terms of Indigenous reliance on the bush for food:

Furthermore, in order to show that the dependence of the Cree Indians and Inuits on animals and fish is not as great as petitioners pretend, respondents adduced evidence to the effect that a great number of Cree Indians and Inuits work for salary and that they purchase certain food-stuffs from the stores. The parties admitted ... that a large number of children attend school, that the majority of Indians and Inuits buy such staple items as sugar, flour, tea, coffee and salt as well as tobacco, clothes, oil, gazoline [*sic*], firearms, ammunition, fishing, hunting and trapping equipment from the stores, that they make use of available health

services provided by governmental authorities, and that some make use of motor boats. Many witnesses ... testified to the effect that Cree Indians and Eskimo frequent the Hudson's Bay stores and the Cooperatives to purchase food and other items. Other witnesses ... say that the Cree Indians and Eskimo make use of the free hospital and health services offered by the governmental authorities; that considerable sums of money have been spent by both the federal and provincial government authorities to provide them with homes, water and sewage facilities, electricity and other services; that a considerable investment was made through the construction of hospitals, schools and roads; that welfare payments are made to help them purchase food, clothing, heating fuels and other special needs; that they receive family allowances; and finally that many are working and receiving salaries. A great number of documents were filed concerning the items just mentioned. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 50-51)

Justice Malouf here outlined the JBDC's contention that the impact of the project will be negligible and in the end positive, because the Cree are no longer really Indigenous as exemplified in a common-sensical way by their engagement with certain aspects of white culture and society. The Cree were depicted as willing to accept the benefits of white society while at the same time opposing a project projected to provide a level of prosperity to the province which would ensure the continuation of such generous programmes.

Justice Malouf was generally dismissive of the experts utilised by the

JBDC to speak to the issues surrounding Cree society and land use, and he rejected their arguments about the levels of Cree attachment to and reliance upon the land:

I note that many witnesses produced by respondents confirm the testimony of petitioners that a great number of Cree Indians and Inuits still hunt, trap and fish. *The fact that they purchase certain food from the stores to supplement their diet does not mean that they are not dependent upon the land.* Lindley's statement that approximately a million and a half dollars worth of grocery items were sold to the indigenous population in the areas mentioned bears this out. On a pro rata basis the total value of all items sold to one individual does not amount to very much. It is true that a great number of Cree Indians and Inuits work and that in some areas the number of hunters has been decreasing. However their dependence on hunting, trapping and fishing remains evident from the testimony of all the witnesses and the documents filed as exhibits. Beaudet for example testified that for the year 1971-1972 each trapper received \$574.00 from the sale of beavers and that in the following year the number of captured beavers increased. The testimony of the anthropologists Feit and Tanner is also very important and shows to what extent the Cree Indians in the areas mentioned by them are dependent on animals, fish and birds. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 52-53, emphasis added)

When it came to the implications of the Cree relationship to the land, Justice

Malouf moved away from the expert testimony both from the petitioners and the respondents, dismissing entirely the evidence of Bertrand as well as that from Feit's re-examination:

On behalf of respondents, anthropologist BERTRAND speaks at length about the impact which the white man has had on the Cree Indian.

Because we are living in a technological world, he does not see how any people can attempt to remain completely attached to roots which no longer relate to the global environment which surrounds us. In cross-examination he admits that the Cree Indians have been able to reconcile modern technology with their own way of life.

In counter-proof HARVEY FEIT was requested to rebut certain allegations made by Bertrand. Although the evidence of these ... particular witnesses is interesting, it cannot have any bearing on the final outcome of this petition. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 117-118)

Based on their relationship to the land, and the unfulfilled obligation of the Quebec government to deal with their title in the land, Justice Malouf found that the Cree had reason to fear the changes the JBDC sought to make to the territory of northern Quebec, and showed that he had carefully considered the evidence put forward by and on behalf of the Cree:

In reviewing the evidence I find that petitioners are justified in their apprehension of injury to the rights which they have been exercising. Damages to the flora and fauna have already taken place. Further

considerable damage will be caused by the works which are presently going on. Still more extensive and more serious damage will occur as the work progresses.

...

In view of the dependence of the indigenous population on the animals, fish, and vegetation in the territory, the works will have devastating and far reaching effects on the Cree Indians and the Inuits living in the territory and the lands adjacent thereto. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 118-119)

In considering the jurisprudence on injunctions, Justice Malouf found that “[i]n the present case the injury which petitioners are suffering and will continue to suffer cannot be easily quantified nor can it be adequately calculated or compensated in monetary terms” (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 142), mirroring Feit’s testimony in his counter-proof about the impossibility of placing a value on a culture.

Justice Malouf concluded his legal findings by considering the JBDC argument that the balance of convenience lay in allowing it to complete construction of the project. The judge rejected this forcefully in asserting that the clear legal rights of the Cree to their land precluded any consideration of balance of convenience, although he dealt with the jurisprudence in any event:

In a case of this nature the sums of money expended [by the JBDC to date], even if substantial, must not be permitted to cloud the issues. The nature and extent of the works presently going on and which are

scheduled for the next few months have been described in detail elsewhere in this judgment. The proof has convinced me that if these works are allowed to continue, a factual situation will soon occur which will render any final judgment ineffectual because it will then be impossible to put the parties in the position they would have been in had the works not been carried out. To put it another way, a continuation of the works will undoubtedly lead to a *fait accompli*.

Furthermore if I were to consider balance of convenience in the present case, I would establish a principle which would lead to strange consequences. It would permit a person to change the status quo prior to or pending the hearing and subsequently plead balance of convenience. I cannot give effect to such a proposition.

There is one final matter which requires consideration. Respondents of their own accord started work on the project notwithstanding the opposition expressed by petitioners. Even after the present proceedings were instituted, respondents continued with the project and expended large sums of money. This was a most unfortunate decision. Respondents knew that the Indians and Eskimo were in possession of the territory and the lands adjacent thereto. They also knew that the Indians and Eskimo were occupying and making use of the land. This situation was not forced upon them. They took the risk of proceeding with the work. A more prudent person would have awaited the decision of the Court. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 153-154)

In light of this strong rebuke of the JBDC, and carrying his hypothetical exercise to a logical conclusion, Justice Malouf offered his opinion on the balance of convenience argument:

What this Court would have to decide, if it were considering balance of convenience, is the relative convenience and inconvenience cause to the parties by the works. The damages referred to in this section must be balanced against the damages which petitioners will continue to suffer if the works continue. Elsewhere in this part I said that the damages to petitioners will be great. In many instances such damages will be not only devastating but irreparable. In addition I find it difficult to compare such monetary loss to the damages which such a large group of people will suffer. The right of petitioners to continue their way of life in the lands subject to dispute far outweighs any consideration that can be given to such monetary damages.

It is my opinion that greater damage would be caused to petitioners by refusing to grant the injunction in the event that the final judgment maintains the rights of petitioners that to respondents by granting the injunction in the event that the Court in considering the final application concludes that the injunction should not issue.

For these reasons, even if I were to consider balance of convenience, I would come to the conclusion that balance of convenience militates in favour of petitioners. (CIRC-JB, *Kanatawat*, 168-169)

Based on the evidence and the jurisprudence, Malouf granted the injunction sought by the Cree and Inuit in part, and ordered the JBDC to cover the cost of the proceedings “including the costs of all exhibits and expert evidence” (CIRC-JB, *Kanatewat*, 171).

Chapter 5: “The only place where a poor man’s table is laden with meat”: Competing Representations of Indigenous Societies and Economies in the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry

During a period of rising petroleum prices in the early and mid-1970s, a number of proposals were made for the construction of a pipeline to bring gas south from the Arctic. At the time thought to be most expensive privately-financed infrastructure project ever, the construction of a pipeline was a development project on a massive scale: beyond the pipeline itself, there would be a need for an infrastructure of roads, airstrips, gravel pits, and so on, not only for construction but also for maintenance once completed (Berger 1977: Vol.1, ix). Taken as a whole, the pipeline and its construction would have a massive impact not only on the environment but also on the Dene and Inuit who relied on that environment for their survival.

In a significant distinction from the experiences of the James Bay Cree with hydroelectric development, the pipeline proposals were subjected to a thorough environmental and social impact study process. Throughout, the proponents for the pipeline argued that any impact on Indigenous peoples, either directly through employment or indirectly through changes to the environment of their homelands, would be mitigated by the benefits of wage employment and the development of infrastructure. At the base of these assertions of benefit was an assumption that the Dene in particular were already far removed from their Indigenous culture and economy and were well on their way to relying completely on wage labour to live, rather than on the bush economy. The Dene and Cree used the research of several anthropologists to demonstrate that, in fact, their

bush economy was not only still functioning but actually made a significant and virtually irreplaceable contribution to their survival and well-being.

Background

In a much-quoted phrase, Mr. Justice Thomas Berger opened his report on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (MVPI) by commenting on the status of the North in the southern imagination:

We are now at our last frontier. It is a frontier that all of us have read about, but few of us have seen. Profound issues, touching our deepest concerns as a nation, await us there. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, vi)

However, the crux of his analysis of the impact of the construction of a gas pipeline along the Mackenzie River to supply Canadian and American markets came in the next two paragraphs, which are much less widely cited:

The North is a frontier, but it is a homeland too, the homeland of the Dene, Inuit and Metis, as it is also the home of the white people who live there. And it is a heritage, a unique environment that we are called upon to preserve for all Canadians.

The decisions we have to make are not, therefore, simply about northern pipelines. They are decisions about the protection of the northern environment and the future of northern peoples. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, vi)

Berger's analysis of Dene culture and society which led him to this conclusion about the impacts, and the debates between social scientists working on behalf of the Dene and of the gas companies, form the basis of this chapter.

The MVPI was created by an Order-in-Council of the federal cabinet on 21 March 1974, relying upon the then-current guidelines for evaluating northern pipeline proposals as part of its terms of reference. Over the next three years, before the publication of the final report on 09 May 1977, the MVPI conducted a series of hearings in a variety of locations. The formal hearings, with presentations by each of the stakeholders, supported by testimony from expert witnesses and subject to cross-examination by counsel for the opposing parties, began in Yellowknife on 11 March 1975. As well, the MVPI travelled to all 35 communities in the region potentially affected by pipeline construction, where testimony from local residents about the impacts was collected in the Indigenous languages. As well, many Canadians contributed written statements, and a series of community hearings were held in ten southern communities in May and June of 1976. The hearings concluded with final arguments from the participating groups in November of that year in Yellowknife (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 203). As one commentator writing in the decade after Berger's report was published noted, "[p]robably no royal commission or public inquiry in Canadian history has sustained such a large and diverse audience, or provoked, years after its conclusion, such strong emotional responses" (Abele 1983: 1).

