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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Hudson's Bay Company and the Peace River Fur Trade, 1821-1850: District Management in an Age of Monopoly.

BY

DALLAS WOOD

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AND THE PEACE RIVER FUR TRADE, 1821-1850: DISTRICT MANAGEMENT IN AN AGE OF MONOPOLY submitted by DALLAS WOOD in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTERS OF ARTS in HISTORY.

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Date 31 Jan 1967

ABSTRACT

This study of the Hudson's Bay Company's management of the Peace River fur trade in the period 1821 to 1850 examines how the Company dealt with a number of management problems related to their monopoly on a local level. These problems included: the introduction of greater economy and efficiency in Company operations; the management of fur and game resources; and the introduction of a new order in Company-Indian relations in which the Company sought to exert a greater degree of control. The Company's difficulties in fulfilling their objectives in these areas on the Peace River were due to the overly optimistic planning and rigid ideas of George Simpson and the Company's London Committee, problems in the management structure of the Company which did not allow for rapid responses to changing conditions on the Peace River, and factors outside of the immediate control of the Company, such as epidemics and starvation among the Beaver Indians and freemen of the area and the problem of competition among various groups of Indians and freemen for the fur and game resources of the Peace River. The example of the Company's experience on the Peace River after 1821 suggests that the widely held view of the Company's post-1821 monopoly management as highly efficient and successful, due primarily to the changes brought about by the Company's chief agent in North America, Governor George Simpson, and the opportunities presented by the Company's monopoly in much of the Northern Department, requires some reconsideration.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this study to my family, especially my parents Raymond and Ann, and my wife, Jill, whose patience and support I can not begin to thank them enough for.

Dallas C. Wood

Toronto, Ontario

December, 1987

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INTRODUCTION

The management of Hudson's Bay Company operations in the Northern Department after 1821 has been interpreted by fur trade historians as highly successful. This success is measured primarily in the high levels of profit, £60,000 on average annually, and of dividends, ten to fifteen per cent annually, from 1821 to 1860.[1] These returns are usually accredited to two major factors: the Company's monopoly, and thus the lack of competition in much of the Northern Department, and secondly, the effective management of the Company's operations under George Simpson. A closer examination of the Peace River District within the Northern Department of the Hudson's Bay Company raises questions as to the success of the Company's management of the fur trade in the "golden age" following the "Coalition" in 1821.

The classic description of the Company's management of the Northern Department after 1821 is that of Harold Innis, from his The Fur Trade In Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History (New Haven, 1930).

> In the Northern Department the amalgamated Company began the task of reorganizing the trade. This department became an excellent example of the economics of monopoly in the fur trade. The personnel was efficiently organized. Expenses were eliminated in every possible direction and control of the supply of furs was adjusted to price levels. The supply of provisions and supplies was developed with reference to the lowest possible cost in the self-sufficiency of each post, of the departments, and of the organization as a whole. Goods were imported, distributed, and handled with the greatest possible economy. Seldom has

> there existed an instance in which monopoly control was exercised over a wide area through such a long period of history in a single industry as in the Northern Department from 1821 to 1869. ... The activities of the Hudson's Bay Company in the period 1821 to 1869 deserve an important place in the history of monopolies.[2]

While this period of Company activity has received a fair amount of attention since Harold Innis, the basic interpretation of the post-1821 situation as highly successful for the Company has remained relatively unchanged. Several historians of the fur trade have accepted this idea. John S. Galbraith refers to this period as "the halcyon era of the Great Monopoly" while to Glyndwr Williams it is the "Simpson Era".[3] The latter observes:

> Under Simpson the principles of sensible fur-trade management were clearly defined. They were those of an earlier period, before the worst excesses of cut-throat rivalry had brought disorder and extravagance to the scene. In areas safe from competition the emphasis was on controlled trapping, a paternal attitude to the Indians, and high profits.[4]

Michael Bliss argues that "in the heartland of its territories the Hudson's Bay Company now enjoyed a monopoly limited only by the natives' sharply diminished bargaining power."[5] The view of Arthur Lower is more qualified: he limits the period of "Company Empire" to 1821 to 1850.[6] To E.E. Rich the Company, after 1821, experienced "years of such prosperity as the Company had never yet known."[7] He writes:

> These [profits and dividends] reveal the competence of the closely integrated machine which Simpson had built up, and show that though there was room for two government enquiries as to the

> principles and practices of the trade, and although the moving frontier of settlement was close on the fur-trader's heels, methods and management were well matched to the task which faced the Company in the middle years of the nineteenth century.[8]

A similar opinion was held by A.S. Morton who describes the period to 1840 as being marked by "profound quiet" and "by an extraordinarily successful fur trade."[9]

More recent authors such as Daniel Francis and Gerald Friesen have continued to accept the general idea of the great success of the Company after 1821 in their survey histories. Francis argues that the Company, after 1821, "quickly began to exploit the advantages of a monopoly position" through restraint, conservation of fur resources and a new relationship with the Indians of the Northern Department.[10] Gerald Friesen observes that, despite a monopoly position, the Hudson's Bay Company still faced considerable problems.

> There were still opponents of the Company to be faced on the periphery of its territory: American and Canadian traders in the eastern forests of the continent; the American Fur Company south of the forty-ninth parallel in the western interior; and Americans and Russians along the Pacific coast. A huge surplus of trading personnel would have to be handled with tact once the duplicated effort was eliminated. The Indians, who had grown accustomed to high prices and plentiful gifts, would have to adjust to the new situation. Even the ecology of fur-bearing animals would have to be considered carefully because over-trapping had exhausted the fur and food resources of some areas. And, of course, fierce enemies, men who had harassed and fought and even killed for their Company's advantage, would now have to learn to live and work together as colleagues in a common cause. But if the tasks were considerable,

they were mastered with remarkable ease.[11]

This picture of the post-1821 management in the Northern Department as presented by the authors mentioned above is, to be fair, a highly generalized one. What is being addressed is the solving of large-scale problems in the huge expanse of the Northern Department. That the Company, as a business, was successful in its efforts is borne out by its healthy rate of returns on its investments. It is more difficult, however, to accept the idea of the "remarkable ease", to use Gerald Friesen's words, with which the Company dealt with its management problems.[12] The general view of the Company's post-1821 operations is based on three fundamental assumptions. The first assumption is the efficacy of the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly. The end of competition in much of the Northern Department is seen as paving the way for a new system of operation and the introduction of a number of policies, such as economy measures and fur conservation, previously difficult to implement in the face of competition. The Company is seen to have enjoyed more success in solving management problems in the Northern Department where it faced no direct competition in contrast to other areas, such as the Columbia Department, where there were American traders. In reference to the Northern Department A.S. Morton noted: "in all these Districts the fur trade had become stable, as was natural in fur areas wholly isolated and long since exploited."[13] The second assumption holds George Simpson's management of the Hudson's Bay Company's operations to be, for the most part, highly effective and largely responsible for the Company's

success. Under George Simpson the Company, it is argued, introduced effective management strategies that were aimed at cutting expenses and stabilizing fur and game supplies; they, they increased profits. Central to Simpson's efforts was a new relationship between the Company and the native inhabitants of the Northern Department in which the Company was able to exert greater control. The third assumption apparent in the assessments of the Hudson's Bay Company's activities in this area is that the Company's profits and dividends are an effective measure of its success.

In this study of the Hudson's Bay Company's management of the Peace River fur trade after 1821 an effort will be made to examine a number of selected management problems in the light of these assumptions. It will be argued here that, based on this analysis of Hudson's Bay Company management on the Peace River, the Company was not as effective in addressing management problems as the literature would indicate. The Company had only varying success in fulfilling its objectives for the Peace River: by 1850 it faced major problems in obtaining sufficient provisions and furs, coping with serious outbreaks of disease and starvation, and trying to reverse declining profits. In short, the Peace River fur trade, as a viable economic venture in the long term, was threatened. Clearly the Company's management strategies were open to question. The basic assumptions underlying the historical study of the post-1821 fur trade in the Northern Department become increasingly tenuous

in the case of the Peace River.

On closer examination of the Peace River fur trade in the generation following the signing of the deed poll all is not system and regularity. Policies were frequently contradictory and inflexible. With planning in the hands of George Simpson and the even more distant London Committee quick responses to new problems were not possible. Thus the long term goals for the region as a major source of furs and provisions proved unrealistic. But Simpson, the architect of these goals, did not change them for an extended length of time. While expenses were cut, ensuring a significant level of profit, the Hudson's Bay Company had difficulty in dealing with other major problems in the Peace River fur trade. Solutions to such problems as native depopulation from starvation and epidemics, fur and game depletion and control of Indian and freemen movements remained elusive. As for the establishment of a new relationship with the Indians and freemen the Company had mixed results. These various problems do not argue that the Peace River fur trade was unprofitable in the 1821 to 1850 period but the historical view that his was accomplished with "relative ease" as a result of the vision of George Simpson and the efficiency of the Company's management strategies has to be challenged.

In order to examine the Hudson's Bay Company's management of the Peace River fur trade three areas were selected for consideration; the introduction of measures of economy and efficiency, the policies of fur and game conservation and utilization, and the introduction

of a new "regime" in Company-Indian relations. Themes to be explored in reviewing these management problems include the role of George Simpson and the London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company in formulating regional plans, strategies and objectives; the management activities of Company employees at the local level; the importance of factors outside of the direct control of the Company, such as epidemics and climatic problems; and the dynamics of balancing Company interests and native concerns in the Peace River fur trade.

Before turning to a discussion of these issues it would be useful, first, to review the existing literature on the early history of the Peace River and the native groups who inhabited it, and second, to comment briefly on the environment and geography of the Peace River itself. The Peace River region, especially in the period 1821 to 1850, has not received much attention in terms of the history of the fur trade. Other than studies of Alexander Mackenzie's voyage to the Pacific Ocean via the Peace River in 1792-1793 and those on the development of the area in this century, the Peace River is seldom mentioned. Perhaps the best known consideration of the fur trade era on the Peace River is J.N. Wallace's The Wintering Partners on Peace River (Ottawa, 1929).[14] As his title suggests Wallace attempts to deal wit the penetration and exploitation of the Peace River in the period prior to 1821. The historical source material available for the study of this subject is not extensive. At the time of writing Wallace did not have access to documents currently available from the Hudson's Bay Company. The problem of disparate

sources is accentuated with Wallace's narrative approach and absence of analysis. His major focus is on the themes of exploration, the establishment of new posts, and the experiences of colorful personalities such as Peter Pond, Alexander Mackenzie and Archibald Norman McLeod. Indeed, Wallace saw these as the only subjects worthy of study in regards to the fur trade.

> The fur trade, in itself alone, seems no more worthy of study than many other commercial enterprises which few people would suggest as fit subjects for historical writing. Indeed, as far as permanent effect on the country goes, the actual commerce in furs was of small account except that it induced men to go to the west and supplied the necessary funds to exlpore and occupy new lands. In the whole series of events embraced by the fur trade the feature which seems most worthy of study at this late date is the strong play of human nature which was brought out.[15]

He does not consider the importance of the Peace River as a source of provisions for the rest of the North West Company's operations nor the role of the local Indians and freemen in this commercial scheme.

Contemporary with Wallace was the Reverend Alfred Garrioch who had been an Anglican missionary on the Peace River (1876-1886 and 1891-1893 at Fort Vermilion and 1886-1891 at Fort Dunvegan) and wrote two books based on his experiences. The first, entitled The Far and Furry North: A Story of Life and Love and Travel in the Days of the Hudson's Bay Company (Winnipeg), was published in 1925.[16] Garrioch, being reluctant to write directly of friends still living, wrote of his career on the Peace River in "the form of a

romance" with fictitious names for the characters.[17] His comments on the Peace River in the period when he was active there are of considerable interest. In particular he often writes of the Beaver Indians and their plight arising from the onslaught of disease. When he writes of the fur trade prior to the 1870's, however, his information and understanding are open to question. The same can be said of his second book, A Hatchet Mark in Duplicate (Toronto, 1929), published in 1929.[18] This took the form of an autobiography of Garrioch's years at Dunvegan. While of value for the late nineteenth century, Garrioch's information is often incorrect. For example, he dates the establishment of Dunvegan as 1800 rather than 1805, a mistake apparently picked up by Harold Innis in his The Fur Trade in Canada (Toronto, 1956).[19] Even Garrioch's information on his grandfather, Colin Campbell, is incorrect. He notes of Dunvegan:

> Twenty-five years after its establishment it was abandoned for one year. But in 1826 ... it was reopened by my grandfater, Colin Campbell, who the year previously had been promoted to the position of Chief Factor.[20]

In 1825 Dunvegan had been established for only twenty years. It was closed from 1825 until 1828 when it was reopened by Campbell, who never reached the rank of Chief Factor.[21]

Of greater value and trustworthiness are E.E. Rich's introductions to Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book (London, 1939), Journal of Occurrences in the Athabasca Department by George Simpson (London, 1938) and Simpson's 1828 Journey to the Columbia (London, 1947).[22] In the first Rich outlines the Hudson's Bay Company's efforts

to compete with the North West Company in the Athabasca Country, most of which took place on the Peace River, in the years 1815 to 1821. He emphasizes the role played by Colin Robertson in the planning and execution of the Company's campaign in winning control of the area. In the Journal of Occurrences and Simpson's 1828 Journey to the Columbia, Rich once again provides useful information on the Company's activities in the Athabasca and on the Peace River in the 1820's but switches the focus of his analysis to the actions of George Simpson. Simpson is seen as bringing in a new commercial era emphasizing "economy" and "recuperation". In addition to these volumes Rich had a brief discussion of the role of the Peace River in his History of the Hudson's Bay Company (London), published in 1958-9.[23]

Literature on the Beaver and the freemen who inhabited the Peace River in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is not extensive but a number of studies are worth noting. Hugh Brody's study of the contemporary Beaver, Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier (Vancouver and Toronto, 1981), has several chapters on the history of the Peace River and the Beaver but these are of a very general nature and emphasize developments in this century.[24] Brody places little importance on the era of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly prior to the 1870's and makes no significant effort to employ Company documents in his analysis.