The experts working on behalf of the Dene and of the gas companies had conflicting goals, and applied conflicting analytical methods to their research

materials in order to bolster their respective cases. Generally speaking, the expert witnesses for the gas companies relied on an argument based on the assumption of the ongoing and inevitable acculturation of the Dene due to the arrival of capitalism in the form of colonialism. This argument was obviously analogous to the evolutionary analysis developed by Robert Murphy and Julian Steward, while the experts called by the Dene applied a theoretical framework derived from Marxist analyses of the articulations of modes of production which emphasised the continuing vitality of the Indigenous economy and the social and cultural forms it supports.

For the Applicants

In their submission, Canadian Arctic Gas Pipeline Limited (CAGPL) produced a “Regional Socio-Economic Impact Statement” which comprised volume 14.c of their application. In its Preface, CAGPL outlines the position of the statement in the general arguments being made in favour of the pipeline:

The Applicant [i.e., CAGPL] has made an assessment of the potential regional socio-economic impacts which the proposed pipeline and associated activity will cause, based upon relevant information gathered and analysed by the Applicant’s staff and consultants. As part of this work, the Applicant’s public affairs liaison officer in the Yukon and Northwest Territories has had the responsibility of conferring with people in the study region, determining their views and counselling as to how these views can

be accommodated and their interest served. In addition, the Applicant's northern staff and socio-economic consultants have made inputs into the formulation and review of the Applicant's routing and other engineering and environmental protection plans, as well as into its construction and operating plans, including personnel and social policies. (CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, 1)

From the outset, CAGPL made clear its assumptions about the nature of Indigenous societies, presumably both Dene and Inuit, in the area being considered for pipeline development. The starting point in this depiction was that change — acculturation, the process whereby the white culture and way of life replaces the Indigenous ones — was already underway, and the form it was taking was inevitable and inexorable; the duty of the pipeline company was therefore to help facilitate change amongst the willing while respecting the choice of those unwilling:

The lifestyle of the native people resident in the area has been characterized by self-sufficiency, self-determination and a deep affinity with the land which directly provided warmth, food, and security. This style of life and means of support is part of the past of all mankind, but for the native people in the region that is being reviewed, the change from that pattern is relatively new.

The Applicant's analysis of these changing patterns, and of the conditions and attitudes that have evolved, lead us to the belief that its

policies must be shaped in a effort to ensure that:

- a. Those persons who wish to continue to follow the more traditional style of life and means of earning a living must not be precluded from doing so. Their freedom of choice must not be interfered with.
- b. For that larger number who have made a transition, or who now choose to do so, assistance in achieving or improving an alternative means of earning a living and, presumably, an alternative life style, must be provided.

The Applicant believes that the substantial economic stimulus to the region that will be provided by its project, and the associated activity that will be generated will be of assistance in providing this choice.

Furthermore, the Applicant will shape its policies in an effort to ease the transition. (CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, n.p.)

This is a particularly telling passage, which seems innocuous at first reading but upon closer analysis reveals a great deal about CAGPL's attitudes towards the Indigenous peoples in the region. These peoples were, apparently, vestiges of humanity's past, living on as relics in the modern age although a few were beginning to enter the twentieth (or, perhaps, only the nineteenth) century. The company would assume the burden of easing the people through this transition, even though according to them many people have already made it of their own volition.

As part of the “Background Considerations” examined by CAGPL, the authors of the statement assessed the “Historical Experience With Development” and the “Political Background” of the people in the area. In each case, the assumptions, the historical analysis, and the proposed solutions are the same.

The former begins by asserting that

[t]he [Indigenous] people in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory began to lose their economic self-sufficiency and to become increasingly dependent upon inputs from beyond their society following the arrival of the explorers, the fur traders, and the whalers.

Prior to the end of the first quarter of this century, native residents were able to continue to use their historic skills to capture the resources which they could exchange for the goods desired from outside. However, the acceleration of the rate of change over the last one or two generations has created a new social and economic environment, and it is not likely that the direction of change could be reversed, even if most northern residents wished it. (CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, 4)

This analysis of the development of Indigenous dependency mirrors that put forward by Bradby regarding the “natural economy” and used by Wolf as his basis for understanding and explicating the effects of “contact.” And then, in the latter:

Political developments in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory appear to have been linked to economic change and development

throughout the history of the North.

In terms of the Indian and Inuit, the change with the most far-reaching and persistent implications was the movement, over the history of the region, from self-sufficient hunting camps and family groupings into settlements that developed around the institutions of the non-natives — the trading post, the church, and the school.

Development altered the environment from one of self-sufficiency to an initial dependency on the goods available in the trading post and, subsequently, to a growing dependence on the non-native employer or government assistance. This change had political as well as economic implications. In terms of political implications, it resulted in non-natives — the trader, the teacher, the missionary, the policeman — influencing and, in many instances, tending to pre-empt important decision-making functions of the historic decision-makers within the native groups.

(CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, 7)

Here, the links between the Bradby / Wolf approach and Elman Service's representation of the Dene as "debt peons" who relied on the traders for their survival became explicit: in the space of two paragraphs, three or more centuries of Dene history can be reduced to a simple linear formula:

contact → dependency → collapse of Dene society → need for help to be white

The company identified two complimentary factors to support its assertions about the increasing Indigenous participation in the southern or capitalist culture and economy: growing numbers of people participating in the wage economy, combined with a seeming decline in the reliance on country food or bush products. On the one hand,

[t]he availability of wage employment within the study region is important and is progressively taking on added importance. In recent years, a number of the companies operating in the region have reported an increase in the number of Northerners¹⁵ they have employed. As economic activity continues to grow, wage employment and associated opportunities are becoming more readily available to northern residents.

The trend is for greater participation by native people in wage employment. This carries with it an acceptance of the necessity of a modification of lifestyles and the need to acquire relevant skills. In response to this need, government and industry have intensified the effort to improve the work skills of members of the northern work force and to assure that hiring practices and qualifications required for employment are more appropriate to the local circumstances. (CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, 6)

Concomitant with the growth in wage employment was, according to CAGPL, a decline in participation in “traditional” pursuits. The statement included a statistic which would be repeated numerous times and become the focus of heated

¹⁵ In this passage, “Northerners” and “northern residents” seem to be synonymous with “Indigenous peoples.”

debate between the witnesses for the pipeline company and those working on behalf of the Dene:

A survey made in 1972 revealed that only 96 persons, out of a study region population of 23,600 and a male working age population of 7,830, were engaged in full-time and regular part-time trapping. In the same year, income in kind [i.e., from the bush] has been estimated as equivalent to approximately three percent of total cash income in the study region. ...

There is an increasing tendency for residents of the study region to pursue the traditional activities for reasons that are not directly related to the achievement of income. Many hunt and fish for purely recreational reasons. In the case of native people, this trend appears to reflect a desire for a periodic return to the traditional pursuits. In addition, many prefer fish and game instead of store foods. (CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, 17)

Given the changes already occurring to the Dene society and economy, and the nature of the proposed project, the pipeline company was confident that the negative impacts on the Dene would be insignificant:

It has been noted that the traditional pursuits, as a source of income, are engaging a decreasing proportion of the attention of the native people in the study region. In recent years, traditional pursuits were responsible for only a small percentage of total incomes in the study region although, as previously noted, hunting, trapping and fishing were relatively important in some of the smaller communities. However, the longer-term impacts of the

project will be concentrated in the larger communities, and on balance, the total impact of the pipeline on the traditional pursuits of the native people living in the study region will be negligible. (CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, 31)

The pipeline company promised to be sensitive to the needs of Indigenous peoples and make accommodations to them in hiring policies, given the changes that they were portrayed as going through and the difficulties that they faced in making the transition to wage-earners although, in the end, such as transition would be both necessary and inevitable:

The traditional lifestyle of native Northerners is not only different from that of people accustomed to a modern industrial society, but is essentially in contrast to it. For example, it has been unnecessary for native people to regularize traditional activities into time compartments and to be disciplined by the imperatives of a clock. Further, the rigidities implicit in the lifestyle of the industrial worker are accepted as an inevitable corollary of the maintenance of a good standard of living and the retention of a predictable income that permits the accumulation of goods. This, again, is foreign to the historically non-acquisitive native Northerner.

The transition from a hunting economy to a wage economy is predictably difficult. The transition must be made, however, if the social and economic needs of the native people are to be satisfied. (CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, 34)

The company portrays itself as promoting a project promising not only massive economic opportunities to the region, but also a significant social project. Similar to the argument put forward by the James Bay Development Corporation, the proponents were moving towards asserting that the bush lifestyle was no longer sufficient to satisfy the needs of the communities, whether in terms of sustenance or in terms of comfort.

The company's representation of the current situation of the Indigenous peoples of the region and of its historical contexts was bolstered by the testimony of Charles Hobart, a sociologist at the University of Alberta. He offered a capsule summary of the changes to Dene society since contact with whites, and introduced the notion of a dual economy to explain the continuing vitality of the bush economy in the face of contact with capitalism:

for most of the culture-contact period and across most of this region the pace of change has been ... slow, but nevertheless steady. With the establishment of trading posts during the first half of the 19th century, the people of the area became dependent on the posts, primarily for tools and utensils, but also for flour, lard, tea, sugar and tobacco. For these they traded furs, and their fur take was shaped to meet these rather modest needs. Their life on the land, in terms of transportation, housing and clothing was virtually identical with life in pre-contact times, excepting, of course, the in-gathering to the post and the mission which occurred several times a years. This period marked the beginning of the dual economy, involving dependence on subsistence from the land but

harvested with the assistance of trade goods from the post.... While there was continuous gradual change as a result of many innovations and adjustments on the part of the native people, the basic tenor and the major activities of their lives were but little changed. Except for the white introduced disease epidemics, there was no severe disruption of their lives. (Hobart 1976: 10)

The changes of the earlier periods can be contrasted with those in the decades immediately past, where the experiences of the Dene were considerably different:

The years since the Second World War must be characterized as a time of accelerating social change in the Mackenzie Corridor. The minimal exposure of native children to formal education in the 1940's has now given way to nearly universal enrolment of children in school. This has inevitably been associated with a decline in trapping and land-living skills, and, together with settlement living, has resulted in greater dependence on wage employment, and on unearned income. (Hobart 1976: 8)

In Hobart's analysis, whatever success the Dene had had since the 1940s was a direct result of the introduction of industrial development to their territory, as the last component of the traditional economy still operating in the dual economy ceased to function; before the Second World War,

the dual economy of the native people, involving dependence on the land

for subsistence and on the trader for the tools to harvest the resources of the land, worked pretty well, and some natives became quite affluent. But this collapsed after the War, as fur values dropped and the prices of goods rose. The resulting generally hard times were only brought to an end by increasing employment opportunities in the late 1960's, triggered primarily by rapid expansion of oil exploration activities. (Hobart 1976: 24)

Hobart here used equivocal language, which could be interpreted as an attempt to make a point, and undermine the Dene interpretation without having to rely on empirical data to support it: the old system, in the bush, was not always positive for everybody and, similarly, the new one was not negative for everybody either.

In case the reader missed his point, Hobart recapitulated his narrative under the heading "Social Aspects":

Generally the post-contact history of native people in the Mackenzie Basin has been a history of growing dependency on whites. During the early trading period, although native people became dependent on traders for continuing supplies of utilitarian (as well as non-utilitarian) trade goods, there were long periods when they were out on the land where they were relatively autonomous. During the Fur and Mission Period their dependence on goods from the south increased. However, many had the wealth, particularly during the 1920's and 30's, to command these goods in comfortable supply and, while the fur market remained high, many of the trappers were "masters of their own fate". But the early Period of

Planned Development witnessed a rather sharp reversal as many became dependent on government, for welfare money during at least part of the year, for housing, for services and often for jobs as well.

The steady, and increasingly rapid erosion of the value of native lore, crafts, and skills that I described in Inuvik, is characteristic of the central and upper Mackenzie region as well. While early contact with whites sustained the value of the native lore and the skills which permitted travel and survival, often in comfort, today Arctic mechanized technology, and increased dependence on air travel, have made traditional survival lore and skills increasingly irrelevant. The result has been the massive devaluation of things native and of more traditional aspects of native life....This process lead [sic] inevitably to a loss of respect or worthiness by the native people, both in the eyes of whites and in their own eyes.

(Hobart 1976: 22)

This repetition serves to stress the main point of Hobart's analysis, and makes apparent the rhetoric he uses to make it: there had been a loss of respect for the old ways, which were no longer that useful and anyways had led to dependency on the traders — but the pipeline offered a way out of this situation, a way forward.

In Hobart's analysis, the results of this contact with wage employment and the collapse of the Indigenous component of the dual economy has serious implications for Dene culture and society beyond those in the economic sphere.

The arrival of government agents was particularly significant, as “their obvious relative wealth, and the similar wealth of most whites whom natives encountered, could not but reduce the native appreciation of things native, and vastly and often unrealistically enhance their appreciation of things white” (Hobart 1976: 13).

Hobart built on this staggeringly self-congratulatory ethnocentrism by going on to argue that this contact and resulting shift in perspective and growing appreciation for white culture at the expense of the Indigenous one profoundly unsettled the Dene and left them stranded between two cultures, dissatisfied with their own but unable to live as whites:

The resulting precipitous acculturation is seen in the tendency of most natives in the Territory to discard native canoes and kayaks, tools of native design of many kinds and dog teams in some areas, long before comparably situated native peoples in Alaska and Greenland did so. It must be noted that the period of intensive contact with whites was typically as long or longer for the Greenland and Alaska natives than is the case with native peoples of the Northwest Territories. However, the contact among the former was not as massively destructive of appreciation for things native as it has been among the Canadian Inuit and Dene.

A further consequence of these same influences, together with the decreasing economic attractiveness of living on the land, is seen in a certain ambivalence among many native people toward both the settlement and the bush. The trading post and its offspring, the settlement or town, has always been “white man’s country”, and accordingly both

attractive and repellent. The attractions were the goods, the comforts, the stimulations of settlement-centered festivity and the liquor. At the same time there were imperfectly understood threats and dangers associated with the white man's law and police officials, the quick loss of hard-earned money, and the threats to pride and self-esteem that were often experienced at the hands of insensitive or prejudiced whites.

Similarly, the bush is attractive because it is symbolic of a well-known and well-liked traditional way of life, exploiting a familiar terrain for known fur, meat and fish resources, in the company of well-known and non-threatening companions. It is also attractive as a haven from the more enervating aspects of settlement life. However, by contrast with the current ease of life in the settlement, life in the bush for many months of the year is harsh, comfortless and, especially for the less well initiated, distinctly dangerous at times. The returns from trapping for all but the last few of the post-war years, have generally been very slim and never very dependable. *Thus it is inevitable that for many, wage employment must be more attractive than trapping, as a source of livelihood.* (Hobart 1976: 13-15, emphasis added)

Here Hobart used a rhetorical style reminiscent of Steward to go with his Stewardian analysis (cf Asch 1979: 86; Pinkoski 2006): basing his discussion on assertion rather than fact, and lacking the data or asking the wrong questions to explain this shift, he applied an ethnocentric perspective to declare that the Dene

“must” have found wage labour more appealing than the bush lifestyle largely, one must assume, because that is the choice Hobart himself would have made.

It is only in his section on “Economic Aspects” that Hobart introduced solid data to bolster his argument, although he analyses it in esoteric ways. Relying on Manpower and Census data regarding income and occupations, Hobart asserts that

[t]he main points to be noted with respect to the Census data are the declines in trapping and the increase in the proportions of male respondents not stating an occupation. The data for trappers show a decline for the whole Mackenzie corridor from 17.6 percent in 1961 to 4.4 percent in 1971, and declines for the Delta, the Middle, and the Upper Mackenzie areas of from 5.9 to 4.2 percent, from 57.4 to 3.2 percent, and from 17.7 to 4.9 percent, respectively. The proportion of male respondents not stating an occupation increased by 13.4 percent in the whole Mackenzie corridor under consideration, and in the Delta, the Middle and the Upper Mackenzie, respectively, by 17.7, 17.1, and 8.1 percent, respectively.

I suspect that the increases in proportions of men not stating an occupation reflect, in addition to interviewer effect, the increased confusion of two groups in 1971. Older men who, when living out on the land, had been used to one pattern of hunting and trapping life in a sense may not have known what their occupation was under the changed conditions of settlement life, given the limited employment opportunities.

Secondly, there was the uncertainty of young men who lacked any very consistent occupational pattern. (Hobart 1976: 28)

Hobart seems unwilling or unable to consider the possibility that there might have been problems with the Census data on the other side, such as enumerators unsympathetic to the complexities of life in the North. He was able to conclude that the data, “to the extent that they are at all representative of trapping activity in the region, ... suggest that quantitatively trapping is not of great significance, although qualitatively and symbolically I think it is quite another matter” (Hobart 1976: 29). However, he does not identify the nature of the qualitative and symbolic value; his analysis of those aspects leads to the conclusion that it is the clinging to these antiquated ideals that causes a good deal of the difficulties the Dene were facing in the incursion of the southern economy.

When confronted by one of the experts testifying for the Dene about recent data showing the ongoing vitality of the hunting economy, Hobart was quick to justify the difference as resulting from a number of factors. First, the other expert worked in an area with which Hobart himself was not familiar, but which Hobart called “one of the more traditional or conservative communities along the Mackenzie River” (Hobart 1976: 29). He called this counter-evidence into question by asserting that “[i]n terms of my reading, and rereading of this literature, almost every researcher who has seriously studied the situation of native people in the North during this period [i.e., since the early 1960s] has described their increasing disinterest in trapping, and their increasingly

expressed preference for wage employment” (Hobart 1976: 30). He quoted extensively from a series of monographs to support this assertion, and then drew the conclusion that

[t]he purpose of reading these many passages from reports of research conducted during the past 16 years is not only to document the general disinterest in trapping as contrasted with wage employment a decade and more ago. It is also to emphasize that a whole generation of native young people has grown up in communities where it was widely accepted that wage employment was quite preferable to trapping. (Hobart 1976: 39)

For Hobart, change in the direction of employment away from the bush was inevitable because that was the movement made by young people, and soon they would outnumber and eventually supplant their elders leaving a society predisposed to wage labour because that would be the only lifestyle they had known. As the witnesses for the Dene pointed out, however, and I will discuss below, Hobart in making this prediction completely overlooked the structural factors responsible for inducing this shift.

Hobart concluded his submission by recognising that his analysis differs from that offered by many northern residents in their presentations to the community hearings. However, he was able to dismiss these differences by trying to undermine the community presentations for not having the full picture of the situation:

It is apparent that I have used sources, and in many cases have used the

words of researchers who were writing before the pipeline discussions began. I do not want to be seen as contradicting the testimony of those who spoke in the community hearings. Those people spoke on the basis of their experience and their concern, and the hearings have profited from their willingness to come forward. However, I do want to call attention to the fact that there are some other aspects of this large and complex Mackenzie Valley picture which were given little emphasis by many who spoke to you at the community hearings. (Hobart 1976: 44-45)

The socio-economic data relied upon by CAGPL in their application and analysed by Hobart was collected by Gemini North, “a Yellowknife-based consulting company,” which was commissioned “to study the economic and social circumstances in the study region and to give its assessment of the potential impact of the proposed developments, as well as to participate in the on-going formulation of policies” (CAGPL, n.d.: Vol. 14.c, 1).

Volume 5 of the Gemini North report on the *Social and Economic Impact of Proposed Arctic Gas Pipeline in Northern Canada* dealt with “The Traditional Economy” in the region (Gemini North 1974). In this report, the social scientists attempted to quantify Indigenous participation in trapping, hunting, and fishing, in order to set benchmarks for their projections about the impact of the construction of the pipeline and the resulting wage employment opportunities on Inuit and Dene involvement in the bush economy.

Gemini North surveyed people during the 1972-1973 hunting season, and

came to the conclusion that “there were estimated to be some 96 active full-time or regular part-time trappers in the ... sub-regions. Of this number about 60 were considered active full-time trappers or those not normally available for wage employment” (Gemini North 1974: Vol. 5, 10). In part, this staggeringly low number was due to the narrow definition of “full-time” hunters: in this case, they counted “those individuals who pursue hunting, trapping and fishing activities on a seasonal basis and are not available for wage employment on a full-time or regular part-time basis” (Gemini North 1974: Vol. 5, 6). But, the obverse definition contained in this formulation, the people who were not counted was significant both in terms of numbers and in terms of ideological interpretation: essentially, any person who reported taking even a single day of wage employment during that period would be classed as something other than a full-time hunter, drastically reducing the numbers. The study’s authors recognised that some hunters combined wage labour with bush activities, but then classified them as labourers who hunted only as “recreation”:

The pursuit of trapping as a recreational or leisure time activity by people who have been drawn into the wage economy appears to be on the increase in the study region. ... Another indication is the increased interest in “day-lining”, or setting of traps close to communities, and in trapping on weekends, vacations or periodic breaks in the wage employment cycle. Some of the best trappers in the study region, in terms of effort expended and income earned, are men who are regularly employed in the wage economy. It has been suggested to us that such men are motivated to

pursue activities which may net them increased incomes and have the money to purchase the supplies and equipment required. Many recreational or leisure time trappers are just that; they return to the bush as an enjoyable break in their normal routine and may be indifferent to potential monetary returns. (Gemini North 1974: Vol. 5, 28)

By analysing their data in this fashion, Gemini North was able to explain away the apparent fact that participation in bush activities, particularly amongst young people, was increasing: they might have appeared superficially similar to the activities of their elders, but since they were motivated by different factors therefore their activities were materially different.