Another recent study is Leonard Ugarenko's master's thesis

(York University, 1979) which concentrates on the role of the Beaver in the Peace River fur trade until 1850.[25] Only one chapter focuses on the period of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly. In this there is little discussion of the problems faced by the Company and how it attempted to deal with them. Events of great importance to the Beaver, such as periods of epidemics and starvation which greatly reduced their numbers and their effectiveness, are not considered. The author makes little use, if any, of the post journals of the Company beyond the 1820's and entirely neglects the available account books which are of major importance.

A much more valuable study of the role of the Beaver and freemen in the Peace River fur trade is the work of Gertrude (Trudy) Nicks.[26] Her studies offer a thorough discussion of the impact of the fur trade on the lifestyle of the Beaver and the local freemen. She concludes that the fur trade brought about a considerable number of changes for these groups including population displacement and changes in mortality patterns. In turn these changes reflected increasing reliance on the new technology and the determination of strategies appropriate to a reorientation towards trapping furs. Nicks' study, while focusing on the Indians and freemen of the Peace River, also discusses the activities of the Companies and is probably one of the best introductions to the subject. Nicks offers the only firm chronology for the establishment of the Peace River posts and is the only scholar to date to employ most of the available historical documents.

Two other authors who should be mentioned are Robin Ridington

and John W. Ives. While most of Ridington's work has focused on the contemporary Beaver he has useful discussions on the history of the Beaver's interaction with Europeans as well as their social oranization, economy and subsistence patterns.[27] Of particular interest to this study is an article written for B.C. Studies in 1979 in which he examines the Beaver's reaction to the Hudson's Bay Company after 1821.[28] In this he relies chiefly on the oral traditions of the Beaver in looking at possible changes in their subsistence activities, technology, social organization and, what he terms "changes of mind" ("changes in traditional ways of thinking to accommate ... innovations") resulting from participation in the fur trade.[29] John Ives' survey of the archaeological reconnaissance of the Peace River area and his recent Ph. D. dissertation, 'Northern Athapaskan Social and Economic Variability' (Alberta, 1985), offer interesting perspectives on the area's prehistory and the social structure and economy of the Beaver.[30]

From this brief survey of the literature on the Peace River fur trade it becomes apparent that there is a need for a scholarly consideration of the operations of the Company after 1821 to supplement the studies of the pre-1821 period and the involvement of the Beaver and the local freemen. As well there is a continuing need for more regional studies to supplement the general histories of the fur trade and the Hudson's Bay Company by authors such as Harold Innis, A.S. Morton and E.E. Rich. The format of a regional study has been well established and used frequently.[31]

Before examining the problems facing the Company on the Peace

after 1821 it would be useful to comment briefly on the environment and geography of the Peace River itself as well as the pre-1821 evolution of the fur trade there. The Peace River and its hinterlands are located in northern Alberta and northeastern British Columbia. The Peace River originates with the junction of the Parsnip and Finlay Rivers in the Rocky Mountains and flows across northern Alberta unti it enters the Slave River near Lake Athabasca, a distance of roughly 900 miles (see figures 1-3b).[32] As such it is part of the Mackenzie River system which empties into the Arctic Ocean. It was, in the fur trade era, readily navigable with the exception of the so-called 'Vermilion Chutes' on the lower river and 'Peace River Canyon' on the upper river.

The environment of the Peace River area in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was of a varied nature (see figure no. 2). The river passes through the Rocky Mountains in the west to lower and flatter country as one travels eastward towards Lake Athabasca. The dominant ecosystem was Boreal Forest but important "islands" of what could be termed 'aspen parkland' or 'prairie' existed in several locations. These areas consisted chiefly of grassland with groves of aspen and/or balsem poplar.[33] As such the Peace River provided a variety of environments which would have been of value to its native inhabitants and later serve as an attraction to European fur traders. The principal game animals were the wood bison, moose, elk and, on occasion, woodland caribou. Of these the most important was the moose which was found throughout the Peace River area. Second in value,

prior to its extinction in the 1830's, was the bison which favored the areas of parkland.[34] Elk and caribou were much less frequent. Other food sources included beaver, hare, rabbit, fish, wildfowl and a variety of berries.

When the first fur traders began to utilize these resources in the 1780's the principal Indian group they encountered was the Beaver. A branch of the Athapaskan-speaking Indians of the subarctic, the Beaver were nomadic hunter-gatherers. As a result of pressure from the westward-moving Cree they were forced to relocate from the Lesser Slave Lake region and the Athabasca River to the valley of the Peace River.[35] This process was complete by Alexander Mackenzie's arrival in 1792 and can probably be dated circa 1760-1780.[36] Trudy Nicks sees the Beaver of the early contact period as having a band social organization with band sizes of three to fifteen hunters and their families. In the late fall and in the winter months the Beaver formed smaller bands as food tended to be scarce and thus they found it necessary to travel more extensively over their hunting territory. In the late spring and summer their bands became larger to participate in communal activities.

In addition to the Beaver other groups were encountered on occasion by fur traders in the Peace River area. Of importance were the Sekani, apparently closely related to the Beaver, who inhabited the extreme upper Peace River. To the northwest were the Slavey or Slave Indians. From the area of Lake Athabasca came Chipewyans and to the south and east of the Peace River were Cree and Assiniboince. Members

of these groups were frequently found on the Peace after 1821. Also of interest was a small number of individuals termed 'freemen' (and later 'metis'). This community included "various Ojibwa (Saulteaux, Courteoreille, Bungee, Nippissing)) and Iroquois Indians" as well as former French Canadian employees of the North West and X. Y. Companies.[38] While not large in numbers the freemen, by 1821, were of great importance as suppiers of fur and game to the Hudson's Bay Company. Freemen from several locations, including Lesser Slave Lake, the Saskatchewan District, Fort Assiniboine and the Smoky River, travelled to the Peace after 1821 and added to those already present.

It was the attraction of the Peace's game resources that led to the earliest exploitation of the area by Europeans. According to Alexander Mackenzie the first visit to the Peace was by employees of the North West Company in 1786.[39] This and subsequent forays in the 1780's were limited to the lower river and were aimed at gathering provisions for Fort Chipewyan. Large scale exploitation of the Peace did not occur until after Mackenzie's famous overland trek to the Pacific in 1792-3 which revealed the Peace as a potentially rich source of furs and game. The remainder of ther period to 1821 can be subdivided into two sections. The first, 1793 to 1815, was one of North West Company monopoly. This Company was able to establish a range of posts on the Peace and fought off attempts by the Hudson's Bay and X. Y. Companies in the period 1802 to 1805 to found posts in the area. In 1815 this monopoly was challenged by the Hudson's Bay Company and the beginning of its so-called 'Athabasca Campaign', Its

early efforts from 1815 to 1818, under John Clarke and Francois Decoigne, were not successful in establishing a foothold in the area. It was until 1818 and the involvement of Colin Robertson that the Company was able to successfully winter on the river and construct posts. Over the period 1818 to 1821 the Company managed to build upon this beginning and take considerable trade away from its rival to the Coalition. With this Coalition of the two companies late in 1821, the Company inherited a monopoly of the Peace River fur trade. The problems of the previous decade and the Athabasca Campaign were replaced by new concerns. Company success on the Peace River called for a reconsideration of the nature of Company operations and an emphasis on economy, recuperation of fur and game resources and a new order in Company-Indian relations.

CHAPTER ONE: The Introduction of "Modern" Economic Management in the Peace River Fur Trade: The "New System"; "OEconomy" and Efficiency.

One of the key elements in the "Simpson Era" in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company was the introduction of a new system of operation which emphasized greatly reduced costs and more efficiency. This was to be accomplished through the elimination of surplus posts and staff, the relocation of posts to more efficient places, increased prices for trade goods, reductions in gifts and alcohol used in the trade process, an end to the giving of credit, and greater self-sufficiency at the local level. As noted earlier, Simpson is given considerable credit by fur trade historians for successfully introducing these changes in the Northern Department, thus allowing the Company to reap large profits. In the case of the Peace River the Company attempted to implement a wide range of economy and efficiency measures. The results, however, were mixed. The efforts in the areas of the standard of trade, gifts, alcohol and reductions in the numbers of staff and posts were generally successful. On the other hand, less success was achieved in reducing credit and increasing self-sufficiency. The end-product of these measures was, initially, greatly reduced costs and increased profits. By the 1840's, however, the Company's profit on the Peace River was in decline. Thus, while Simpson's efforts in reducing costs are usually seen as the major factor in making the Company highly profitable after 1821, in the case of the Peace River, these same measures were not as success-

ful. On the Peace River it would appear that the introduction of greater economy and efficiency was not in itself sufficient to ensure continuing high levels of profit.

The situation facing the Hudson's Bay Company after its merger with the North West Company in 1821 was how to realize the profits that sound "modern" management promised. Despite the end of competition with its rival, the Company still faced significant problems. There were new opponents to face from Canada and from the United States in the Columbia Department. Though the Company enjoyed a monopoly in much of the area under its control there were the problems of the enormous expenses left from the era of competition. At the same time declining fur returns reflected over-trapping during the heyday of competition. If the Company was to realize the region's promise it had to cut back on its operating expenses while maintaining reasonable fur returns on a long-term basis. In response to the situation the Company's Committee in London initiated policies aimed at greater "economy" and efficiency in the conduct of the trade and recuperation of fur resources in the areas under its control. These measures were to have a substantial impact on the Peace River fur trade. By 1821 the region had come to share problems common to other areas, high expenses and declining returns. The Company made a concerted effort to combat these problems and turn the Peace River into a highly profitable area.

It would be a mistake to see the measures taken after 1821 as something entirely new, although they would lead to considerable changes in areas such as Peace River. The London Committee had put an emphasis

on greater economy and efficiency since the introduction of the so-called 'retrenching system' in 1810. At that time the Company was clearly in a poor position. It was showing substantial losses, £19,000 in 1809 and £9,000 in 1810, while the North West Company was gaining large profits and clearly winning the competition.[1] The situation in 1810 was such that the Company had to retire from the fur trade altogether or alter its basic strategies. Under the influence of a group of men including Thomas Douglas (Lord Selkirk), his brother-in-law Andrew Wedderburn (later Colvile) and his wife's cousin John Halkett the Committee chose the latter course of action.[2] One of the aspects of the new system was greater economy and efficiency. The amounts of goods and supplies imported into the fur trade regions were to be greatly reduced and posts were encouraged to be more self-sufficient. Greater care was to be taken with accounts, "a meticulous scrutiny of accounts and paring down of extravagance was indeed at the heart of it."[3]

As such the 'retrenching system' can be seen as a practice arising out of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. As John Foster notes the Company had been established in the "age of exploration and the era of the first British Empire."[4] While the other great chartered Companies collapsed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Hudson's Bay Company was able to incorporate featrues of management techniques developed in the industrial factories to survive and later to flourish as a "modern" business concern.

> The Company revitalized itself to become as efficient and as energetic as any of the new industrial corporations. The retrenchment policy with its emphasis on the efficiency of process and the energetic pursuit of

objectives placed the Company in the forefront of metropolitan changes associated with the industrial revolution.[5]

This system of management was not introduced on the Peace River until the end of competition in 1821. The Company's Athabasca Campaign of 1815 to 1821 had been an effort aimed at capturing a region with little concern for "proper" management. The Company had chosen men like Colin Robertson and John Clarke to conduct the campaign. Both were products of the so called "old system". Robertson had long advocated an aggressive campaign to capture the Athabasca area from the North West Company but his ideas were rejected until 1815, when the Committee initiated the Athabasca Campaign. Clarke, a veteran of several years experience, had been convinced by Robertson to join the Hudson's Bay Company in 1814.[6] Both had long been involved in the conflict between the two Companies, having served on both sides of the dispute, and were no doubt acquainted with the tactics of competition. Their chief concern while operating on the Peace River was to win the "loyalty" of the local native populations, usually through generous treatment and low prices. Given that their opponents were offering terms equally generous, they had little choice if they wished to compete effectively.

There is a considerable contrast in Company operations on the Peace River between the pre-1821 period with its circumstances of competition and the post-1821 era. The direction the Company was to take into the third decade of the nineteenth century was heralded in the Committee's choice of George Simpson to run its operations in Athabasca. Simpson was well suited for the tasks confronting the Company in 1821. He came from an obscure background, born an illegitimate child of George Simpson

of Ross-shire, Scotland in 1786 or 1787.[7] As a youth he joined the London firm of Graham, Simpson and Wedderburn. This firm was engaged in the sugar business, involving trade with the West Indies. Simpson was employed as a clerk and probably received some training in accounting and business. In his years with this company he caught the notice of Andrew Wedderburn (Colvile as of 1814) who recruited him for service in the Hudson's Bay Company in 1820.[8] Simpson was sent by Colvile to Athabasca in 1820 to supervise the final stages of the Company's efforts there against the North West Company. Colvile had been unimpressed with Colin Robertson whom he saw as a very poor businessman who accumulated high expenses.[9] The Governor of the Northern Department, William Williams, was in a difficult situation as the North West Company had obtained warrants for his arrest, hence the need for Simpson. In his year in Athabasca Simpson did not disappoint his mentor, impressing him with how he managed the affairs of Athabasca and handled the pressures of competition. Following the Union of 1821 Simpson was chosen as Governor of the Northern Department and subsequently in 1826 was put in charge of both the Northern and Southern Departments. In choosing a relative novice like Simpson the Company passed over several well experienced employees such as Colin Robertson, John Clarke, and James Bird but who "had all shown glaring weaknesses" in terms of personality and management abilities.[10] They were, in general, men whose ways reflected those of the pre-industrial age with little interest or concern for "modern" attention to process. While effective in opposition they lacked the necessary administrative and business skills to manage the large areas now under the Company's control. They were further

tainted by their involvement in the conflict with the Nor' Westers. Simpson, on the other hand, had been involved in the struggle for only one year and as a result would be better positioned to soothe over the differences between former enemies. With his business and administrative background he was suited for managing the empire inherited by the Company. He had close connections to Colvile and the London Committee and had the same basic philosophy in regards to how the Company's operations were to be managed. In areas such as the Peace River where the Company had an effective monopoly Simpson's beloved "oeconomy" would become the major theme and the Company's operations would be put on a more rational basis. Profit through greater economy and an effort to sustain fur output would replace the economics of competition.

"OEconomy" as such would take several forms after 1821. What was to be replaced was a system based on competition. In 1821 the Company had large numbers of employees and posts which had become redundant. The wage load was to be reduced through cutting the number of employees through the closing of surplus posts and further reductions among the staff of the surviving establishments, as well as the wages of those employees who remained. The trading practices which had evolved in the era of competition were now seen by George Simpson and the London Committee as uneconomical. Due to competition prices did not reflect the ability of Indians and freemen to pay and the giving of gifts did not match the benefits which followed. In addition the Company's posts were notorious for failing to utilize all of the resources of their hinterlands. Such problems were compounded by the growing number of dependents living at the posts, chiefly in the form

of the wives and children of the Company's officers and servants. These problems had their origins in the age of rivalry prior to 1821. In theory, the monopoly acquired after 1821 by the Company offered the necessary opportunity to address them.

Simpson's 'Athabasca Journal', kept while he was stationed at Fort Wedderburn on Lake Athabasca in 1820-1821, and his subsequent 'Report on [the] Athabasca District', written in May of 1821, demonstrate that Simpson and the London Committee saw the problems of Peace River as rooted in the previous era.[11]

> This District under a proper system of judicious management would in a very short time defray all of its expenses, and yield handsome returns, but until this year [1820-1821] I cannot say that the business has been studied or conducted with any degree of attention.[12]

John Clarke had been responsible for the Athabasca Campaign from its inception in 1815 and had established Fort St. Mary's and Colvile House on the Peace River during the winter of 1818-1819. According to Simpson Clarke had been sent out "under the most auspicious prospects."[13] He was well equipped, in contrast to the North West Company men, and on good terms with the local Indians; but had failed to deliver the coup de grace to the Nor' Westers that others more capable would have. According to Simpson Clarke had given away his advantage through "extraordinary liberality" in allowing the Indians to "carouse for a length of time about the house" and his extravagance in gift giving.[14] Clarke managed returns of "1200 lbs" of Made Beaver (a unit of exchange which equaled the value of one prime beaver pelt or its equivalent in trade goods and/or other furs) but Simpson remarks that "had common

prudence and foresight been exercised the returns would have been very handsome."[15] Simpson maintained his dislike for Clarke for the duration of his career. He concludes his description of Clarke in his so-called 'Character Book' written in 1832 by noting that Clarke "is the most [illegible] disgrace to the 'fur trade'."[16]

Simpson was equally unimpressed with the efforts of Colin Robertson who took charge of the Peace River posts in 1819 to 1820. In his 'Report' Simpson describes him as a poor manager of men and supplies who allowed the Company's stores of goods and supplies to be depleted without proper recording and accounting. Simpson observes that "in short there never was such a disgraceful mess of confusion."[17] That the area yielded £1,500 of beaver (£300 more than in 1818-1819) under Robertson was due to the "assistance of good officers and Men."[18] The Company's prospects for the region, Simpson felt, were greatly improved during the 1820-1821 season as "fortunately for the Company's interests in Athabasca generally, but Peace River in particular ... Mr. Robertson did not return to the Country last fall."[19] Robertson's successor, Duncan Finlayson, is seen by Simpson as a considerable improvement as he was successful in "making a considerable reduction in the Expenditure, prevailed on the Indians to exert themselves, established a new post, in short acted fully up to his instructions."[20] The Peace River returns remained at £1,500 but apparently Simpson felt Finlayson had contributed more to the Company's interests by reducing expenses and by procuring provisions for the annual Athabasca brigade.[21]

Simpson also found room in his 'Report' to praise the North West Company's management of the Peace River. In particular, he was impressed

with their agricultural efforts at Dunvegan and Vermilion where they had "very extensive gardens, which are of the most essential importance to them."[22] In contrast, at the Hudson's Bay Company posts,

> cultivation had in a great measure been neglected, and the Gardens do not yet produce sufficient to afford occasional assistance to the Officer's Mess, whereas by a little attention they might be made to yield sufficient to lighten the consumption of animal food materially, and guard against the dangers of starvation.[23]

For the future Simpson suggested "I sincerely trust that every exertion will be used at all the Posts in Peace River ... to bring their Gardens to such perfection as will enable them to contribute very materially to the maintenance of the establishments, and assist Fort Wedderburn in cases of emergency."[24]

Simpson concluded his discussion of the Peace River posts as they stood in 1821 on an optimistic note.

> The Peace River District on the whole is greatly improved, and if any Gentleman possessing a tolerable notion of business and arrangement took the trouble of following up the OEconomical system this Season laid down, I am satisfied that it will in a very short time repay the losses incurred.[25]

In Simpson's mind the primary consideration in Peace River was a need to greatly reduce expenses. Subsequent changes included the reduction of the numbers of posts and employees (and their dependents), the relocation of inefficient posts, the encouragement of agriculture to achieve greater self-sufficiency at the Peace River posts, the establishment of a new standard of trade and the reduction of gifts, credit and alcohol to the Indians.

The most important change initiated after 1821 was the reduction

in the number of establishments and a corresponding reduction in manpower. Overall the Company cut back from a total of about 2,000 employees in 1821 to less than 700 in 1826. This eventually increased, however, to 1,140 in 1839 and to 1,565 in 1845 as the Company increased its activities. In the Northern Department alone there was a sixty per cent cut in the Company work force by 1826.[26] On the Peace River there were significant reductions to be made as the Company found itself with five major posts and one smaller establishment as well as a large contingent of men. There were the three major posts of North West Company origin: Vermilion, Dunvegan and St. John. Then there were the Hudson's Bay Company posts: Colvile House, Fort St. Mary's and Fort de Pinette (or Fort St. George). It is difficult to estimate how many men in total were employed at the posts. In the winter of 1819-1820 the Hudson's Bay Company had twelve men at Colvile House and 26 men at Fort St. Mary's.[27] Colin Robertson recommended to the London Committee that he needed 35 men for the Peace River posts for the winter of 1820-1821.[28] Simpson, in the spring of 1821, asked for a total of 80 servants (including 80 "tripmen" and 40 men at the Company's three posts) for the Company's Peace River operations.[29] If one supposes then a total of 25 to 40 men for the Company's winter establishments and a similar number for the North West Company's posts one had a total of 50 to 80 men at the time of the Coalition in 1821.

The Company felt that it was simply unnecessary to maintain six posts and a workforce of this size. The result was that by 1822 the number of posts was cut to three. These were the former North West Company posts: Vermilion on the lower Peace River, Dunvegan on the

upper Peace River and St. John on the extreme upper Peace River. This allowed for significant reductions in manpower. In 1822-1823 there were still 20 men employed at Vermilion and likely a similar number at Dunvegan and St. John. By the winter of 1826-1827, however, there were only eight men on the entire Peace River as Vermilion was the only post in operation. For the remainder of the period to 1850 the Peace River post journals suggest the number of men on the Peace River for the winter establishment varied from twelve to twenty.[30]

In addition to these reductions in manpower for the winter establishments an effort was made to cut the Company's summer contingents. By 1824 the Company had decided that it was necessary to cut their summer workforce on the Peace River, and the entire Athabasca Department, by one-fourth.[31] In the early 1820's the summer establishments on the Peace River consisted of twelve to fifteen men. This was reduced to three for the summers of 1825 to 1827 with the closing of Dunvegan. After the reopening of Dunvegan in 1828 the total for the summer contingent on the Peace River stood at five or six.[32]

As well as decreasing the burden of wages through cutting its workforce the Company wanted to reduce the expenses involved in the maintenance of their employee's families. The London Committee proposed making employees responsible for all expenses related to their families. Such a plan was strongly opposed by Company officers, on the grounds that it would be too expensive for men to maintain their families under the new system and that the families more than earned their keep through the duties they performed at the posts, and it was eventually dropped.[33] In its place the Council of the Northern

Department in 1824 passed a resolution that

> no Officer or Servant in the Companys [sic] service be hereafter allowed to take a woman without binding himself down to a reasonable provision for the maintenance of the women and children as on a fair and equitable principle may be considered necessary not only during their residence in the country but after departure hence ... .[34]

Such a resolution appears to have done little to discourage the keeping of families at the Peace River posts. There are several references to the existence of employees' families in the post journals and account books for Dunvegan and Vermilion for the period 1821 to 1850. The numbers involved were not large: averaging from three to seven women and six to ten children per post depending on the size of the Company workforce.[35] In terms of the costs involved in the maintenance of these families the evidence is minimal. The few references available suggest the cost of food for the families ranged from one-third to one-fifth of the total amount expended.[36] The significance of this expense is difficult to assess given the limited information on how much labour was supplied by the wives and children of the Company's servants at the Peace River posts. If the Peace River was typical the families would likely have engaged in a wide-range of activities including food gathering and preparation, production of clothing and footwear, fur dressing, assisting in the making of canoes, planting and harvesting of gardens, interpreting native languages, and going on the annual bridages.[37] Because of their skills, Sylvia Van Kirk argues, "native women came to be relied upon as an integral if unofficial part of the labour force."[38] Unfortunately, due to the nature of the documentation available for the Peace River, there are very few

references made to the economic role of the Indian wives and their children. Examples of this include their involvement in the planting and harvesting of gardens, bundling hay and making pemmican.[39] This is likely the result of journal writers neglecting "day-to-day" details of activities. In suggesting the curtailment of the practice of allowing the native wives and children of Company employees the Company was probably being short-sighted as a result of policy makers, such as the members of the London Committee, not being familiar with "in the field" operations. Given the important economic role of the families at the post level, any measures aimed at reducing their numbers may well have been detrimental to other Company management objectives such as the encouragement of agriculture and self-sufficiency. It is no wonder that efforts to remove families were opposed in the Northern Department.

As part of the Company's objective to reduce expenses through fewer posts, employees and dependents, a decision was made to move the post at Fort St. John to a site further upstream, to be called Rocky Mountain Portage. The reason for this move, according to Edward Smith, was "for the Accomodation of the Sekaine [Sekani] Indians that will resort to it."[40] The Sekani apparently disliked the journey from their territory on the extreme upper Peace River and the Finlay and Parsnip Rivers to St. John which was within the area controlled by the Beaver. The move to Rocky Mountain Portage, a distance of some 120 miles from Dunvegan and 40 miles from the former site of St. John would, in theory, remove some of the difficulties and tensions of the journey. The move was to be completed in the summer of 1823 or 1824.[41]

This move did not work out as the Company had planned. It was strongly resented by at least some of the local Beaver and freemen, resulting in the murder of Guy Hughes, a clerk, and four of his men at St. John in November of 1823. As a consequence the Company lost furs previously procured with ease from the Sekani. The abandonment of St. John, however, as well as the closing of Dunvegan for the period 1825 to 1828, resulted in a considerable savings for the Company in terms of manpower, wages and provisions. It also allowed, presumably, for the recuperation of the Peace River's fur resources.

A major aspect of the Company's drive to encourage economy at the Peace River posts was the goal of self-sufficiency. The full utilization of the Peace River's resources was to be means of achieving this objective. Indian hunters were to be hired to provide meat from large game animals as well as fish and fowl. Berries of various kinds were numerous in most years and were to be used to supplement the diet. Agriculture was to be pursued at the posts and livestock was to be kept. Not only were Dunvegan and Vermilion to produce enough provisions for their own operations, but they were to produce a surplus that could be sent to other areas such as New Caledonia and Fort Chipewyan. Through these means expenses for the Peace River were to be cut substantially.

An effort was made throughout the 1821 to 1850 period to produce large quantities of meat from large game animals, chiefly wood bison, moose and elk. Simpson, in 1821, had been very impressed with the amount of game available on the Peace and felt that this must be used to cut the costs of importing food supplies.[42] For much of the remainder of the period to 1850 the Peace River was expected to produce its own

meat supplies as well as provide for New Caledonia, Fort Chipewyan and the annual boat brigades. Unfortunately the resources of the area were such that there were several years when this was not possible. Over-hunting meant that the wood bison was virtually extinct after 1830 with the result that the posts had to depend heavily on moose and elk. Such a strong dependence was bound to result in problems. Shortages of game frequently developed. A number of factors such as animal disease, over-hunting and unseasonable weather could be responsible in any given year. Such shortages occurred most severely in 1820 to 1821, 1835, 1840 to 1843 and 1848 to 1850. In these times the Company had a difficult time providing for its own staff on the Peace, let alone supplying other areas. Fur returns were often poor in these years as the Beaver and freemen were unable to trap effectively in circumstances of starvation. Thus one can see that large game animals did not always provide a dependable food source.

Other sources of meat the Company atempted to utilize were fish, fowl and rabbits. The Peace River does not appear to have been a good source of fish as most of the references to fishing involve lakes and tributaries of the Peace such as the Boyer River (near Fort Vermilion). Simpson, in his 'Report' of 1821, was unhappy that no fisheries had to that time been established by the Company.