Given these numbers, Gemini North sought to identify the factors which determine whether a person withdrew from the bush lifestyle or became more committed to it. In terms of the motivating factors, besides the issue of recreation they identified four from their interviews (Gemini North 1974: Vol. 5, 26-29): the “social milieu in the communities” (i.e., going to the bush to escape social strife); a “return to traditional values” (in their analysis, “[t]he evolution of ethnic interest groups in the study region is primarily responsible for instilling a new sense of pride in the traditional pursuits of hunting, trapping and fishing”); “the number of people trapping” (i.e., a desire to avoid feeling isolated in the bush); and the development of “better communications” between the bush and communities.

On the other hand, the authors of the study identified a series of factors which would in their perspective constrain participation in the bush economy

(Gemini North 1974: Vol. 5, 30-32). These included the high cost of supplies and equipment, lack or loss of skills, over-hunting of desirable animals, and, finally,

[c]hanges in values. The generation of young northerners who have attained higher education levels than their parents may not be bush-oriented and may be disinclined to go trapping except for recreational purposes. The revival of interest in traditional values which appears to have led to an increase in trapping effort in the 1972/3 season seems to be concentrated in the middle-aged population, who already possess the required skills. (Gemini North 1974: Vol. 5, 31-32)

The authors of the report then predicted some future trends based on their analysis, with a mixed prognosis for participation in the bush economy. On the one hand,

[i]n the absence of [pipeline] development, a decline in wage employment opportunities coupled with higher prices for fur may increase the economic viability of trapping as a full-time occupation and make it more attractive alternative to living on welfare, or working for low wage rates in town, where living costs are higher. (Gemini North 1974: Vol. 5, 34-35)

On the other hand, if the developments went ahead as planned, Gemini North predicted that

increased wage employment opportunities associated with the proposed pipeline and related developments would further reduce the number of full-

time trappers. Given the choice between the uncertainties and risks associated with trapping and the greater security of income from wage employment, younger members of the working age population are opting for the latter. ... Conversely, increased wage employment may increase the number of part-time trappers, who would have the money and motivation to trap when not actively employed for wages. (Gemini North 1974: Vol. 5, 35)

The upshot, however, was always that trapping was not and would not be again an important component of the Indigenous economy, even if their own data showed an increasing proportion of Dene participating in bush activities.

For the Dene

Hundreds of Dene and Inuit testified before the MVPI, in their own languages and in English, in community hearings and in Yellowknife. As a supplement to the insights and analyses offered by their people, the Dene and Inuit relied upon a number of social scientists to analyse and explicate the potential social and cultural impacts of pipeline construction on the region. Peter Usher, a consultant with a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of British Columbia working for the Committee on Original People's Entitlement on behalf of the Inuit, produced a series of reports on their land use patterns based on his fieldwork and statistics he collected and analysed (Usher 1976a, 1976b). He

documented the dietary importance of bush resources, both in terms of preference and of nutritional value, and concluded that “[t]here is no satisfactory substitute for country food, hence anything which might be substituted for it entails an absolute loss of welfare for native people of incalculable proportions” (Usher 1976b: 10). He also demonstrated that the people had developed “an elaborate network of exchange in country produce” (Usher 1976b: 4), such that even people living in settlements far from the best hunting and trapping, such as Inuvik, relied upon bush resources for an extremely significant part of their sustenance. These findings led him to conclude that “[t]he North may be the only place where a poor man’s table is laden with meat as a matter of course” (Usher 1976b: 12).

Expert witness testimony on behalf of the Dene claims about the social impacts of the pipeline was offered by two anthropologists. The first, Scott Rushforth, undertook fieldwork for his Ph.D. with the Dene communities around Great Bear Lake. Having heard from members of the community that they were dissatisfied with the representations of Dene economy and society in the Gemini North report, Rushforth set out to document current land-use patterns and to place these in an historical context of change over time. He found that

- (1) The Bear Lake People, in spite of tremendous changes which have occurred in their way of life, still derive an important if not critical portion of their foodstuffs from their land.
- (2) A significant percentage of the Bear Lake People still engage regularly in traditional land-use activities.
- And (3) almost the entire area of land which was occupied by the ancestors of the

Bear Lake Indians is still utilized, to some extent, by the Bear Lake People today. (Rushforth 1976: 5)

In fact, he seems most surprised that the Dene hunters he interviewed, when asked to rank the relative importance of particular areas of their territory, were unable to do so; he concludes that “[t]heir difficulties in ranking their land in terms of economic value derives from the irrefutable fact that *all of their land is useful and important to them*” (Rushforth 1976: 32).¹⁶ Rushforth concluded his analysis with a discussion of the nature of change as experienced by the Dene in the region, and asked a crucial question which no one working on behalf of the proponents or the government was able to answer satisfactorily: “Should representatives of the same socio-cultural system which introduced change to Dene society now cite the existence of those conditions as proof of the need for additional change?” (Rushforth 1976: 55). Here he drew attention to the seemingly untenable situation in which the Indigenous opponents of the pipeline found themselves:

The other anthropologist who testified was Michael Asch, who had completed three years of fieldwork among the Slavey speakers around Wrigley, on the upper Mackenzie River. Styled an analysis of “Past and Present Land-Use by Slavey Indians of the Mackenzie District” (Asch 1976a), Asch’s expert report provided an analysis of the Dene economy since the time of contact with the fur

¹⁶ This mirrors one of Usher’s conclusions about the potential impact on the Inuit, his “severe doubts that it is possible to identify so-called critical areas which alone are set aside from industrial use, and still expect the traditional resources and their effective use to be viable twenty or fifty years down the road” (Usher 1976a: 31).

trade, encompassing a discussion of the historical record, an examination of data he collected during his fieldwork, and a theoretical engagement with the analysis offered by the proponents.

Asch began by summarising the position outlined by the experts for the pipeline proponents, and called attention to what he saw as the gaps and shortcomings in their analysis. In his formulation, the proponents focused on the problems faced by the Dene, such as alcoholism and unemployment, and argued that the construction of a pipeline was the only thing to offer a chance for solutions given the collapse of the traditional economy (Asch 1976a: 1). Asch then outlined the general themes of his critique of this interpretation and analysis, focusing on the aspects that the researchers for the pipeline neglected to account for or elided:

at base, my critique of these studies is that, although they have collectively amassed quite a bit of data, they include virtually no information on either historical or cultural factors. As a result, on the one hand they are missing information essential to making a proper assessment of any development, and, on the other, they are creating the impression that Northern Natives are fundamentally just “poor” people, who happen to be Native, an impression which does an injustice to the facts. In fact, I would argue that had they taken historical and cultural factors into account, the other researchers would have either reached the same conclusions as I or, at least, would have moderated their recommendations concerning immediate development to include more

native control. (Asch 1976a: 2)

Here, Asch's approach undermines the arguments made later by those in the political economy school to the effect that the arrival of capitalism turns Indigenous peoples into peasants or proletarians. As part of this analysis, and in order to provide this missing context, Asch presented an interpretation of Dene economic history which focused both on their Indigenous system and the ways in which this system interacted with capitalism. Following most Athapaskan ethnohistorians (e.g., Helm 2000[1975]), he divided this economic history into three broad periods: the pre-contact era, the fur trade era, and the post-Second World War era up to the present at the time of the MVPI.

Asch depicted the pre-contact period as one in which the Dene were self-sufficient much of the time, but also had mechanisms in place should local groups or families need assistance in meeting their subsistence needs. In his analysis,

the regional economy in the late aboriginal period was a total economy both in terms of production and circulation of goods. That is, the people of the region were themselves wholly responsible for their own survival. They achieved this end by organizing themselves into self-sufficient local groups into within which production and distribution were collective activities. However, given the potential variation of resources in local regions from year to year, on occasion local groups found themselves unable to maintain their self-sufficiency. At these times, they would join

with other local groups lucky enough to be enjoying a surplus. Hence, the principle of co-operation and mutual sharing found within local groups was extended to all the people of the region. (Asch 1976a: 7)

At the core of this way of life was an all-encompassing system of reciprocity, which functioned at the level of the local groups and formed one of the bases of the solidarity between families. Hunting, and the sharing of the food acquired by hunting, was the basis of the collectivity, bringing together individuals and families to form the minimal social group (Asch 1976a: 6). Although this analysis dealt with an area not touched upon in detail by the applicants or their experts, Asch addressed ideological components which reflect the connections between families even though these components might not have readily apparent material bases.

In his depiction of the fur trade era, which covered the period from contact with whites until the first half of the twentieth century, Asch's analysis engages explicitly with that provided by the applicants. By asserting that the trade in furs and concomitant introduction of trade goods to the Dene did not fundamentally alter the ideological structures of Dene society, he contradicts the applicants' representation of this period as the end of a distinctly Dene culture and economy and the beginning of a process of acculturation. He wrote that

it would appear that the regional economy was transformed by the new fur trade conditions from a "total economy" to one which relied both on local subsistence and the use of externally produced goods which were

exchanged for furs. However, it is important to point out that this shift appears to have created no major changes in the internal dynamics of production and circulation within the native economy.

Nonetheless, as the result of this economic shift, which required minimal changes in production and virtually no change in distribution, the standard of living was greatly raised. This must have made people feel quite wealthy. This rise in the standard of living, however, had an unexpected consequence: dependency. For now the stability and success of the economy was dependent in large measure on external economic conditions such as a high market price for furs in relation to trade good prices and the availability of productive surpluses in one aspect of local resources, furs. (Asch 1976a: 12-13)

In the context of this debate, Asch's use of the term "dependency" was perhaps an unfortunate one, as it subsumes two quite different concepts under a single marker. He was not arguing, as the witnesses for the proponents did, that the Dene were reliant on handouts because their own society was internally deficient non-functioning, or passively victimised by the arrival of whites; rather, his point was that through the fur trade the Dene were connected to elements outside of their direct control.

At the same time, Asch stressed repeatedly the explicit continuities between the Aboriginal period and the fur trade era:

As a result of these externally initiated developments in the fur trade, the

Native economy of the region had shifted by 1900 in some areas (certainly throughout the region by World War One) away from its virtual independence of trade goods to a situation where both trade goods and local subsistence resources were significant. Yet, the internal organization of the economy did not change greatly. The primary economic unit for most natives still remained the local group which, in most cases, still wintered at fish lakes. Further, labour was still organized on the basis of age and sex with the women and children responsible for collecting small game, and the men for hunting, fishing, and now trapping.

Some changes in production resulted from the introduction of the rifle and the steel trap. Of these, perhaps the most significant was the new found ability of individuals to maintain more independence of others in their hunting and trapping pursuits. Yet, aboriginal hunting techniques were still employed in collecting most game, including big game animals, and so co-operation remained a significant component of production.

As well, some changes occurred in the mobility of the people. To begin with, the advent of the trapline, the year-round availability of provisions at trading posts, and the introduction of dog team transport encouraged sedentarism to the extent that during the early 20th Century many families built permanent dwellings at fish lakes and along traplines. Further, in order to obtain supplies and trade furs, the men now made at least three trips to the trading posts during the winter seasons. Generally, these were in the fall, at Christmas, and at Easter. However, the women

and children most often did not accompany the men to the post but remained, as before, in the bush throughout the winter months. Finally, summer travel was probably expanded by the introduction of motors on canoes and skows. As well, now the seasonal round almost always included summer encampments at the trading posts rather than at the major lakes.