> Hitherto little attention has been paid to Fishing at the Post [Fort St. Mary's], I am however satisfied that if any exertation was used, it could not fail of success, as the Country is intersected with Rivers & Lakes, and the Waters throughout this Country are ascertained to be very productive.[43]

Echoing this sentiment Campbell wrote of the Vermilion area in 1823:

> Fish has been found in two of these lakes--the first being upon the south side of the River and about three days travelling from this where a fishery was to be made in the fall until 1820 when it failed. The fish in this lake were very small white fish. The next fish lake is upon the Caribou Mountains behind the late establishment of Colville H. and about 3 days march from the River and from this about 7 days. In this lake [are] very fine white fish ... a very good fishery may be made in the fall.[44]

Campbell did attempt to establish a fishery at the site in the Caribou Mountains but this failed after a brief trial.[45] Indeed it would appear that fish were but an occasional source of meat as there are few references to large numbers being caught. In 1840 "Gold Eye" were frequently caught by a Company employee from the Peace River at Vermilion. Later in 1843 several "carp" were taken from the Boyer River near Vermilion.[46] The most dependable sources of fish appears to have been the so-called "Fishing Lakes" near Dunvegan.[47] Nonetheless fish production was never great--certainly nothing like the production of meat from large game. One gets the impression that the Beaver and freemen expended much more effort on hunting rather than fishing. In the winter of 1842 to 1843 there was a severe shortage of all types of large game animals. In the face of this a number of Beaver and freemen wintered at the "Fishing Lakes" near Dunvegan in an attempt to stave off starvation. This suggests that they had a preference for moose and elk as food sources and fell back on fish only when there was a shortage of game.[48]

Other sources of meat that were utilized include rabbits, hares and fowl in the form of ducks, geese, swans and partridges. There are remarkably few references to the hunting of fowl other than totals of swan and geese "skins" and quills in account books. Colin Campbell

noted that near Vermilion the "country abounds in very small lakes with wild fowl in plenty spring and fall."[49] It is difficult to imagine that efforts would not have been made to hunt the large flocks of game birds that flew over the Peace River in their spring and fall migrations. Rabbits and hare were of lesser value than wild fowl in that their populations followed cyclical patterns of seven to ten years duration and could be hunted in large numbers only once or twice a decade.

In regards to agriculture George Simpson was highly impressed with the vegetable gardens of the North West Company in the Peace River valley. After 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company copied their example. The chief crop grown at Dunvegan and Vermilion was the potato. The amount grown near Vermilion was usually negligible. There, crop failures were recorded in 1827, 1840 and 1843 with the only substantial crops harvested in 1826 and in 1846.[50] The growing of potatoes at Dunvegan was much more successful, with but one recorded crop failure in 1848. Other recorded crops ranged from 245 kegs (nine gallons) in 1844 to 1,034 kegs in 1843.[51] Hopes that Dunvegan could produce enough to provide for other areas were futile. Only in 1825, when 20 kegs of potatoes were sent to Fort Chipewyan and Lesser Slave Lake, were potatoes to leave the Peace River.[52]

While potatoes were the major vegetable grown attempts were made with other crops such as turnips, onions and cabbages. Of greater importance was the Company's effort to raise grain crops such as wheat, barley and oats. That the Company had plans to grow large quantities of these crops is shown by the resolution of the Council of the Northern Department, a body consisting of Chief Traders and Factors which met

annually at York Factory each summer to make policy and arrangements, in 1833 that:

> In order to save the expense of transporting flour from the Depot to Athabasca or McKenzies River Districts it is [resolved]
> 16. That the Gentleman in charge of Posts in Peace River where the climate and soil are favorable to cultivation, be directed to devote their attention to that important object forthwith; as it is intended that those Districts shall depend on Peace River alone for their Flour after the close of Outfits 1834.[53]

This plan proved to be a failure and the resolution was not repeated in later years. At Vermilion the only recorded grain crops were in 1826 when ten kegs of barley and seven and a half kegs of wheat were harvested and in 1827 when only small amounts of wheat and barley were produced.[54] The results for Dunvegan were somewhat better but hardly spectacular. Barley and wheat were grown in 1828 with no result recorded. In 1829 the crop consisted of fourteen kegs of barley and one and a half kegs of wheat, in 1837 there was one keg of wheat and three kegs of barley and in 1838 both wheat and barley were planted but there was a crop failure. During the 1840's barley was grown regularly and threshed but no crop results are given. The only recorded wheat crop was in 1848.[55] As for the Company's planns to supply Athabasca and other areas with grain and flour there are few indications that anything other than a negligible amount was ever sent. The only recorded "exports" came in 1825 when thirteen kegs of barley were sent to Fort Chipewyan and in 1832-1833 when one keg of barley went to Lesser Slave Lake.[56]

As for the keeping of livestock on the Peace River the Company appears to have been more successul. Plans for the raising of live-stock stemmed from Simpson and former Nor' Wester Colin Campbell. The

North West Company apparently had as many as 100 to 150 horses at Dunvegan in 1820-1821.[57] Presumably these would have gone to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. Simpson was highly impressed with how the North West Company used horses as a means of hauling provisions which were often obtained several miles from the posts. He advocated the importation of horses in his 'Report' of 1821.

> Had we a sufficient number of Horses, there would not be the smallest danger of Starvation, and the number of people might be materially curtailed, as two or three Men could with the assistance of these useful animals supply the posts abundantly, whereas the present about Fifteen are constantly employed for that purpose ... .[58]

After 1821 the Company did keep a number of horses on the Peace River but never as many as the 100 to 150 suggested for the North West Company. The Company kept the largest numbers in the 1840's when there were "several" horses at Vermilion in 1840, 44 at Dunvegan in 1841-1842, 51 at Dunvegan in 1842-1844 and 41 at Dunvegan in 1849-1850.[59] In addition to horses other livestock on the Peace River included cattle and oxen. None were recorded for Vermilion but they were numerous at Dunvegan. A small herd of eight cattle arrived at Dunvegan in 1835 from the Saskatchewan District (via Lesser Slave Lake).[60] From this point to 1850 there appears to have been permanent herds of ten to twenty cattle and three to seven oxen.[61]

Aside from reductions in posts and manpower and increasing the efficiency of their operations at the remaining establishments, the Company continued to be concerned with economy in the conduct of the trade itself. Simpson and the London directors believed that prior to 1821 the Company had become very extravagant in its trading operations.

The price paid for furs, they argued, had been too high (favoring their native trading partners). The Company had provided generous credit to the Indians as well as gifts of food, tobacco and alcohol. In addition the Company placed a good deal of emphasis on the quality and the continuity of its supply of trade goods. The rivalry with the North West Company had necessitated these concerns and actions. On the Peace the Company quickly realized that success depended on the full co-operation of the Beaver. To wrest control of the Peace River, the Company felt that it had to "win the loyalty" of the Beaver, as it was seen, through favorable treatment in the form of better prices, gifts and credit. How this treatment was interpreted by the Beaver is difficult to determine as the documentation is written solely from a European perspective--one which tended to see the relationship between the Company and the Beaver in terms of "loyalty", the long-term allegiance of the Indians to the Company based on the trade of furs and provisions, and European economics. The possibility that the Beaver might be operating at least partly on the basis of non-European economic concepts, in which gifts and credit were seen as an expected way of cemeting the friendship between the Company and the Beaver, does not appear to have made much impression on the formation of policy.[62] Ridington argues that the Beaver saw their relationship with the Company in terms of reciprocity. He notes: "during the early decades of the trade, natives must have viewed the provision of European artifacts as a reciprocal obligation incurred by the whiteman because the Dunne-za [Beaver] had given up communal hunting in favour of a life organized around the requirements

of trapping."[63] The differences between the way the trade was perceived by the two sides were, according to Ridington, profound.

> The Company could easily elect to close down a particular post they considered uneconomic--as in the case of the Fort St. John post in 1821--while the natives could not easily give up their dependence on European artifacts and return to a way of life based on skills that were in decline. Native trappers had become dependent on white people whose actions were determined by distant economic and political circumstances, rather than on any sense of reciprocity with the natives who had supplied them with furs. For the natives, economic activity was embedded in moral values and expectations of reciprocity; for the whites, it was a creature of impersonal marketing and organizational forces.[64]

The possible problems arising from changes to the trade relationship after 1821 and how they might be interpreted from the Beaver perspective was not always completely appreciated by the Company. What George Simpson and the London Committee were chiefly concerned with was the large operating losses they had endured in areas like the Peace River prior to 1821. To them, the circumstances of monopoly after 1821 provided the opportunity to alter practices that they saw as uneconomical or inefficient, in order to establish a profitable trade.

In terms of the Company's 'Standard of Trade', there were a number of changes in the prices charged to the Beaver and freemen. In areas of the Northern Department where there had been heavy competition the Company had to lower its prices significantly. This had happened on the Peace River in the period from 1815 to 1821. Colin Robertson had been very distressed with the situation in 1819. Arriving at St. Mary's in October of that year he had noted:

> [a] ridiculous standard intended for the freemen and Iroquois had been handed me at this place ...

> I however have done away with it, and in lieu, substituted one, where the Company's interest has not been so much overlooked. I have likewise instructions with Mr. Lalonde [at Colvile House] not to trade any provisions with the Freemen, unless obliged by absolute necessity, their terms being so very extravagant.[65]

Later he wrote of trade with the Beaver that "Mr. Clark having reduced the Indian Standard so low, as to place me in a very awkward situation with the Natives, as some articles are really charged to them as to incur an actual loss if paid in Martins."[66] In 1820 Charles Thomas, stationed at St. Mary's, found the situation little improved. In his journal he pointed out that he had to agree to the prices demanded by the Beaver even if it meant lower profits. Thomas also had difficulty dealing with the local freemen as "they were promised much higher prices at Colville Ho [sic] and Lesser Slave Lake."[67] These prices created problems;

> these extravagant prices are not only thrown up to us by the Iroquois and Freemen, but by the Indians in general and threaten to leave us if we do not deal with them upon the same terms.[68]

By 1821 the Company faced a situation in which they had to improve their Standard of Trade.

When the Company gained its monopoly in 1821 it restored its usual Standard of Trade; it would pay less for furs in terms of trade goods. As early as 1822, however, the London Committee suggested to Simpson and the Council of the Northern Department that the new Standard should be changed.

> We think it proper to prevent the Indians from desponding, under the idea they will suffer from the total absense of competition among the traders, to amend the standard of trade, & to make it more

> favorable to them by 20 or 25 per cent on the present rate.[69]

It was hoped that liberal prices would make Indians groups more "industrious in hunting."[70] The loss in revenue would be offset by greater economy, elimination of gifts and reductions in credit.

The response of Simpson and the Council of the Northern Department was a cautious one. Simpson wrote in a letter to the Committee in 1822:

> In regard to the proposed reduction on the Standard of Trade, no question exists that it would be much to the interest of the concern and beneficial to the Indians could it be effected, if at the same time the system of giving presents and treats was abolished, but it will require a great length of time and much caution to bring such reform about.[71]

Clearly Simpson wanted to establish greater economy and better profits in the Northern Department before changing the Standard. It was not until 1826 that the proposed reduction of twenty to twenty-five per cent was introduced into the Peace River and Athabasca.[72]

Other changes in the Standard of Trade on the Peace River in the period 1821 to 1850 were related to the prices offered to freemen and the Company's conservation policies. Prior to 1821 the freemen (including Iroquois and Saulteaux) were given a more favorable Standard of Trade in which they had double the purchasing power of the Beaver.[73] After 1821 there are no references to a continuation of a special Standard for freemen; but there were suggestions that they were an unnecessary expense to the Company and should be removed from the Peace. The only group who appear to have received more favorable prices were the Chipewyan of Hay River, although the details are unknown. Colin Campbell noted that this particular practice had upset

the Beaver at Vermilion and recommended that it should be discontinued.[74]

Changes in the Standard of Trade were accompanied by alterations in other areas. The elimination of gifts and gratuities was repeated on several occasions in the directives of the Company to their officers during the 1820's. Gifts were seen as contributing to laziness and nonproductive behavior among the Indians. One of the major items, alcohol, was seen as destructive to native health and moral stature. The Committee's attitude to gifts was summarized in a letter to Simpson in 1822:

> the system of presents to Indians should be abandoned, except under very special circumstances ... . The best mode of encouraging the Indians to be industrious in hunting is to give them a liberal price for their furs and put an end to those presents and treats, which from opposition came to be given to them, whether they brought a good hunt and paid their debt or no[sic] ... .[75]

In response to the Committee Simpson accepted the idea in principle but was anxious as to how the Indians of the Northern Department would receive the change. In time the extensive giving of gifts would be greatly reduced in areas of no competition; but Simpson felt it would be necessary to continue giving gifts such as tobacco and ammunition.[76] Gifts were to be curtailed as much as possible but not eliminated. Gifts were still to be used in the ceremonies prior to the bi-annual trading sessions; tobacco would replace alcohol as a gift and ammunition as well as foodstuffs would be given in times of need.

The Peace River was no exception to this pattern. Prior to 1821 the Companies presented gifts to the Beaver to win their "loyalty". In 1819 Charles Thomas described a ceremony involving John Clarke and a group of Beaver at Fort St. Mary's. In exchange for their "loyalty"

to the Hudson's Bay Company Clarke made one of the Beaver a "Chief" and presented several gifts to him including a coat, a keg of rum, some tobacco and ammunition. In turn these were distributed by the "Chief" among his followers.[77] The same process was repeated in the 1819-1820 and 1820-1821 trading sessions. The importance of the Company's gifts in this period of intense competition cannot be understated. Charles Thomas, at Fort St. Mary's during the 1820-1821 season, found it very difficult to compete with the North West Company as he had few goods that could be used as gifts. He received a request from one group of Beaver that they would trade with the Company only on the condition that they were to be given "a supply of cloth and many other articles that we are not able to supply them with."[78] When the Outfit finally arrived Thomas gave liquor and tobacco to those Beaver who remained. By the next spring Thomas rewarded the "loyal" Beaver by choosing a new "Chief" and presenting him with a medal and liquor to be given to his followers.[79]

After 1821 the situation changed. By 1826 alcohol was no longer a gift item. Although gifts were still given each year they were not on the same scale as previously. An example is offered by Colin Campbell's description of trade with Beaver and Chipewyan at Vermilion in 1827.

> For their industry & good behaviour the Br [Beaver] Indian & Chipewyan Chief received each a clothing consisting of a Scarlet Laced Coat, a Corn Wool Hat & Cock Feather, a Corn stripped Cotton Shirt, a sm. Blk. silk skarf [sic] & a Pan Gurrah Trousers--their followers received presents according to the amount of their hunts.[80]

Thus although gifts were not totally eliminated they were limited;

whereas in the past the Beaver had received larger quantities, often from both Companies. In 1822 Edward Smith, the Chief Trader in charge of the Athabasca Department, informed the Company's staff that there was to be a reduction in the amount of gratuities. He added the qualification, however, that Indians were not to be turned away without sufficient supplies.[81] This instruction, with the qualification, was repeated by James Keith in 1824 and in 1826. By 1825 the Council of the Northern Department passed a Resolution that all Indians "be liberally supplied with the requisite necessaries particularly the article of ammunition whether they have the means of paying for it or not."[82] This resolution became part of the 'Standing Rules and Regulations' in 1828.

The supplying of necessities such as ammunition and food was the result of the Company's recognition of the harsh realities experienced by trapping Indians in the fur trade. If too many of its trading partners died from starvation or disease the trade would collapse.[83] This was certainly the situation on the Peace River. The Company attempted to aid the Beaver and freemen on several occasions when they faced food shortages or disease. In many instances, however, aid was beyond the means of the Company's employees at Dunvegan and Vermilion. The worst such period was 1848 to 1850 when the Company's men faced starvation themselves and were unable to aid the Beaver or freemen.[84]

The one aspect of the trade in which the Company was successful was the elimination of alcohol as a gift and as a trade item. In areas such as the Peace River where the Company faced no competition and the

local Indians and freemen had no other access to alcohol it was no longer a gift or trade item. The change was not without problems. By 1821 liquor had long been accepted as a trade item and as a gift to facilitate trade on the Peace River. The Beaver desired it. The Company on its part saw the eliminiation of alcohol as assisting its interests. The giving of alcohol as a gift did not fit with the new emphasis on economy and was felt to inhibit proper industrious behaviour. Alcohol was perceived as destructive to the health, physical and moral well-being of the Beaver and was thus a threat to the long-term survival of the Peace River fur trade. Alcohol also created problems for the Company's employees as they could be outnumbered by inebriated Indians or freemen. A final consideration was the Company's concern with criticism of its operations at home in Britain and the possibility of losing its charter.

One can see then that the problems confronting the Company were not only of a practical and business nature but also had ethical and political aspects. One of the major reasons that the Hudson's Bay Company had been granted the 'Licence for Exclusive Trade' in 1821 was to end the "debauching" of the Indians which had resulted from the years of competition.[85] The British Colonial Office encouraged the Company to remove alcohol as a part of the fur trade. Simpson gave sanction to this policy in a letter to the London Committee in 1822:

> I observe with much pleasure that an Act of Parliament has been passed granting to the parties to the recent arrangement the exclusive privilege of Trade in this Country and that it had become incumbent on your Honors to take measures for the amelioration of the condition of the Indians and for promoting their moral and religious improvement. The Council have given this subject their most serious consideration

> and I am authorised to say that nothing could afford every Member thereof more real satisfaction than being instrumental in carrying these desirable objects into effect. The first step towards it had already been adopted, that of diminishing the use of Spirituous Liquors, and they hope that in a short time it may in most parts of the Country be entirely given up ... .[86]

The elimination of alcohol must be seen then, John S. Galbraith suggests, as a means of improving the lifestyle of the Indians of the Northern Department.[87] By such policies the Company could avoid possible criticism of their treatment of natives and challenges to their charter.

It is important to note, however, that the humanitarian directives of the Committee had to be balanced with business concerns. In some areas the elimination of alcohol would hurt the Company. In areas where the Company faced stiff competition, such as in the Columbia Department, where it was highly dependent for provisions on Indians or where Indians could go elsewhere for liquor, "the policy was left as an aspiration rather than a reality."[88] On the Peace River the Company faced no such difficulties and therein lay the reason for its success. The Beaver had no means of obtaining alcohol other than through the Company. Acceptance of the Company's policy was their only course if they were to continue to participate in the fur trade. As a result the Company was able to deal with a number of problems created by alcohol.

In addition to the problems and concerns about the expense of giving large amounts of alcohol to the natives there was the problem of the effects of alcohol on the health of the Beaver. It is difficult to assess the real impact of alcohol on their physical well-being. It

seems apparent, however, that the Company's servants perceived that a health problem existed, one that was a threat to the success of the Peace River fur trade. Colin Robertson noted in the spring of 1820 that the "Natives of Peace" were "much addicted to spirituous liquors."[89] He saw this as a major factor in the short lifespan of the Beaver. This observation is echoed by George Simpson who observed during the winter of 1820 to 1821 that

> the Beaver Indians until of late held European articles in little estimation except such as become absolutely necessary to them ... they are now however excessively addicted to Spirituous Liquors which they use immoderately and unadulterated. Their constitutions are delicate, most probably owing to their want of attention to personal comfort and unrestrained use of ardent spirits ... .[90]

It is not surprising therefore that after 1821 Simpson and the London Committee would push for changes in the Company's attitude to alcohol. In areas such as the Peace River it was to be eliminated. This retreat from alcohol was a gradual one. In 1822 the Council of the Northern Department resolved

> [that] conformable to the directions of the Honble. Committee, all Chief Factors, Chief Traders & Chief Clerks in charge of Posts be directed to give Indians no more than one half of the quantity of Spirits they have been accustomed to receive in the way of presents, and that no furs be traded for that article.[91]

This was followed by a resolution in 1824 that "the use of Spirituous Liquors be gradually discontinued."[92] The reasons given were "to encourage industry, repress vice and inculcate morality."[93] This resolution was repeated in 1825 through 1827 and became a 'Standing Rule' in 1828. It remained in effect throughout the period under consideration.

The last phase of the retreat from alcohol was completed by 1826 when the Council of the Northern Department resolved that:

> In order gradually to wean the Indians all over the country from the use of Spirituous Liquors to which they are so much addicted ... . That none of that article, either for Trade, Sales or gratuitous indulgences to Servants or allowances to Officers be imported into English River, Athabasca or Mackenzie's River Districts for the Current Outfit, and that such deficiency be made up by a proportionate increase in the Supplies of ammunition and Tobacco.[94]

This approach would be followed until 1850.

The reaction of the Beaver to the complete withdrawal of alcohol in 1826 was one of initial disappointment and eventual reconciliation to the situation. There are few references to alcohol following 1826. Colin Campbell, at Vermilion in 1826, noted that the "Indians feel very much downcast to be without Liquor although they say very little."[95] He observed a few days later that they "are pretty well reconciled to the nonimportation of Liquor but not withstanding except [sic] that is not done away with entirely."[96] In 1827 Campbell recorded his relations with the leaders of the Beaver and Chipewyan then at Vermilion:

> Gave the two chiefs each of fathom Twist Tobacco to smoke with their friends as Liquor is done away with but they beg hard to get Liquor next year without however making use of any threats in the event of none being imported in the country. I gave them not the least hopes.[97]

At the fall trading session in 1827 the scene was repeated. "The Indians feel disappointed to see no liquor still they say very little, indeed none spoke about it except a few of the greatest drunkards."[98] Following this there are no references to demands for alcohol until 1838. At this time a Beaver "Chief" asked A. R. McLeod for liquor as

he had heard that the Beaver could get "liquor to their heart's content at the West end of the R. Mountain Portage [Rocky Mountain Portage on the Peace]."[99] McLeod questioned the validity of this claim and the "Chief" gave in by saying that he and the members of his band would try harder to provide provisions and furs. It is apparent that by this time alcohol had ceased to be a major issue among the Beaver and that the Company's efforts had been successful.

Less successful was the Company's objective of eliminating the granting of credit to its trading partners. Under this system, which had come into existence by the first half of the eighteenth century, the Indians were sold goods and equipment on credit in the fall when the annual Outfit arrived and were expected to have paid these debts by the following spring.[100] This was probably the method employed by the Companies on the Peace River prior to 1821. The Hudson's Bay Company continued the practice after 1821. What the Committee in London preferred was the so-called "ready barter" system in which goods would only be exchanged for furs or provisions. No credit would be involved.

The reasons for their desire to eliminate credit in the Northern Department appears to have been two-fold. First, the giving of credit involved a certain amount of financial risk. Indian and freeman traders had to be trusted to return to the same post in the following spring to repay their debts. In some areas it would be relatively easy for them to trade elsewhere and avoid their debts, at least for a time. This practice associated with credit was common in the era of competition. There were other problems such as who was liable for the debts of a hunter who died. Secondly, it was believed that credit did not

"encourage industry" among the Indians and freemen.[101] The elimination or at least a reduction of credit would make them produce more fur and provisions. The position of the London Committee in regards to credit in the Northern Department was clear. In 1822 they suggested to Simpson that it was unnecessary "to give such large credits as hitherto."[102] A similar suggestion was made in 1823.

While the Committee continued to press for the abolition of credit on these grounds, Simpson and the Company's employees in the Northern Department approached the idea with great care, realizing the possible problems it might create with their trading partners. They may have shared the general negative attitude towards credit held by the directors of the Company but they were concerned that credit was an accepted and essential aspect of the trade. It would be difficult to alter a practice that had likely been part of the Peace River fur trade since the arrival of the North West Company. They realized that there were likely to be years when the Beaver would be unable to obtain enough furs and/or provisions. If credit was to be eliminated this might result in greater hardship for the Beaver, eventually threatening the existence of the trade if they were to starve due to, for example, a lack of ammunition. There was the additional problem that the Beaver may have seen credit as more than a business transaction but rather as part of a reciprocal relationship between them and the Company. In this way credit, especially in times of extreme hardship due to a shortage of game or fur, was expected by the Beaver as an act of reciprocity. The result was that credit was not eliminated in many areas of the Northern Department including the Peace River. Certainly efforts

were made to reduce credit. These steps were more realistic in scope and promised greater success than abolition. Simpson came to this conclusion in an 1823 report to the Governor and the Committee:

> Heavy debts are ascertained to be injurious to the Trade and of little benefit to the Indians, it is therefore understood that no more shall be given than there is a reasonable prospect of being repaid at the same time every encouragement will be held out to them to renew their habits of Industry.[103]

This was followed by another reference in a letter to the Committee in 1823 in which Simpson points out that "in many parts of the country we cannot avoid giving credits, otherwise they can neither maintain themselves nor procure Furs for the Compy."[104]

Practice in the field meant careful accounts. If credit was given Indians would have to be restricted to one post at which they could receive credit and pay their debts. This practice was introduced as early as 1823 and became part of the 'Standing Rules and Regulations' in 1828. The 'Regulation' stated:

> [be it resolved] that a List of the Indians, half-breed and Freeman Trappers considered appertaining to each District be made out and settled on annually by the Gentleman in charge of neighbouring Districts, and that no hunts in payment of supplied advanced by one Post or District excepting, for account or on behalf of the place furnishing such supplies, and in all doubts cases that such matters be determined and settled on by the parties more nearly concerned, on a fair and liberal principle.[105]

By 1821 the giving of credit had become an established tradition and the trade system had become accommodated to it. The withdrawal of credit could mean significant changes which might not accord with the Company's interests. The introduction of a "ready barter" system would have to be based on the assumption that fur and game supplies would be

adequate every year. Such a system ignored the undependability of supplies and the periods of epidemics and starvation. In these circumstances credit often proved to be a necessity.

The situation on the Peace River dictated that while efforts would be made to reduce credit it would not be eliminated. The earliest reference to the post-1821 situation comes from George Simpson who noted that for the Athabasca District during the 1823-1824 season credit had been reduced.[106] He does not discuss the Peace River itself but implies that credit had, indeed, been lowered there as well. The available statistical information is highly uneven and is mainly for Dunvegan (see Table 1.1a-1.1b). It does suggest, however, that, based on figures from Outfits 1825 and 1826, the Chipewyan from Hay River and the freemen on the Peace River were entrusted with a higher level of credit than the Beaver. Whether they were considered more "trustworthy" in fulfilling the payment of their debts or if it is a case of their simply wanting more trade goods is not known.

As for the total amount of credit given on the Peace River the Company appears to have failed to improve the situation by 1850. The amounts given in 1843, 1850 and 1851 for Dunvegan alone exceed that of both Vermilion and Dunvegan for Outfits 1825 and 1826. This was probably the result of a long series of epidemics and periods of starvation. The situation from 1849 to 1852 was particularly severe with several deaths among the Beaver arising apparently from a shortage of game. Thus environmental factors, outside of the Company's control, appear to have thwarted its attempts to reduce credit.

It is difficult to make an assessment of the effectiveness of

the Company's economic measures without more information showing profits and losses for the Peace River posts. Those which are available (see Tables 1.2 tp 1.4) do suggest that the Peace River was highly profitable throughout much of the period to 1850. This was made possible through a considerable reduction in operation costs but was ultimately dependent on the yearly returns. In years with good returns profits could be quite substantial (as much as a 500 per cent return on expenses). But there were years, such as Outfit 1838, when returns were very poor; hence the "need" for sizeable profit margins in other years.