Finally, it would appear that the system of circulation of goods among the people of the region remained virtually unchanged by the new fur trade conditions. Despite the increased individualization in production and the introduction of money into the economy, distribution both within and between local groups remained based on the principle of mutual sharing. Thus, the main change in the distribution of the region was the great increase in the amount of trade between the native people and the traders. (Asch 1976a: 11-12)

For the applicants, the postwar period reflected the failures of passive acculturation and the opportunity for the pipeline and its associated jobs to play an active role in the Dene engagement with the white culture and economy. At the crux of Asch's critique of the analysis of the history and economy of the Dene offered by proponents of the pipeline is what he saw as their neglect of the impacts of factors beyond the control of the Dene on their lives. Describing the period as marked by "the operation of an economic relationship in which the native people receive immediate material well-being in exchange for long term

economic dependency” (Asch 1976a: 3), Asch focussed on the collapse of the market for furs and the increasing intervention of the government in Dene lives as the critical external factors reshaping the Indigenous culture.¹⁷ By linking parents’ government allowance checks, which provided necessary cash in the absence of revenues from furs, to the school attendance of their children, the intrusion of the government through social programs and transfer payments caused a reorganisation of the Dene economy as people shifted their activities to allow them to collect the much-needed cash income. The result was that the nuclear family emerged as the minimal social unit for much of the year (Asch 1976a: 15). The emphasis on school attendance and the resulting shift in residency patterns had serious implications for the transmission of Dene culture to the next generations, because “the younger children remained in the local communities for the whole year and then as they grew older went on to the major centers to continue their education. Thus, they often never experienced throughout the winter in the bush environment” (Asch 1976a: 17).

The decline in the value of fur and the subsequent impact on the Dene participation in the cash economy had other effects as well. Asch identified some of the implications of these changes on aspects of Dene ideology such as the

¹⁷ Asserting that “there have been and still are important co-ercive elements involved here,” Asch identified several of the factors which affected the ability of the Dene to continue unfettered their traditional practices:

[t]hese ... include the collapse of the fur trade which forced people to seek other sources of cash income; the location of schools in places far removed from bush collection centers; an education system that undervalued until recently traditional pursuits in its curriculum and sets its school terms in such a way as to deny young people the opportunity to spend winters in the bush to learn about hunting-trapping; and the introduction of exploration jobs that are extremely well-paid which help to skew the choice of young males away from bush pursuits — out of which little disposal [*sic*] income is derived — and towards high-paying wage labour — which provides large excesses. (Asch 1976a: 30)

emphasis on sharing and reciprocity:

In terms of distribution, the cash-trade goods economic sector had an ideology which seemed to take on feature both of our society and the traditional native one. On the one hand, the “production”, that is the “cash” itself, was not shared except to purchase those trade goods necessary to fill the needs of the nuclear family, and, indeed, any income generated by family members surplus to these was apparently considered as the private property of the income earner to be used either to purchase on an individual ownership basis personal consumer items such as portable radios, record players, musical instruments, and amplifiers; for personal travel; or, in some cases to be buried away somewhere as a useless thing. In rare instances, surplus money was “lent” (of course at no interest) to close relatives, but it was never shared. On the other hand, however, traditional trade goods, and especially food items, although now purchased with money rather than furs, were treated like bush resources and formed a significant part of the reciprocity system of distribution.

(Asch 1976a: 16-17)

In spite of these influences, Asch identified a strong and consistent resiliency in the Dene culture, as evidenced by the ongoing salience and utilisation of aspects of traditional culture:

As a result of this social and economic domination, Native people in the last twenty years have been under ever increasing pressure to abandon

their traditional way of life and replace it with institutions and values like ours. Yet, despite our conscious and unconscious efforts to effect this end, this process has not been completely successful and, indeed, many aspects of the traditional way of life survive and even flourish. The pressure cannot be discounted, it is being resisted in the sense that Native people, are not succumbing but rather are working to solve these problems which face them and regain control over their own lives. (Asch 1976a: 25-26)

This is not to say, however, that this resiliency was unlimited, and that the Dene could resist the attempts to undermine their society and culture indefinitely.

In fact, Asch identified the construction of a pipeline as yet another of these external constraints, and perhaps the most serious threat to the viability of their way of life the Dene had yet faced. Based on his analysis, Asch reached the conclusion that

it is very obvious that on the most basic level this development, at least in its present proposed form, merely represents a further elaboration on the theme of immediate material survival for long-term dependency; only this time the changes being considered appear to be on such a massive scale that they will inevitably produce a major re-orientation of the native economy away from the self-sufficient bush subsistence sector and towards an ever increasing dependence on the externally controlled trade good sector for survival. (Asch 1976a: 19-20)

Not only would the pipeline have a major impact on the territory of the Dene, but also the employment opportunities it promised northern residents would in Asch's view likely have an insidious effect on Dene culture:

In short, what I am saying is that in today's circumstances wage labor is often less of a solution than it is a problem — despite what the industry-sponsored studies say — for on the one hand it is acting as a subtle influence to change values away from mutual sharing and towards individualistic ones and on the other it is concentrating wealth in the hands of those who are least capable or willing to use it in socially useful ways, while at the same time helping to undermine the respect for others who perform socially more valuable labour such as that involved in bush collection. (Asch 1976a: 24)

Having laid out his theoretical position and the historical and ethnographic evidence that undergirded it, Asch then launched a direct attack on the social scientific data produced by consultants for the proponents and the analysis of it put forward by Hobart. Asch argued that

if it were indeed true that the economic value of traditional bush collection activities were decreasing, then it might be possible to argue that the “old ways” are dying. Yet, of all the claims made by the industry studies, this is the most groundless. Others ... will demonstrate with hard data the continuing importance of bush resources to native subsistence. I, as well,

can state that on the basis of my experience at Fort Wrigley during the winter of 1969-1970, they are important subsistence sources there too. However, what is most telling is that their own data, when interpreted properly, also helps to prove my contention and actually disproves theirs.

Why is this so? The central issue revolved around the question of value. Gemini North Ltd. computes the value of big game resources in terms of cash equivalents. ... Now, such a method of computing value might be valid if the hunters were entrepreneurs who killed game in order to resell it at a profit. But, of course, this is not the case. Rather, hunters hunt to fill certain subsistence needs of their own families. Only bush resources surplus to these needs are exchanged or given away usually to close relatives. This fact means that the prices quoted by Gemini North do not represent a market or exchange value. Rather, they can best be considered as a monetary symbol of the "reciprocity" system of distribution. Hence, their use as representations of value is patently false. (Asch 1976a: 32)

Asch also had an opportunity to respond to the analysis of his report by Hobart. The most crucial aspect of this was Asch's critique of Hobart's claim that the Dene as more acculturated than the Indigenous people of Alaska and Greenland, which also served as a trenchant critique of the evolutionary acculturation model of culture contact and change (cf Asch 1979):

I am not certain of the intent of this statement, but I fear that it may be

seen as implying that merely because Native people have adopted certain items of Western technology, they are losing their traditional values and replacing them with Western ones. Now, this position holds a venerable place in the history of social science. That, I suppose, is the best that can be said for it. A more contemporary view of the nature of the technological adaptations in changing values can be found in statements such as that of Derek Smith who says ... "technological change, which is very visible, should not be allowed to obscure the less visible but very important continuities in reliance upon traditional resources." Indeed, I would go one step further than that. Without modern hunting equipment, including rifles and snowmobiles, it would be virtually impossible for Native people to continue to pursue their traditional land-based subsistence activities in the contemporary situation: for in many cases they are located in areas far removed from traditional hunting grounds and, often, suffer from a lack of labour power. Therefore, it is the very existence of modern technology that enables Dene to cope with some of the disadvantages presented to them by our society. Thus, the point is clear: far from being mere indicators of "precipitous acculturation," items of Western technology adopted by Dene may in fact be one of the means by which they continue to maintain their traditional way of life in the new and trying circumstances we have presented to them. (Asch 1976c: 6-7)

In later work, Asch developed his analysis of the materials he prepared for

the MVPI. In an article originally presented at the first Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, he asserted that “in contrast to the evidence presented by industry, the Dene did not see themselves as in a period of transition from one way of life to another, but rather as continuing in the present their traditional life-style” (1982: 351), and he summarised the stance taken by the Dene in their work around the MVPI:

In sum, what the Dene are asserting is this. In spite of the erosion which exists in the present day, their society still has the potential and the will to develop in a manner which strengthens rather than diminishes their traditional institutions and values. What they require to effect such an end is merely the power to control their own destiny. Seen in this context, national self-determination becomes a key objective for, by removing the locus of decision-making away from others and returning it to the Dene themselves, it provides them with the means both to check the further erosion of their traditions and to base their future on a continuation with rather than a transition from their present way of life. (Asch 1982b: 354)

The Report

In his two-volume report based on the Inquiry hearings, *Northern Frontier*, *Northern Homeland*, Berger crafted a comprehensive analysis of the current situation in the North, the potential impacts of pipeline construction, and the conditions that he recommended be met before construction begin. In the first

volume, after assessing the proposals put forward by the gas companies and the describing the scientific data on the natural environment, he dedicated a chapter to a discussion of the impact of a pipeline on the cultures of the North. Berger confronted directly the differences in the evidence about the Indigenous economies presented by the pipeline proponents and the witnesses for the Dene:

The discrepancy between the evidence of Gemini North and that of the native people arises from different assumptions about the nature of trapping. To Gemini North, and to most white people, trapping is a job, much the same as any other job. So, determining the number of trappers is simply a matter of counting how many people during the period of the survey ran a trap line and sold furs. The native people, however, do not see trapping as job; it is, rather, a way of life based on the use of the land and its resources: running a trap line is but one of a number of seasonal activities. A trapper is, therefore, someone who sees himself as following that way of life. A man who is working for wages with a seismic exploration crew (and who would, therefore, enter Gemini North's figures as a wage employee) might still regard himself as a trapper (or hunter) because he intends to use part of his wages to buy a new snowmobile, a new boat, new traps or a new rifle. In his own eyes, therefore, he is working at "a job" to support "his way of life" as a trapper. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 100-101)

Berger took the experts for the proponents and the data from Gemini North upon which they based their economic analyses to task for allowing the actual reliance

of the Indigenous peoples on the land and its resources for relying upon southern preconceptions and assumptions to cloud their evidence. His condemnation of this was stern, and he totally rejected the proponents' depiction of the value of bush food to the Indigenous peoples in the region:

Our tendency to underestimate the vitality of native culture and the native economy is exemplified in the value that Gemini North said should be attributed to country food. They found that it accounted for less than five percent of the native income in the Mackenzie Valley and the Mackenzie Delta. How could they reach such a conclusion, when everywhere in the North there is evidence that people still rely heavily on country food? I think the main reason is that, long ago, we concluded that the native economy was dying, that the land could not sustain its native population, that the people had lost the skills they needed to live off the land, and even that they had lost the desire to do so.