As noted earlier the Company's operations on the Peace in the period 1819 to 1821 showed a substantial loss (see Table 1.2). After 1821 the Company's returns increased significantly as it gained all of the Peace River's fur returns. At the same time operating expenses were cut gradually while economy measures were probably in full effect by 1826. Costs through Outfits 1821 to 1823 were probably high as the Company maintained three posts and nearly as many employees as in the pre-1821 period. If one assumes that operating costs for these years were comparable to the 1820-1821 total of over £4,900 then the Company would have been lucky to break even for Outfits 1821 and 1822 before showing a rewarding profit for Outfit 1823. The returns for Outfit 1821 were 68 packs (see Table 1.3); if one assigns each of these packs a value of roughly £70 (based on nineteen packs at Vermilion being worth £1,454.7.0 for Outfit 1822) this gives only £4,760, resulting in a small loss. In regards to Outfit 1822 the Peace River returns were slightly better, 73 packs. This would work out at

a small profit. For Outfit 1823 the returns amounted to over £7,300 (90 packs) which would have meant a profit in excess of £2,000. After Outfit 1823 expenses would have been considerably reduced as Fort St. John was closed. Dunvegan was subsequently abandoned for Outfits 1825 to 1827; thus operating expenses must have been very low. For Outfit 1825 a total of £576.7.5 is noted as [illegible] for trade.[107] The same figure for Outfit 1826 stood at £632.13.[illegible]. What is included these totals is not known but based on later figures they probably included the cost of the annual Outfits as well as the cost of provisioning the Company's only post, Vermilion. One would have to add other costs such as servants' wages and transportation which would likely increase costs over the £1,000 level. Against this the Company showed returns of over £5,000 for each of Outfits 1825 and 1826.[109] With such a high rate of profit it is not surprising that the Athabasca District as a whole produced significant profits in this period, a 60 per cent increase in returns for Outfit 1825 resulting in a profit of £13,000 and a further £1,500 increase for Outfit 1826.[110]

The re-establishment of Dunvegan for Outfit 1828 would have meant large increases in operating costs but also should have generated larger revenues. This was likely the case in Outfits 1828 to 1829, 1831 to 1832, 1834, 1836, 1844 and 1846 to 1847 (see Tables 1.3 and 1.4). Of interest is an 1832 post journal for Dunvegan. The author of this document estimated the costs for the winter operation at £845.12.7 which included £356.7.7 for the original Outfit, £204.0.0 for wages, £90.8.10 for the transportation of goods and £158.17.4 for additional trade goods received from other posts.[111] If one adds in the cost of

the summer establishment the total cost was in the area of £900 to £1,000. This represents a substantial reduction from the situation in 1819 to 1821 and strongly suggests that the Company was very successful in reducing the costs of operation on the Peace River. On the basis of the tentative assumption that each post on the Peace River cost £1,000 a year (after Outfit 1828) then it can be argued that the Peace River did give the Company a very substantial profit for the period 1821 to 1850. Profit was at a peak for Outfits 1824 to 1837. From Outfit 1838 onwards returns declined in terms of packs and the value of these packs, with the exception of Outfits 1844 and 1845 which were rich in beaver. The Company likely continued to make a reasonable profit for Outfits 1838 to 1849 but it was certainly reduced for Outfits 1838, 1842, 1848 and 1849.

This decline in the value of the Peace River in terms of profit is significant. It illustrates that the Company, while successful in lowering its operating costs from the pre-1821 era, was unable to sustain profit levels. While historians of this period have focused on the apparent success of George Simpson in creating a new economic system which cut costs through policies aimed at greater economy and efficiency, it is clear that on the Peace River success was limited. Credit was not eliminated, nor was the goal of total self-sufficiency every fully realized. The management of the Peace River, especially the formulation of objectives and strategies, was not as efficient as one might think from assessments of this period. Several measures, it could be argued, were incompatible. The elimination of the families of Company employees from Peace River, apparently a relatively cheap

and valuable labour force in many areas of Company operation, was hardly likely to help the Company's posts reach the goal of self-sufficiency. Another efficiency move, the relocation of St. John, created major difficulties (to be dealt with later) and threatened the Company's efforts in developing a new relationship with the Beaver. Similarly, changes to the trade process itself in the form of reductions in gifts and credit had the potential to create ill feeling on the part of the Beaver.

One has to look towards the system of policy formulation in the Hudson's Bay Company, in which objectives and methods originated primarily from the London Committee. Their lack of contact with local conditions and their pre-set ideas did not always allow for the most efficient measures. In addition, there was a lack of appreciation on the Company's part for the perspective of the Beaver and other groups of the Northern Department. As a result of their European economic perspective with its great emphasis on profit, the London directors frequently made policy decisions that proved to be mistakes. Plans such as the elimination of credit, which on the surface made economic sense and promised greater profits, were not always in touch with the realities of the fur trade and the views of the Indian trader. Besides these apparent difficulties in the structure of the Company management one also has to consider other problems, frequently overlooked, that the Company had to face after 1821, especially on the Peace River. These include fur and game conservation, the use of the Peace River's resources by groups of Indians and freemen other than the Beaver and difficulties facing the Beaver and Peace River freemen in the form of disease and starvation.

CHAPTER TWO: Resource Management on the Peace River: Fur and Game Conservation.

Equally important after 1821 as the problem of introducing economy and a profitable system of operation was resource management. This problem was two-fold in that there were concerns for both fur and game resources in the various districts of the Northern Department. In the case of beaver neither of the two great Companies prior to 1821 had been able, or willing, to institute a conservation policy. Unrestrained trapping of beaver and other furs with little consideration for the effect on future supplies was widespread. Indeed, both companies felt that to succeed they had to maximize fur returns in the short run. The policy of "trapping out" an area, the intentional exhaustion of an area by one of the Companies to prevent its use by the other, was frequently implemented. After 1821 there was a dramatic change in the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company, with a new emphasis on the conservation of fur resources in areas where there was no competition. E.E. Rich underlined the importance of this objective: "the prosperity and even the survival of the fur trade" depended on the ability of the Company's employees to convince their Indian and freemen trading partners to cut down their "production" of beaver.[1] The pre-1821 concern for maximizing production was to be replaced by a new scheme of a long-term sustained yield of furs.[2] The same could be said of the situation concerning game animals. Severe shortages were developing in many districts of

the Northern Department as a result of overhunting:

> not only were the local fur-bearing animals intensively trapped, but heavy hunting pressure was brought to bear on large game animals also as the Indians attempted to satisfy the mushrooming logistical requirements which this expansion of trading networks generated.[3]

Extensive efforts were needed to improve the situation.

In the case of the Peace River it is readily apparent that the Company's objectives in regards to resource management were unrealistic and its methods less than successful. These objectives and methods were formulated by the London Committee, George Simpson and the Council of the Northern Department. Their vision appears to have been overly optimistic about the quantity of fur and provisions the Peace River could produce. This optimism continued to survive despite poor results, especially in the failure of the Peace River to become a major source of provisions for the Athabasca and Mackenzie River districts. It shows a remarkable lack of understanding of local conditions or an unwillingness to change pre-set ideas on the part of policy makers or poor communications between the different levels of management in the Company. The end-product of optimism was a failure to solve problems which severely hurt the profit levels of the Peace. In attempting to utilize fully the resources of the area the Company faced a number of difficulties. George Simpson appears to have overestimated the potential of the area. He visited the Peace River in person in the 1820's but he appears to have imagined more potential fur and game than actually existed. As a result, the Company set provision quotas that were impossible to fill. As well, the Company's

plans did not take into account local conditions and problems, namely the natural population cycles of the area's animals and the movement of other Indian and freemen groups into the Peace River, both of which served to disrupt controlled hunting and trapping. Furthermore, the Company's ideas on conservation may have run counter to that of the Beaver. In coping with these problems the local managers, namely men like Colin Campbell, were to be particularly important. While Campbell had little impact on the formualtion of strategies aimed at better utilization of fur and game resources, he had a major role to play in ensuring that the local Beaver and freemen co-operated with the Company's directives. Equally important, he had to cope with the problems created by competition between the Beaver and other groups for the resources of the Peace River.

Unfortunately the subject of resource management in the fur trade has been neglected. Rich was certainly aware of its importance at the time of writing his History of the Hudson's Bay Company (London, 1958-9), devoting an entire chapter to the problem.[4] It is interesting to note, however, that in his shorter The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857 (Toronto, 1967) he does not deal with the subject at any length. Other major studies of the fur trade such as those by Harold Innis and A.S. Morton have only brief discussions on the efforts made by the Company to combat the problems of fur and game depletion. Morton when writing of fur conservation implies at one point that the Company's regulations were "difficult to live up to" but then goes on to say that "on the whole the policy of conservation was success-

ful."[5] More recent studies of the fur trade have dealt with resource management to a much greater extent. Arthur Ray, in his Indians in the Fur Trade (Toronto, 1974) and subsequent studies, has re-established the importance of this area of Company activity.[6] Others such as Charles Bishop, Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz have useful discussions of the topic in their regional studies.[7] They have attempted to explain the success (or lack of it) on the Company's part in terms of native reactions rather than Rich's preoccupation with the activities of the Company's employees. The nature of native attitudes to conservation has been the centre of considerable discussion since the publication of Calvin Martin's Keepers of the Game (Berkeley, 1978).[8]

As noted earlier the Company's goal for the Peace River was to maintain it as a source of furs and provisions. By 1850, however, the situation on the Peace River was one of lower production in both. The efforts of the Company to replenish the fur and game resources proved to be at best only partially successful. To explain this one has to take into account not only the resource base of the Peace River but also the nature of the Company's policies and the reaction of the Beaver to these measures. Most importantly one has to look at the role played by freemen and other Indian groups on the Peace River.

Looking first at the question of fur management the problem on the Peace River appears to have been, initially, not as severe as in other areas of the Northern Department. Nonetheless the long-term survival of a profitable trade on the Peace depended on the successful implementation of a conservation policy. This policy, reduced to its

basic elements, meant that the Company hoped to be able to determine which types of fur were to be trapped, how many of each type were to be taken and who would trap on the Peace River. This was a distinct move away from the pre-1821 emphasis on taking all available furs for immediate profit.[9] As with other Company plans the success of any fur management scheme depended primarily on obtaining the co-operation of its employees and the Beaver. There was also the added problem of coping with the activities and behaviour of freemen and other Indian groups who frequented the Peace River.

The problem of fur management in the Northern Department after 1821 was serious indeed. In many areas the years of heavy trapping had led to the severe depletion of fur, in particular beaver. The removal of the incentive to trap large numbers of beaver, provided by an end of the rivalry of the Companies, was not sufficient to correct the situation. Problems were evident in the Churchill area and the Winnipeg, Norway House, Island Lake, York, Nelson River, Cumberland and English River Districts.[10] George Simpson, in his 'Report to the Governor and Committee' of 1822, noted that

> [the] Country is without doubt in many parts exhausted in valuable Furs yet not to such a low ebb as has been generally supposed and by extending the Trade in some parts and nursing others our prospects are by no means unfavorable.[11]

Simpson was thus optimistic that the Company would be able to restore the fur resources of the Northern Department by promoting a "curtailment of trapping operations in overhunting districts" while extending operations into new areas such as the Mackenzie River District.[12]

There were other factors involved in the decline of the beaver in the Northern Department that were recognized after 1821. The technology and strategies of beaver trapping ha[illegible]e highly efficient with the use of steel traps and the employme[illegible] castorem, a glandular secretion of the beaver to which they were attracted. Prior to the introduction of the steel trap the chief methods of killing beaver among Indians of the subarctic meant that the hunters had to break into the beaver lodges and club the animals or use a form of "deadfall" trap or snare.[13] The combination of steel trap and castorem, dating to the 1790's, required less effort on the part of the hunter(s) and the trap, being metal, had the advantage of being sturdy and long lasting and did less damage to the fur of trapped animals.[14] At a time when the Company felt that too many beaver were being trapped and therefore prohibited the killing of cub beaver, the steel trap was seen as too efficient and allowed for "indiscriminate" trapping.[15] While the hunter could see the sex and age of the animals he killed by hand and select the most appropriate, this was not possible with steel traps. Simpson moved quickly to ban the trading of new traps in areas where the Company faced no competition.

> The use of Beaver Traps should have been prohibited long ago, they are the scourge of the Country and none will in future be given out except for new Districts exposed to opposition and frontier establishments.[16]

Another major reason for the decline in beaver populations was the custom of trapping beaver during the summer months and the killing of cub beaver. It appears that in many parts of the Northern Department

these were traditional practices. Beaver was an important food source for many Indian groups and cub beaver was often regarded as a delicacy.[17] In the pre-fur trade economy of subarctic Indians when beaver was more plentiful, the killing of cub beaver and summer hunting to obtain food was unlikely to have great impact on population levels. With the appearance of the fur trade and the intensive trapping of beaver, however, these practices were a serious threat to population levels. In his 'Report' for 1822 Simpson explained that

> [t]hroughout the Country the Indians have been discouraged from hunting Beaver and other valuable Fur animals during the Summer and it is hoped the Traders will be enabled to check it altogether this year as the Indians have been informed that Skins out of Season will not be taken off their hands. It will be difficult however to prevent the destruction of Cub Beaver in Winter as they not only do not like to run the risk of losing a Skin but value the meat as a very great delicacy.[18]

There was the additional problem of large numbers of Iroquois and other freemen. These individuals had been greatly valued for their trapping expertise during the era of competition but after 1821 they were regarded as a threat to a long-term profitable fur trade. They were blamed for overtrapping beaver and other fur-bearing animals. Prior to 1821 they were a much sought after source of beaver as they demonstrated their ability to trap animals intensively. After 1821 intensive hunting was regarded as destructive as it did not fit in with the new idea of controlled trapping to ensure population levels.