The fact is, the native economy exists out of the sight of white people: out of sight, out of mind. Furthermore, the true extent of the native economy is difficult to measure; it cannot easily be reduced to statistical form. Gemini North attributed to country food only a "local exchange" value, that is, the price that one person would charge another for a commodity, say caribou, within a native community. This method of calculation ignores the fact that the distribution and exchange of country food takes place within the context of kinship obligations and family ties; it is nothing like an ordinary market transaction. So, if we are to understand

the real economic value of country food, a standard other than “local exchange” must be used. It is clear from the evidence that the standard that should be applied is the “replacement” value, that is, the amount it would cost a native person to buy from the local store the imported equivalent of the country food he now obtains from the bush and the barrens. It must be plain to anyone that if native people did not or could not obtain country food, they would have to buy meat and fish from the store to replace the food they get now from the land. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 101)

For Berger, in fact, this type of analysis represented only one part of a wider trend in southern conceptualisations of Indigenous people, and the North more generally. He took direct aim at the philosophical underpinnings of the proponents’ analysis, and rejects both that foundation and the conclusions drawn from it:

The attitude of many white people toward the North and native northerners is a thinly veiled evolutionary determinism: there will be greater industrial development in which the fittest will survive; the native people should not protest, but should rather prepare themselves for the challenge that this development will present. It is inevitable that their villages should cease to be native villages, for in this scheme, native villages are synonymous with regressive holdouts. “Progress” will create white towns, and the native people will have to become like whites if they are to survive. But this kind

determinism is a continuation of the worst features of northern history: southerners are once again insisting that a particular mode of life is the one and only way to social, economic and even moral well-being. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 89)

Recognising this tendency on the part of the proponents, and the role that these assumptions played in their analysis of contemporary Indigenous cultures and their adaptations to the presence of whites, Berger rejected the proponents' depiction of the Indigenous peoples as acculturated and accepted the proposition that the use of imported goods and technology could actually strengthen Indigenous cultures:

The evidence heard at the Inquiry has led me to conclude that the selective adoption of items of western technology by the Dene and the Inuit is, in fact, one of the most important means by which they continue to maintain their traditional way of life. These items, like other modern or southern elements in the native society, have become part of the life that native people value. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 111)

In drawing these conclusions about the nature of Indigenous connections and interactions with the southern culture, technology, and economies, Berger developed a novel analysis of the nature of the northern economy and the Indigenous role in it. He began by outlining the typical perception of the economy of the north:

The northern economy is often thought of as dual, consisting of a native sector and a white sector. This duality emphasizes the differences between the native way of life, with its long roots in the region's aboriginal past, and the white way of life, which represents the extension of the southern metropolis into the northern hinterland. The first is the traditional economy, based on renewable resources; the second is the industrial economy, based on the exploitation of the non-renewable resources of the frontier. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 121)

However, Berger was quick to point out that this perspective was not one held by the Indigenous people themselves, who saw the situation as more flexible and more complex:

In fact, the native people's own idea of traditional economic activity does not correspond to the idea of an economy that is dual in nature. Neither Dene nor Inuit regard the aboriginal past, when they were isolated from and independent of southerners, as their traditional life. Ever since the first days of the fur trade, they have willingly adopted new techniques and equipment, and some of the social practices that the white man brought to the North. These elements were amalgamated into the native economy, and have to some extent become integral to the way of life that the native people are now trying to maintain and defend. At every stage there have been the dual aspects to the northern economy: the native society, with its emphasis on hunting, fishing and trapping, has stood apart from the white

society that has gradually established itself in the North. This duality has never become fixed, and it continues to evolve. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 121)

In one sweep, Berger undermines both the evolutionary and acculturation aspects of the proponents' argument: tradition is current and malleable, contact is not assimilation, and industrial capitalism is not the only or even the best option for contemporary societies..

In fact, he argued that the northern economy actually consisted of four interconnected aspects, that is

subsistence, trading of renewable resource produce, local wage employment, and industrial wage employment. We can trace the history of the native economy along a spectrum that has subsistence activities at one end and industrial wage labour at the other. But we must bear in mind that overlapping or mixed economic forms are now integral to the native economy. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 121)

Clearly, for Berger, notions of “purity” or “authenticity” of Indigenous forms were not part of the definition of activities as Indigenous; the fact that they were performed or identified by Indigenous people as parts of their way of life was enough for them to fall under that category.¹⁸

¹⁸ This is not to say that Indigenous perceptions of the effects were uniform, or that opposition to the pipeline was unanimous amongst the Indigenous population of the region. As one observer has noted about Indigenous perspectives,

[l]ess than 5% of the people who testified in the community hearings spoke in favour of the pipeline. Most of those who did so were residents of towns such as Inuvik, Fort Smith and Fort Norman, which have a relatively long history of proximity to centres of wage labour opportunities and in which hunting and trapping are consequently less important

Berger drew a sensitive picture of the actual lived experiences of Indigenous peoples in their interactions with the industrial economy, recognising the agency that they exercised in making decisions about their precise investment in it at a given time. This depiction was in marked contrast to that offered by the applications in their evidence, which purported to show that the Indigenous peoples were largely passively swept up in a series of external developments which rendered them powerless. However, if the pipeline were to go ahead, for a variety of reasons there would be no guarantee that such a situation would continue; Berger wrote that

[i]n the native economy, the individual or the family combines production, exchange and consumption activities, at least during certain parts of the year. ... In the North today, the lives of many native families are based on an intricate economic mix. At certain times of the year they hunt and fish; at other times they work for wages, sometimes for the government, sometimes on highway construction, sometimes for the oil and gas industry. But if opportunities for wage employment expand and the pressures to take such work increase, the native economy may be completely transformed. Men will then leave the small communities to work at locations from which they cannot possibly maintain a mixed economic life. Many people have expressed the fear that, if the industrial economy comes to every settlement, if wage employment becomes the only way to make a living, then the native economy will be debased and

activities for some people. In the more isolated communities, such as Fort Good Hope and Old Crow, community opinion was unanimously opposed to the pipeline. (Abele 1983: 161-162)

overwhelmed. ... Absorption into the industrial economy will tend to undermine the mixed economic life that the native people have evolved during their contact with white society. Absorption into the industrial economy can only mean displacement of the native economy: migrant workers cannot also be hunters and trappers. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 122)

In the end, Berger's assessment of the Indigenous economy and the threat it faced from pipeline development was much more pragmatic than it was romantic; in this way, it mirrored Harvey Feit's summation of the value of Cree culture in *Kanatewat*. Berger concluded his discussion of the mixed economy by asserting that

[t]he native economy should not be preserved merely as a curiosity. The northern peoples have demonstrated before this Inquiry that their economy is not only a link with their past, but it is also the basis of their plans for the future. The continued viability of the native economy should be an objective of northern development, not its price. (Berger 1977: Vol.1, 122)

Clearly influenced by the materials on the Indigenous economies presented by Asch, Usher, and Rushforth, Berger seemed to try to strike a moderate position in his recommendations. In retrospect, Asch identified where their analyses of the northern economy converged and where they diverged, writing that

[b]roadly speaking, I am in complete agreement with Justice Berger's characterization of the contemporary "native economy." That is, I would assert that it is viable but weak. Furthermore, we both agree that a basic goal of Northern development must be the strengthening of that economy. Where we disagree fundamentally is on the remedies necessary to attain that goal. (Asch 1982a: 5)

Asch asserted that Berger's reliance on a staples-centred view of the economy led him to see a unitary economy shaped by the introduction of a new staple and the need for changes on a technical level to help the Dene react successfully. Against this, Asch argued that there were other, social and political, factors which affected Dene participation in the economy, and that when a mode of production analysis taking into account these other factors is applied to their situation it becomes apparent that there were actually two modes of production operating at the same time (Asch 1982a: 5). From Asch's perspective,

the weakness in the native economy today is not merely that it lacks capital and job opportunities but equally that its traditional institutions and values are being eroded by the very means Native people must use to obtain essential cash. Today, the bush subsistence mode is still dominant in the daily lives of most Native people but, even without the presence of large-scale non-renewable resource developments, is steadily losing this position as the need for cash drives Native people further and further into the institutional sphere of capitalism. (Asch 1982a: 6)

In this way, Berger and Asch reached similar conclusions along different analytical paths.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

There can be no doubt that the anthropological evidence and testimony in *Kanatewat* and the MVPI had a great impact on Canadian policy and political ideology concerning the viability of Indigenous foraging economies in the twentieth century. This success went some way to demonstrating the shortcomings of the thesis, then held by many, corresponding to the theory of the anthropological political economists, that the arrival of capitalism had brought an end to that way of life. This impact was felt immediately as the Governments of Quebec and Canada were forced to negotiate the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), and the Government of Canada reluctantly accepted Berger's recommendation of a ten-year moratorium on the construction of any Mackenzie Valley pipeline to give the Dene and Inuvialuit time to protect and further develop their foraging economies. Agreements reached between First Nations and the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, including the JBNQA and certain Dene agreements, subsequently provided a framework for Indigenous participation on wildlife management and other boards that deal with their hunting regimes, and more broadly the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that First Nations have an on-going right to hunt for subsistence.

These are substantive successes in the "real world" which can be attributed theoretically at least in part to the ability of the articulation of modes of production approach to clarify how foraging could exist within a world system dominated by capital — a position antithetical to that presumed in the political

economy approach. It is important to remember, however, that there were other anthropologists contributing to these later developments as well, such as Salisbury's analyses of which applied formalist economic theory to explain the rationality of Cree hunting practices and provide justification for their protection (e.g., Salisbury 2004[1979]).