On the Peace River the situation in 1821 did not appear to be serious. George Simpson, who was enthusiastic concerning the area's

fur resources, noted that although some local areas had been exhausted the Peace River as a whole was promising. In regards to Fort St. Mary's in 1822 he noted:

> valuable furred animals are more numerous this Season, than they have been known for many years, they consist chiefly in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's of Beaver, Foxes, and Bears, indeed the Country may be pronounced rich.[19]

Of Colvile House on the lower Peace River he observed that "Beaver and the other valuable fur Bearing animals have become numerous in this neighbourhood of late years."[20] His only negative comment was in regards to the presence of Iroquois near Colvile House who had for several years been using a "poaching system of killing Male and Female, young and old promiscuously."[21] It is clear that Simpson expected the fur returns of the Peace river to improve substantially in the future.

> The Trade of this District previous to opposition might be computed at One Hundred to One Hundred and Twenty Packs and it would still produce that number, or even more, as the Country is Daily improving ... .[22]

In contrast to the optimism of Simpson was the view of the more experienced Chief Factor, Edward Smith, who was in charge of Fort Chipewyan. In the spring of 1822 Smith observed that the "Peace River appears exhausted and wants rest."[23] His reasons for this assessment were two-fold. He placed much of the blame on freemen, Iroquois and "roving Indians" who should, according to Smith, be driven out of the Peace River by force as "if they are allowed to remain it [the Peace River trade] never will recover."[24] A second problem was that the Beaver were killing large numbers of beaver in the spring months, a

practice that Smith felt must be curtailed.[25]

The same problems were observed by James Keith at Fort Chipewyan in 1824 to 1826. In his 'District Report' of 1824-1825 Keith argued that there was heavy trapping of beaver in spring and summer, a problem that would result in further exhaustion of beaver in an already depleted area.[26] This was still the case in 1826 when Keith reported that as many as one-third of the Peace River beaver were trapped in summer.[27] The contrast between the views of Simpson and those of Smith and Keith is of interest in that it reveals a major difference in thinking about the potential of the Peace as a source of fur. It is worth noting that Simpson's optimism was based on only one winter in Athabasca while Smith and Keith were far more familiar with local conditions. Given subsequent developments, such as the introduction of conservation measures on the Peace, it would appear that the assessments of Keith and Smith were more realistic than those of Simpson.

An examination of Company documents for the period 1822 to 1826 suggests that the amount of beaver available on the Peace River was in decline (see Table 2.1). Unfortunately one does not know the number of beaver taken prior to 1822 in order to develop a sense of long-term trends. The 1826 total of 3515 beaver marks only a marginal decline from the totals for 1822 to 1825 with the exception of 1823. There is evidence suggesting that the killing of cub beaver was substantial as reported by Smith and Keith. The figures supporting this idea are limited to only a few years at Fort Vermilion (1823 and 1826 to 1828) in which the beaver total was subdivided into "small" (cub) and "large"

beaver. In 1823 41 per cent of the beaver were classified as "small", probably cub beaver.[28] For 1826 36 per cent of the beaver for the entire Peace River were termed "small".[29] This supports the views of Smith and Keith that a large number of cub beaver were being trapped. This was a pattern maintained in 1827 (36 per cent) and in 1828 (39 per cent) for all of the Company's operations on the Peace.[30]

Up to 1826 the Company's approach to conservation was multi-fold. As already noted the trading of steel beaver traps had been banned. An effort was made to discourage trapping in areas that were considered exhausted and, subsequently, to encourage people to move into new areas. On the Peace this took the form of relocating Fort St. John to a new location at Rocky Mountain Portage.[31] The London Committee advocated a firmer stand on the conservation of beaver. In 1823 its members suggested to Simpson that

> the Indians ought to be discouraged from killing beaver and other valuable animals when young or in the breeding Season, and when practicable, considerable districts should be left unhunted for three or four years. By arrangements of this kind, the numbers will be encreased [sic] and the amount of trade will be both larger and more regular ... .[32]

The direct result of this suggestion was a resolution in 1824 that the hunting of beaver during the summer be discontinued and a further resolution in 1825 that the Indians of the Northern Department "be encouraged during the proper season to hunt small Furs throughout the Country."[33] A more drastic remedy, a quota system for beaver, was introduced in 1826. The London Committee was dissatisfied with the success of the conservation efforts to 1825 and resolved that stronger

measures be taken.

> If the same plan of obtaining as many Beaver as possible every year is pursued, which has been practised for so many years, the breed of animals will be extirpated, and as the posts must to a certain extent be maintained to preserve the Indians who could not now exist without ammunition and other necessaries the expenses cannot be curtailed in proportion to the returns ... . The proper mode of accomplishing the object is to resolve in Council that no district shall bring in more than the numbers prescribed for it.[34]

Accompanying this sentiment was the establishment of a "quota" for each of the districts where a problem existed, including the Athabasca. The method of calculating the quota was to determine an average beaver return for Outfits 1823 to 1825. For Athabasca the returns were:

Outfit	1823	7726
Outfit	1824	5479
Outfit	1825	6186[35]

This provided an average of 6463 2/5! A reduction of one-fifth was introduced which brough the quota to 5171.[36] For the sake of simplicity the Athabasca quota was set at 5000, a level which remained until 1841.[37]

The incompleteness of the returns (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2) render it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the Company's conservation efforts after 1826. The available returns do suggest, however, that these efforts were only partially successful. In general terms there were a number of trends in regards to beaver. In the short run there was a substantial decline in 1828 with only 2153 beaver compared to returns of over 3000 for the previous three years. After the re-opening of Dunvegan in the fall of 1829 the beaver returns for the Peace River

appear to have improved greatly although there are gaps in the documents. In 1833 4355 beaver were brought in, a figure close to the entire quota of 5000 for Athabasca. Subsequently there were no further beaver returns until 1841. The early 1840's showed very low returns. By the end of the period under consideration, however, the 1850-1851 season, one finds more substantial levels. These mid-century returns were likely not as high as the early 1820's but do indicate some restoration of the beaver on the Peace River.

These returns suggest that the Company's measures against the killing of cub beaver were unsuccessful. As noted earlier the trapping of cub beaver was a major problem in the years immediately after 1821. Despite the Company's regulations against the practice, it appears from the Dunvegan data to have continued (see Table 2.3). The only figure for Vermilion is for 1833 when 43 per cent were cub.[38] The proportion of cub beaver out of the total returns was never less than twenty per cent and in some years reached nearly fifty per cent. An interesting feature of these returns is that they provide limited support for the idea that the Beaver employed a resource strategy in which more cub beaver were taken in years when total beaver returns were low (see Tables 2.1-2.3). In the years of the highest proportion of cub beaver (1841, 1845 and 1846), when cub beaver was 40 to 46 per cent of the total beaver, returns of beaver were generally low. On the other hand, in 1833, a year of very high beaver returns, the proportion of cub beaver was only 22 per cent. If the Beaver did follow such a strategy the Company appears unable to have changed it through its measures.

The existence of this type of trapping strategy could go a long way towards explaining the partial failure of the Company's conservation plans. In these figures one sees no real improvement from the situation of the early 18[illegible]s. Of further interest is a reference to the trapping of beaver at Du[illegible] in 1841 during the summer months, another hunting strategy that had been prohibited by the London Committee.[39] The situation in 1841 was one of very low beaver returns (see Table 2.3), suggesting a possible need for summer trapping.

In addition to the possible existence of a beaver trapping strategy on the part of the Beaver which, given years of low beaver returns, allowed for greater trapping of cub beaver contrary to Company regulations, the Company faced other difficulties in implementing their beaver conservation policy. An obvious difficulty was that the beaver was a major food source for many Indians groups of the subarctic and remained so in the fur trade era.[40] Although there are no references to the consumption of beaver among the Beaver it would be surprising if they did not. In times of starvation when large game animals were scarce one would expect this food resource to be especially valuable. Given such situations the Beaver might ignore the Company's regulations in order to survive. Ray also argues that cub beaver was regarded as a delicacy among several Indian groups.[41]

The policy of encouraging the Beaver to switch from beaver to other "small" furs was hindered by the widely fluctuating population levels of these other animals.[42] The availability of other types of fur was dependant on such factors as climatic conditions and the

natural population cycles. Jack Ives, for example, argues that the hare and the lynx followed ten year cycles in northern Alberta, reaching population peaks roughly once a decade.[43] The hare was one of the chief food sources for the lynx, thus, not surprisingly, population rises among the hare were usually followed by upward swings in lynx numbers. Climatic conditions, such as cycles of wet years favouring the habitat of animals like the muskrat and beaver, and other natural phenomenon such as fires and disease could have a major impact on population levels. Given this they could not be depended upon to provide a stable source of furs. As already noted the first resolution encouraging the trapping of "small" furs was in 1825. To accomplish this the Company offered better prices for these furs. The Company's fur policy for the Peace River was revealed in a letter from William Stewart to Colin Campbell at Fort Vermilion in 1826. Campbell was to suggest to the Beaver of his post that they should trap "small" furs such as martens, silver foxes, muskrats, lynx and others. Stewart wrote:

> for effect I have advertised the Indians of this place that we'll take two Martens indiscriminately for a skin, 3 minks for 1 Skin & 4 skins for a Silver Fox but only 1 skin for a Cross Fox & you may do the same if you think it good policy with your Indians.[44]

Campbell apparently took this advice in the following season.[45]

The success of Stewart's suggestions as applied to the Peace River was mixed. The returns of the various types of "small" fur suggest that indeed there were great fluctuations in the different types of animals. They also point to the existence of hunting strategies

on the part of the Beaver who, just as they may have varied their trapping of cub beaver according to the total numbers of beaver taken, had to cope with these fluctuations. Such strategies, of course, were not necessarily incompatible with Company regulations.[46]

Muskrat returns varied widely (see Table 2.4). For Dunvegan alone returns ranged from zero in 1850 to a high of 3317 in 1846.[47] In the returns one sees frequent peaks and drops, as in the 1840's, suggesting possible major climatic and/or habitat changes. One can see correlation between beaver and muskrat levels in the few years when returns for each are available. In 1843, for example, when muskrat levels were at their highest those for beaver were very low. The situation in 1846 was not as dramatic but the same trend is evident. Conversely, in 1849 to 1850 when muskrat levels were almost non-existent beaver returns were generally improved. A possible explanation for this was that the Beaver employed a hunting strategy in which an effort was made to substitute muskrat and other "small" furs in years when beaver were not available.

The situation with martens was similar in that there was a wide distribution of returns. For Dunvegan the average was in the area of only 200 to 400 with exceptional results in 1822, 1845 and 1846 (see Table 2.5).[48] The range for Vermilion was equally spectacular with a low of 123 in 1833 and a high of 2627 in 1827.[49] As with muskrats one can see a trend in which returns of martens are generally higher in years beaver are low and vice versa. In 1833, for example, it was a good year for beaver but the Peace River recorded its lowest marten

total.[50] In 1845-1846 marten returns were exceptionally high at Dunvegan while those of beaver were only average.[51] One should not "over-interpret" such trends as the Beaver and other trappers were influenced by climatic factors as well as the population cycles which are characteristic of animals like muskrats and martens. The movement of Indian and freemen bands in pursuit of their own particular interests was also a factor.

Another of the suggested "small" furs that was to be encouraged was the lynx. Prior to the 1825 change in policy the highest result for lynx pelts on the Peace River was 56 in 1825 (see Table 2.6). After 1825 there was an immediate major increase in lynx taken. In contrast to 1827 when the total was 280 for the entire Peace River one finds 879 in 1828 and 962 in 1829. In the following year this fell to 742. This peak in population was followed by low points in 1833 and the early 1840's, with another peak in the late 1840's. Unfortunately there are several gaps in the documentation after 1830 which makes analysis difficult.

As for the other types of "small" furs it is equally difficult to determine real trends. The returns of fox were mixed with generally larger returns after 1825-1826 (see Table 2.7). There was little change in regards to the otter, an animal which was not found in large numbers on the Peace River. Its population appears to have undergone a decline after 1828 (see Table 2.8). Other major furs included bear, fishers and wolverines. After 1825-1826 each of these were trapped at a greater rate (see Tables 2.9 to 2.11). This suggests that the Beaver did make an effort to trap larger numbers of "small" furs in response to the

Company's conservation policies. This might be the case but one also has to consider the hunting strategies of the Beaver which were the result of the fluctuating population levels. What the historian needs is a more complete run of data, especially for the period prior to 1821, to see what picture of Beaver hunting strategies emerges. What is clear is that other animals were not available in large enough numbers each year to enable the Beaver to substitute them for beaver. The situation appears to have been very much a "feast or famine" circumstance for the Beaver. In suitable years, when wet years and/or population peaks favoured beaver and muskrat numbers, they faced fewer problems in meeting their debt obligations and obtaining the goods they required. In other years they faced considerable problems.

In addition to its "small" fur policy, the closing of Dunvegan and St. John in the 1820's provided the Company with an additional means to restore the fur resources of the Peace River.[52] The anticipated advantages of this move did not materialize. Rather it created a new problem in resource management. It appears that the Beaver of the upper Peace river trapped and hunted animals in the vicinity of Vermilion (on the lower Peace) in the period 1825 to 1828 when Dunvegan was closed. Colin Campbell saw the nature of the problem in 1827 when he noted that

> [the] disadvantages are undoubtably [sic] that the Natives must all resort to one establishment where they will exhaust the country & and in a year or two, not be able to subsist let alone be able to pay for their absolute necessities.[53]

He strongly advocated the re-establishment of Dunvegan and another post

on the upper Peace River to take the burden off Vermilion.

By far the largest obstacle to the Company's conservation plans was the migration of freemen and other Indian groups into the Peace River country in search of fur and provisions. The situation was complex. As noted earlier freemen were present on the Peace as early as the 1790's and others came later from the Saskatchewan District, Lesser Slave Lake, the Athabasca River and the Smoky River. Cree came from the Saskatchewan and Lesser Slave Lake areas. Chipewyan from Lake Athabasca often hunted on the Peace and in the 1820's some were established in the Hay River, trading at Fort Vermilion. Slave Indians from the Liard River came south to the Peace River.