Therefore, one might have thought that these findings would have made their way forcefully into the literature, but such is not the case. *Kanatewat* and the theoretical contributions of the anthropologists to it fared poorly in the anthropological literature on the Cree, even though both Adrian Tanner (1979) and Harvey Feit (1982) published works based on their research which explicated their theoretical positions not long after. However, in contrast to their testimony and its acceptance by Justice Malouf, Toby Morantz (2002) still adheres to the view that the ethnohistory of Cree-white relations is a single long narrative of the disintegration of Cree culture in the face of numerous disastrous encounters with Europeans and with the Canadian state. Hers is a study of an Indigenous group in the Stewardian mode; she depicts the Cree as if everything that Murphy and Steward predicted would occur actually happened to the Cree. She even manages to tie *Kanatewat* into her narrative of Cree victimhood, making her only mention of the case the exception that proves the rule in her discussion of the disastrous effects of white schooling on the Cree:

The highly effective challenge a group of young Crees mounted against the Quebec government's unilateral decision in the early 1970s to erect a massive hydroelectric dam on their territory indicates that for these

exceptional people residential school held some benefits. They could meet southern society on its own terms. This group ... had all attended the Moose Factory school in the late 1950s and later the school at Sault Ste Marie where they met other young Cree leaders from inland communities.... Thus, the residential schools benefited these budding leaders from different Cree communities by providing them with networks and contacts which were well used in the 1970s. This is not to mitigate the suffering they and all the other Cree students must have endured in such harsh, alien institutions. The Crees, as other Native Peoples across the country, are now beginning to grasp the extent of psychological injury done to them, a subject that only recently have people begun to articulate and analyse, much like the notion of women's equality that only came to the fore in the 1960s.... That the political leadership have looked, with hindsight, on the positive side of their experience should not mask the pain other Cree children suffered in coping with the loneliness, the strangeness, and above all the assault on their identity and self-esteem. (Morantz 2002: 219-220)

In her epilogue, she offers a standard chronology of the court case and negotiation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, presenting *Kanatewat* as simply the episode that forced the parties to negotiate (Morantz 2002: 252). For example, Toby Morantz's ethnohistory of Cree-white relations is a single long narrative of the disintegration of Cree culture in the face of

numerous disastrous encounters with Europeans and with the Canadian state. Hers is a study of a post-acculturation Indigenous group; her depiction of the Cree mirrors the worst-case scenario offered by the government about the collapse of the society should the project not go ahead.

It is possible to hypothesise that she used the data collected by Feit and Tanner without considering or mentioning the context in which they were collected or the interpretations the other scholars made of them because these latter factors would have contradicted her fundamental premise, as she writes, that “[i]n my mind’s eye I see the colonialism as octopoidal, inexorably enveloping all aspects of Cree society” (Morantz 2002: 9). Taken together, the work of Tanner and Feit demonstrate beyond question that this was fundamentally *not* the Cree experience of colonialism. Rather, they each take care to elucidate the ways in which the Cree were active participants in encounters with whites.

The more general anthropological historiography is somewhat better, in that it actually acknowledges the role that anthropologists played in the case. In the chapter on development in his textbook, *Applied Anthropology in Canada*, Edward Hedican, a student of Salisbury, writes at length about the Cree of the James Bay regions and their struggles against hydroelectric development while only mentioning the court case in passing: “The Cree had to claw their way through the courts to protect their rights” (Hedican 1995: 134). He draws two somewhat perplexing conclusions based on his analysis. First, with regard to the process that led to the negotiation of the JBNQA, he argues that it is impossible

to bridge the gaps between groups of people and their perceptions of the world:

The most obvious lesson here is that there are a variety of perceptions involved, but also that those perceptions become culturally structured. The perceptions are part of a cultural history that has had a subtle moulding effect on the way we perceive the changes happening in the world around us. There is also a cultural consistency to the way these development views are shaped, partly as a result of the “world view” of a people, but also as a result of their interaction with those immersed in other cultural traditions. With such a reality any “development” would appear doomed from the start, at least in the sense of satisfying the intentions of all the parties involved. (Hedican 1995: 134)

But, it seems that the expert witnesses for the Cree were able to make the Cree worldview “make sense” to the court. Perhaps the best example of this approach was Feit’s impassioned response to O’Reilly’s attempt to get him to place a monetary value on the Cree culture. There might be a divide between people and cultures, but that is not to say that there *must* be one or *always* will be one. This division or separation between people and cultures, as embodied in debates about the nature of development, lays the foundation for Hedican’s second conclusion, this one focussed specifically on anthropology’s role in such debates:

The difficulty for anthropology is how to reconcile these divergent views of development. The Cree and francophone views about how to develop

northern Quebec are pretty much diametrically opposed to one another. Who is right? Should anthropology support one perspective or another, or should it try to understand both views by placing them within the wider cultural contexts in which they originate? Of course this wider context should also acknowledge the fact that Nouveau-Quebec [sic] is more than a Cree-francophone question. Bay Street, Wall Street, the Inuit, and Greenpeace are all players in the matter, and none of these parties fall neatly on one or the other side of a good guy–bad guy line when it comes to making decisions on economic development issues.

Yet it is nonetheless true that the anthropologist, because of fieldwork in local communities, is apt to have considerable sympathy for the less powerful people who are the victims of mega-projects. This is particularly so when these projects undermine the economic subsistence base of a people whose livelihood is irreparably harmed by the self-interested decisions made in the corporate boardroom. However, the inability on the part of anthropologists to study up this corporate ladder in order to better understand why these decisions are made, makes them less effective allies of the local people. They would be more useful if they could provide an analysis of corporate decision-making, with a view to buttressing or accommodating the decisions in some way, so that deleterious effects on local communities are less harmful. (Hedican 1995: 155)

Here, Hedican adopts a position that with a little understanding of the political and corporate process the effects of development on Indigenous peoples can be mitigated. What he overlooks, at least in the case of the Cree, is that their legal right to occupy and use the land was affirmed by Justice Malouf's ruling.

Similarly, the historian Hans Carlson, in his article on the representation of nature in *Kanatewat* and the negotiations leading to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, argues from the perspective that there was a division between the Cree and the expert witnesses who testified on their behalf. He asserts that

Cree hunters came to [the court in] Montreal to save both their physical and conceptual landscape, but the words of interconnectedness that these men and women brought — that the hunter was inseparable from the landscape — were drowned beneath the flood of information that came after them. The picture of interconnectedness that developed in the courtroom, and which dominated the later understanding of the region, was not an interconnectedness of beings but a systematic understanding: an interconnectedness of parts that not only could, but should, be disassembled and studied. (Carlson 2004: 83-84)

Carlson represents the anthropologists working for the Cree as part of the colonising or dominating project of the whites, which clearly was not the case, and argues that the division between the Cree and their expert witnesses had epistemological and representational components:

[t]he key to understanding this case is coming to grips with the process of questioning and how it relates to the changes that later came to the Cree. Although the Cree wanted the land to be left as it had been, the questions that were asked and the answers that were recorded created a changed language of landscape and nature which made room for development in the region. Fundamental to this case is the idea that the Cree understood James Bay differently from all the experts called to testify. The Cree, however, were called on to answer a limited set of questions designed to show their physical dependency on the land, and this process elicited little of their cultural understanding of the land or of that dependency, beyond the search for food. Anthropologists, in contrast, were asked to articulate their understanding of Cree land use. Much of their testimony was concerned with quantifying and statistically analyzing Cree hunting. The physical scientists gave their opinion of the region as a biological system in need of study and management by man. In the end a picture of James Bay, framed in Western cultural assumptions, emerged from the court and, with the beginning of negotiations between Quebec and the Cree, entered the political arena. (Carlson 2004: 69-70)

However, in his analysis of the anthropological testimony, Carlson focuses on the details of the data collected and presented by Tanner and Feit, without stepping back to look at the bigger picture they were drawing, of the Cree connectedness to the land. Presentations regarding hunting statistics were not simply esoteric

abstractions of Cree existence, they pointed to the fact that for the Cree hunting was not simply the killing of animals to eat but rather the central principle around which Cree society is organised. To say that the anthropologists focussed on this aspect of the data at the expense of presenting actual Cree experience is misguided; everything that Feit and Tanner presented in court was selected in order to bolster the Cree's case that losing access to and control of their land was tantamount to genocide.

As is the case of the anthropological evidence in the James Bay case, the work done for the MVPI has yet to become part of the discipline's historiography. Intriguingly, scholars from other disciplines have taken up extensive analyses of the anthropological evidence, while anthropologists and researchers in allied fields have given it short shrift (e.g. Abel, who dealt with it in one paragraph of her history of the Dene since contact [2005: 252]). Even though they are not anthropologists, both Frances Abele (1983) and Peter Kulchyski (2005) have produced significant discussions of the articulations of mode of production theory that was applied to the Dene case.

Kulchyski's discussion of modes of production focuses on more theoretical considerations. He begins from the premise that "Dene and Inuit live on a fault line between two very distinct ways of life: that of the (post)modern, industrial, capitalist world and that of their traditional, subsistence, hunting world" (2005: 37). From there, he moves through a discussion of the work of Eric Wolf, repeating the assertion that the three modes of production identified by the latter do not represent an evolutionary schema, before offering his sole critique of Wolf,

in the realm of nomenclature:

What Wolfe [*sic*] called a kin-ordered mode I would prefer to designate as a gathering and hunting mode of production, characterized by nomadic and semi-nomadic bands where the primary producer has both access to the means of production and “ownership” of the products of her or his labour. Notably, there is no extraction of economic surplus, but rather systems of generalized reciprocity among gatherers and hunters; hence, even this category needs rethinking if it is to be deployed to understand gatherers and hunters. (Kulchyski 2005: 41)

This leads him to a more general critique of anthropological thinking about hunters and gatherers and issues of naming. Locating a fundamental difference between the capitalist mode and the tributary one it grew out of on the one hand and the hunting mode on the other, he argues that

both tributary and capitalist modes of production are social structured around class conflict; the gathering and hunting mode was effectively classless. One implication of this is that the word “traditional,” used by agriculturalists and by hunters, takes on quite a different resonance in these distinct contexts. Both involve traditional cultures in conflict and collusion with the dominant structures, but one set of traditional values, that of agriculturalists, involves social hierarchy and values directly related to those now in the ascendancy. When hunters from egalitarian cultures use the word “tradition,” it retains a critical charge.

Hence, the dynamic of conflict between gathering and hunting peoples and the capitalist mode of production is specific and remains largely undertheorized, to a great extent because of the elision that the concept of pre-capitalist social formations involves. ... The capitalist mode clearly grew out of the tributary mode and, as a result, even when it imposed itself on the tributary mode, it found social and other material structures that could accommodate its exigencies. The radicality of the difference between capitalism and gatherers and hunters made for an entirely different dynamic, one that continues to this day. (Kulchyski 2005: 41-42)

From this profound difference, Kulchyski motivates an ethical programme seeking to foster social justice through a process of understanding Indigenous cultures both for the contributions that non-Indigenous peoples can make to Indigenous struggles and for the insight into different ways of being potentially available to members of the dominant culture:

To each mode of production corresponds a mode of social being. This latter phrase may stand in as a working definition for the concept of culture. Reading the traces, in everyday community life in northern Canada, of a gathering and hunting mode of production involves attempting to interpret gestures, structures, stories, talk, objects, for what these may say or how they may point towards a radical alterity, an alterity that operates at the liminal margin of contemporary culture. The most

profound differences, which challenge the fundamental structures of being that organize dominant society and which demand operation of concepts suited to the widest horizon of interpretation, are etched in commonplace figures of speech and everyday habits. The work of decoding and interpreting these does not take place for its own sake but has a dual direction: to point towards existing alternative modes of being that may be adaptable to quite different social circumstances, including our own (who and where ever this “our” can be found), and to better understand and advance the specific struggles of particular Aboriginal peoples in the interest of furthering the project of social justice. (Kulchyski 2005: 42)

While this is a definite step forward from the Ricoeurian approach cited approvingly by Rabinow (1977), Kulchyski still runs the risk of objectifying Indigenous peoples if the emphasis on critique of the dominant society is allowed to dominate the social justice work.

In contrast to both the length and tone of Kulchyski’s discussion, Abele devotes an entire chapter of her dissertation to an examination of the articulation of modes of production debates, considering both the Marxist theory undergirding it and its specific application in the MVPI process. Because her emphasis is ultimately on issues of policy and Dene involvement in the political process, her analysis elides a sustained consideration of the more activist elements of representations of the Dene, both those put forward by the Dene themselves and those offered by the anthropologists working on their behalf.

Interested in the role of the Berger inquiry in the process of the development of political institutions in the Northwest Territories, Abele uses the MVPI debates about Dene society to understand contemporary shifts in Indigenous participation in and critiques of structures of the dominant society. In her analysis,

the Berger Inquiry marked a crucial juncture in the transformation of the indigenous mode of production in the Mackenzie Valley. Understanding the Inquiry process in this way makes comprehensible the unusual character of the Inquiry debates, and as well provides an opportunity to further our understanding of the nature of social transformations and political struggles. ... I will argue that the debate at its heart concerned one of the most fundamental questions of the modern age: what is the significance of the process by which the institutions of industrial capitalism extend their activities into land occupied by people who use the land in a different way, and who come only gradually to understand the implications of this process for their way of life? (Abele 1983: 3)

Abele found in the testimony of Dene and the expert witnesses testifying on their behalf a fertile ground for testing some Marxist theories about the nature of contact between capitalist and non-capitalist societies and about the process of cultural change. Based on the materials from the MVPI, and distinguishing these from the materials commonly used by Marx and his followers in crafting their analyses, she makes an argument that

successive shocks to the original domestic mode of production in the Mackenzie Valley gradually destroyed the fundamental stability of native societies, and launched a process of transformation to which we are still witness. However, the transformative process in the Mackenzie Valley has been different in major respects from the transformation in Europe studied by Marx, and further, the “resolution” of the process, at least as far as it can be determined today, is different as well: it is not the case that capitalist relations of production have overwhelmed or eradicated the original organization of productive activity. The situation in the North today is more complex than that, as is clear at least initially from an examination of the class position of northern native people. ... In the North, native people have never been landless — that is, they have never been denied the use of the land as the basis of productive activity — and they have never formed an important element in the northern wage labour force. In fact, native labour power has been integral to the accumulation of capital in only one historical period (during the heyday of the fur trade), and in this period the labour force was organized not by wage labour but by commodity exchange between formally independent direct producers and trading companies.

Thus, although capitalist relations of production have been in place in pockets in the North for decades (at mines and transportation centres for example), and although native people have on occasion joined the wage labour force, they have never been “proletarianized” as a group.

Although the original pre-contact social relations of the domestic mode of production no longer order Mackenzie Valley native life, neither are native people subject to the clear imperatives and choices which face wage labourers under capitalism. Northern native people today maintain a certain independence, and a claim to the land as a basis of productive activity, which is rooted in an alternative way of life which blends the purely traditional (subsistence hunting and fishing) with commercial commodity production (trapping), occasional wage labour, and dependence upon transfer payments from the state. (Abele 1983: 9-10)

There is much in these dense paragraphs to be unpacked. Most crucial is the tension between her assertion, at the beginning of the quoted material, that the “fundamental stability of native societies” was undermined, and her conclusion that the Dene still “maintain a certain independence” from the dominant social structure. Even though she does not cite Wolf’s work on either the theory of the articulations of modes of production or the specifics of the Dene encounter with capitalism — her anthropological theorising draws more on Marshall Sahlins’ notion of the household economy, from his *Stone Age Economics* — her analysis directly and completely undermines his representation of the effects of contact with capitalism on Dene social organisation. She does admit, however, that to a great degree “the political development of the Dene ... has occurred largely in response to attempts by the state to resolve the class position of northern native people by proletarianization” (Abele 1983: 10), that is, that the state is much

more comfortable dealing with the Indigenous peoples of the north as working-class citizens of an industrial economy — a category quite familiar to the dominant society — than as a somewhat nebulous group of people claiming special group rights. However, her analysis demonstrates that such a process of making the Dene into proletarians had not and likely could not succeed.

Her analysis leads Abele to the conclusion that the issue of northern development is much more complicated than the state and business interests would admit. In particular, the relationship between the Dene and southerners, as manifested through capitalist and colonialist projects, puts the lie to claims of assimilation and acculturation, largely due to the efforts of the Dene to resist the imposition of particular changes while making accommodations to developments which would help them maintain their communities. She concludes that

[p]erhaps the most striking feature of the transformation of Dene social relations over the last two centuries is the extent to which protracted contact with capitalist institutions failed to transform Dene social relations into the relations of production typical of capitalism. What were after all small societies organized in a way which made them highly vulnerable to disruption repeatedly encountered very powerful external pressures. They were changed by these influences, but not assimilated to the capitalist mode of production. Through the commercialization of productive activity in the fur trade, the incursions, famines, and epidemics of the mid-twentieth century, and despite attempts by the state to re-organize native societies along wage economy lines, native people in the Mackenzie

Valley maintained a non-capitalist relationship to the land, and a resistance to joining the wage labour force, which was vividly displayed in the rising of a people's movement in the Mackenzie Valley in the 1960s and 1970s, and in the testimony before the Berger Inquiry. (Abele 1983: 306-307).

However, the analyses by Abele and Kulchyski, although incomplete, are still significant because they represent two of the very few attempts to come to terms with the aspects of the MVPI materials related to the articulation of modes of production approach. They demonstrate how profound the gap in this aspect of the historiography actually is.

As the above discussion shows, clearly the articulation of modes of production approach has elicited more serious engagement from scholars outside anthropology than from within. There are many possible reasons for this, not the least of which likely concerns the relative weight given to scholarship developed in different countries. In closing, however, I wish to point one methodological move that I believe is salient to understanding why neither Ortner nor Roseberry paid sufficient attention to the manifest impact that the articulation of modes of production approach had in the "real world," and by implication as a critique of the political economy orientation. It is that although these scholars are committed to explaining the history of materialist anthropology in the 1970s in terms of its impact on the "real world," Ortner and Roseberry's method focuses only on the academic literature on the topic to the virtual exclusion of everything

else. This lacuna is quite apparent in Ortner's influential article, for other than citing a *New York Times* editorial by Wolf, she relied exclusively on academic literature to make her argument about theoretical trends and transitions. In this regard the Canadian academics whose work I have discussed are significantly underrepresented, for they did not direct much attention to disseminating their research through scholarly publications as through engagement in the public sphere. Indeed, with respect to the possibility of attracting attention to a wider audience, I believe that there are only three contributions to mention: Tanner's 1979 *Bringing Home Animals*, and the contributions by Feit and Asch to the volume *Politics and History in Band Society* (1982), edited by Eleanor Leacock and Richard Lee.¹⁹ In this regard, their output was much less than the political economists and, therefore, their research would have been overlooked by those focussing solely on academic literature.

What is important to note is that this gap in methodological completeness is typical of scholarship in the historiography of the discipline more generally, as can be illustrated by the work two seminal scholars. The first is George Stocking, who is the first to attempt a systematic historiography of anthropology, one which emerged in the context of a nascent American intellectual history (Higham 1954;

¹⁹ That is not to say that there were not any other academic contributions from participants in these cases. Richard Salisbury published numerous papers based on his experiences with the Cree, dealing with both the data he collected and the larger theoretical implications of such applied work (e.g., Salisbury 2004[1979], 2004[1983], 2004[1988]). Feit and Colin Scott, both students of Salisbury, write that he

often addressed audiences of government policy-makers, regional and Indigenous leaders, business people and the public. In these formulations, he elaborated the arguments of many of the growing Indigenous rights and self-governance movements around the world. But he carried these arguments to development agencies and corporations, with conclusions drawn from cross-cultural, social science research. He thus showed that research was equally critical for local peoples and macro-institutions. (Feit and Scott 2004: 233-234)

cf Seidman 1983). His pathbreaking essay, “On the Limits of ‘Presentism’ and ‘Historicism’ in the Historiography of the Human Sciences” (1968[1965]), first published in the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, lays out in relatively stark terms what he saw as the two options for describing and analysing a discipline’s history. The first is a “presentist” or “Whiggish” mode, one where the historian “reduces the mediating processes by which the totality of an historical past produces the totality of its consequent future to a search for the origins of certain present phenomena” (Stocking 1968[1965]: 3). The second is an “historicist” mode, one with “the essential quality of the commitment to the understanding of the past for its own sake” (Stocking 1968[1965]: 4).

The second is Regna Darnell, the most important of Stocking’s interlocutors for the historiography of the discipline. Her work subtly refashions the categories proposed by Stocking to offer another narrative understanding of the discipline’s history. Engaging explicitly with Stocking’s approach, Darnell’s goal is

to reclaim the history of anthropology so that it can serve anthropologists as a means of constructing contemporary professional identities upon continuity with the past. Presentism in this reflexive sense, choosing issues for historical attention because they still matter today, is fully commensurable with historicism. It is only when we fail to distinguish the contexts of our own theoretical positions from those of the past that presentism becomes a methodological millstone. (Darnell 2001: 1)

She goes on to offer a proudly internalist account of Americanist anthropological theory, tracing its development, through the connections between anthropologists, and its continuing influence and salience.

While Stocking and Darnell differ in their approaches, like Ortner and Roseberry their method relies on the academic literature to the exclusion of what otherwise might be called the “applied” work undertaken by anthropologists. I would argue that it is this omission that has had a profound impact on the historiography of the field, as evidenced by the paucity of discussion of the articulation of modes of production approach, where pioneering work is accomplished by those who focus more on the “real world” than on academic discourse. Such an approach is limited, not only because it omits relevant information, but also, more significantly, because it can provide misleading characterizations of very important moments in the history of the field. This dissertation has discussed one such moment where, as Nelson Graburn describes,

we can begin to delineate the post-Second World War character of Canadian anthropology, as shaped by the following factors: a significant presence of left-wing antiwar personnel; a style somewhat influenced by the francophone intellectually engaged tradition; and an involvement in the North and / or direct concern with Native activism. These influences have led a greater proportion of academic anthropologists into applied work, in their own (adopted) country, and often directly into the fray of social conflict. ... Such a group is unmatched by any similarly sized and high-

profile group south of the border, and the tradition seems to be continuing in the ensuing generations. (Graburn 2006: 251-252)

In short, the omission of “real world” anthropological interventions significantly distorts the discipline’s historiography. As is shown in the discussion of the articulation of modes of production and political economy approaches undertaken in this dissertation, insisting on a methodology that pays attention to applied research in “real world” contexts, in addition to the more “traditional” academic works of an individual and/or a theoretical approach, can only enrich our understanding of our discipline’s history.

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