The problems created by these groups were considerable. While it is debatable how the Beaver, as a group, regarded the concept of territory, it would appear in the following examples that they resented the utilization of the resources of the Peace by other groups. One should not think of the areas inhabited by the Beaver as having rigid boundaries; one sees instead some overlap in land use as one might expect from nomadic peoples who had to utilize a wide variety of resources over a large area. The band structure also meant that one could find small bands distributed widely in certain times of the year. Ridington rejects the idea of hunting and trapping territories "owned" by individuals but argues that larger groups among the Beaver, such as the groups which formed for summer activities, may have had "definite territorial rights".[54] Nicks prefers the term "neighbourhood", defined as "regions over which segments of the native population

were in close, if irregular, interaction."[55] For the Peace River she identifies two neighbourhoods: the "Upper Peace River" and the "Lower Peace River".[56] The Hudson's Bay Company's attitude to the concept of territory is also important to consider. Despite what the Beaver and other groups might have thought about the idea of clearly defined territories the Company actively sought to control the movement and associated activities of the Indians and freemen of the Northern Department. In the case of the Peace River the Company tried to restrain other groups from visiting the area as part of their efforts to maintain its fur and game resources.

The situation in regards to other groups on the Peace River was already a matter of concern for the Company by the early 1820's. Much of this concern was directed towards the freemen of various origins who visited the area. One can see a real change in their relationship with the Company. Prior to 1821 they were viewed as a positive element in the Company's operations as they were excellent fur and game hunters. In this way they were well suited to the age of competition. Following 1821 these same qualities were seen as a threat to the fur and game resources of the Peace River. The situation was aggravated in the 1820's by the Company's policy of sending surplus Canadians and Iroquois to the Peace River. Colin Campbell saw this as a distinct problem in 1823.

> Surely sending Iroquois to Peace River is no act of economy as they have been exceedingly troublesome and Expensive to us since last Fall ... . Peace River cannot afford to support so large a body of people.[57]

The limited fur and game resources of the area were to be put under further stress as a result of this policy. Its negative effect was

clearly recognized by Smith and Keith, as noted earlier, who complained bitterly in the mid-1820's. Both placed much of the blame for fur and game exhaustion on freemen who were "over-running" the Peace and Smoky Rivers.[58]

Despite the suggestions of Smith and Keith in 1825-1826 that freemen should be removed from the Peace it is quite apparent that whatever steps were taken were not successful. In the summer of 1826 a number of freemen from Lesser Slave Lake were trading at Vermilion. Colin Campbell strongly discouraged them from returning.[59] Freemen and Cree from Lesser Slave Lake were present on the Peace in 1827. They engaged in hunting but made no attempt to trade at the Company's establishments.[60]

Beginning in 1828 there are several references to freemen from Fort Assiniboine on the Athabasca River hunting on the Peace. In the summer of that year they were on the Smoky River and asked Colin Campbell at Vermilion if they could trade there in the future, a suggestion rejected by Campbell.[61] In 1829 they returned to hunt and apparently had a major impact on the Peace River. Campbell observed in February of 1829:

> Accounts from another party of B. Indians [Beaver] they have done very little owing to the Fort Assiniboine Iroquois having exhausted the country in summer of Beaver where they expected to make great Hunts. They saw five Iroquois who said they were directed to kill Beaver at all seasons.[62]

There were further complaints about the freemen in the spring when the Beaver came to Dunvegan with their winter hunts. In the summer Fort Assiniboine Iroquois were engaged in hunting and trapping on the Peace.

Campbell noted that the Beaver were trapping beaver in the summer contrary to Company regulations as "if they do not kill it [beaver] the Iroquois of Fort Assiniboine will be before them."[63]

There are no further references to the presence of Fort Assiniboine Iroquois on the Peace but by 1831 Campbell reported that a party of Iroquois from the Saskatchewan, consisting of five men and their families, had been seen in the area with over 200 bear furs.[64] As of 1832 Simpson suggested that the Peace had become the "richest part of Athabaska" as the freemen had withdrawn to Lesser Slave Lake.[65] An examination of the number of freemen trading at Vermilion and Dunvegan in 1826 to 1827, when census data is available, contradicts this somewhat (see Table 2.12). One sees a steady increase from 1826 to 1833 fo[illegible]cline. Nonetheless the numbers of freemen in the mid-1830's at Dunvegan are certainly comparable to the totals at Vermilion in 1826 to 1828. One has to note that despite Simpson's assertion that they had retired from the Peace by 1832 the freemen were still a major factor. In 1834 two Iroquois from the Saskatchewan were at Dunvegan seeking to trade. Campbell complied but asked them not to return.[66] Saskatchewan freemen, however, returned to the Peace in the spring of 1836 and there are references to them for May and August of 1836 and May 1837.[67] By the latter year Campbell was concerned with the effect they would have on the resources of the Peace. He told a party of freemen who arrived at Dunvegan in May of 1837 "with a great party of horses and well furnished with traps that they should return to their District."[68] This they refused to do until several years later when

they returned to Jasper House on the Athabasca River as a result of hostility from the Beaver.[69] The situation with the freemen apparently improved after the 1830's as there were very few references to their presence. Nicks suggests that their focus of activity shifted to Lesser Slave Lake by the 1840's, thus alleviating the situation to the Peace River.[70]

Similar to the practice of sending freemen to the Peace River in the 1820's a small group of Chipewyan from the region of Lake Athabasca were relocated in 1823 to Hay River, north of the Peace River (see Figure No. 3b).[71] The success of this migration of a few families was quickly apparent. Colin Campbell recognized the value of the Chipewyan as industrious trappers and hunters, praising the Chipewyan from Hay River who came to trade at Vermilion. He even considered establishing a post on the Hay River for them.

> Great benefit is derived from the party of Chipewyan who hunt in the vicinity of Hay River--their exersions is [sic] likely to continue valuable & their coming in to this post [Vermilion] I think as beneficial as being at the expense of making a separate establishment for them--they appear quite reconciled to come in here.[72]

In addition to bringing in sufficient furs to pay their debts the Chipewyan further enhanced their good standing with Campbell by agreeing to co-operate with the liquor policy and to curtail the trapping of beaver in the spring and summer months.[73]

Unfortunately relations between the Beaver and the Chipewyan of Hay River and Lake Athabasca were often not friendly. In 1824 there was a violent incident between a party of seven Beaver from Vermilion and sixteen Chipewyan which resulted in the death of four Beaver. Bad

feeling between the Hay River Chipewyan and the Beaver of Vermilion continued for several months. The source of this dispute appears to have been control of fur resouces. There was further conflict between the two groups in the winter of 1825-1826.[74] As of 1826 there were 26 Chipewyan men and their families at Hay River. They asked Campbell in 1825 for their own post, a request that was eventually declined.[75] Despite his earlier positive comments Campbell had by April of 1828 decided that the practice of allowing Chipewyan from Fort Chipewyan [illegible] Hay River to hunt on the Peace should be discontinued.

> I must remark that the Chipewyan from Fort Chipewyan by their stories of the advantage they have at their Fort in trade over the Indians here has created a good deal of discontent [illegible]s the Indians protest against their coming h[illegible]e future to exhaust their country of the Fu[illegible]s well as large animals when they can scarcely m[illegible]e out to live themselves.[76]

Despite Campbell's comments Chipewyan were at Hay River in 1829 and there were hostilities between them and the Beaver at Vermilion. Chipewyan were reported trading at Vermilion in 1834, 1840, 1841 and 1846 but there are not indications of any further conflict.[77]

In addition to the Chipewyan there were other groups who traded regularly at the Peace River posts. In 1822 a small group of Saulteaux attempted to trade at both Dunvegan and Vermilion. Campbell noted that he gave them "little encouragement to return as it is poor policy to draw Indians from one post to another."[78] This practice was subsequently followed by the Company. Indians and freemen were expected to trade at a particular post. They were not to move from one establishment to another as was common practice prior to 1821. This policy served to prevent the Indians playing one post manager against another, not so

much in terms of price but in terms of giving credit. Nonetheless some groups were on occasion allowed to come to the Peace River posts. This included the Sekani and the Slavey from regions west and north of the Peace River. In 1822 there are several references to the presence of "Slaves" or Slavey trading at Fort St. John on the upper Peace River. The post manager was impressed with their fur hunts and encouraged them to come back.

> The Slaves have done pretty well this year--if the Beaver Indians would do as well the returns would be rich. The Slaves are pleased with the trade and promised they would bring good hunts when they returned.[79]

By the 1840's the Slaves were not welcome on the Peace River. Their impact on the area's resources was deleterious. In 1843 21 Slaves and their families arrived at Vermilion from Hay River to trade. The clerk at Vermilion noted

> I have accordingly delivered the message sent to me that they should never come here again but nothing will induce them to go back, saying that they have adopted this Country as their home, having for that purpose fomred alliances, by intermarriage with the Beaver Indians.[80]

He urged them to return to their original post on the Finlay River but concluded that they were unlikely to do so. As there are no further references to the Slaves being at the Peace River posts it would appear that he was successful in this effort.

It was relatively commonplace for Sekani from the upper Peace to visit the Company posts at Vermilion and Dunvegan after the closing of Fort St. John in 1823. Prior to this the Sekani had little incentive to travel to the lower reaches of the Peace River. The period

of greatest frequency of visits was 1839 to 1843. A party of Sekani (refered to as "Tsucanes") traded at Dunvegan in the spring of 1839. Small groups returned to trade at Dunvegan in 1840 and 1841. Large numbers began coming in June of 1842 to Dunvegan complaining of starvation.[81] By August of 1843 several Sekani were seen on the Peace River. The Dunvegan clerk observed that

> Semaroushe [refered to as a Beaver "Chief"] reports that the Seccanies of the other side of the mountains are in great numbers on this side which renders it impossible for our Indians to make Provisions also that they have invited the elders of the Beaver Indians to meet them at the Portage [Rocky Mountain Portage] this fall to have a drinking bout.[82]

There are no further comments on the Sekani on the Peace River in the period under consideration. It is unclear whether the Company had a policy of discouraging them from trading at Dunvegan or whether the Beaver resented their travelling over their hunting territories. The above observation suggests that the Company was unhappy with the Sekani disrupting the hunting of provisions by the Beaver.

Other major groups who visited the Peace River were the Cree and Assiniboine. In 1825 to 1827 there are several references to Cree hunters on the lower Peace River in the vicinity of the Wabasca River and the Caribou Mountains. Several of these Cree were apparently post hunters for Fort Chipewyan.[83] While their presence appears to have been acceptable to the Company, the arrival of Cree from other districts was not. In 1827 a party of Cree communicated to Campbell at Vermilion that they wanted to trade there. Campbell resisted this proposal, noting that "it is my intention to send them word to return to the nearest establishment to Lesser Slave Lake intended for that tribe."[84]

There is no further mention of Cree until 1830 when a small party were observed at the junction of the Peace and Smoky Rivers.[85]

In the mid-1830's there were arrivals of both Assiniboine and Cree. An armed party of the former appeared at Dunvegan in 1835. This resulted, according to Campbell, in a verbal confrontation between them and the Beaver.

> I understand these people are from a band of about 30 men with their families who are a couple days march out in the plains from this [Dunvegan] and come from Fort Assineboine. They tell me it was the Mr. C. Factor Roward advised them to come and see the Beaver Indians, which I have good reason to doubt as it be achieved with no good object.[86]

He was able to convince them to return to Fort Assiniboine but not before they disrupted trade by upsetting the Beaver.

A large party of "Plains Cree", consisting of 22 families, was on the Peace River in the fall of 1836. This created an awkward situation for Campbell at Dunvegan. The Cree went as far as setting fire to the countryside to prevent the post hunters of Dunvegan from supplying the Company with sufficient quantities of meat.[87] They left Dunvegan a few days after their arrival. Campbell does not record how he dealt with them. Despite their short stay the effect of their visit was negative. The Beaver were anxious that the Cree would return to make war on them. Campbell observed that "although the Indians are when face to face on good terms they are very suspicious of each other & our Br [Beaver] Indians dread a treacherous blow from the Crees."[88] In the spring of 1837 the Beaver were still afraid that the Cree would return. Several left the Dunvegan area of Vermilion, resulting in less "industry".[89] In addition it appears that the Cree had a major impact on the large

game resources of the area through hunting and the use of fires to drive away game.[90] Clearly the Company wanted to avoid such developments and no further visits by Plains Cree are recorded after 1836.

The movements of various freemen and Indian groups into the Peace River area created numerous problems in terms of the Company's efforts to manage the area's game resources. It would appear that the Beaver were willing to co-operate in large measure with the Company but faced circumstances in which others were not. Colin Campbell when reporting to Simpson in 1841 commented:

> In regards to the prohibition of killing Beaver I would beg to observe as far as regards Peace River, there would be a necessity to restrict the Indians of McLeods Lake & Fort Halkett also, who come on the Limits of P. River & Destroy the Beaver at all seasons as much as the Freemen of Jasper's House used to do. The Beaver Indians always wished to preserve the Beaver on their Lands but when they saw those Strangers destroying them, they of course did the same, at least where the Strangers hunted on their grounds.[91]

The 1840's saw a change as there were fewer recorded visits of other groups to the Peace River. Nonetheless several decades of over-utilization limited the success of attempts to restore beaver population levels.

The final stage in the evolution of the Company's fur conservation policy began in 1841 when it was decided to prohibit the trapping of beaver in those areas of the Northern Department where populations had not recovered. The Council of the Northern Department resolved that

> [the] Impoverishment of the Country in the article of Beaver is increasing to such an alarming extent that it becomes necessary to take effectual measures for providing an immediate remedy to that and it is [resolved] that the gentlemen in charge of Districts and Posts be strictly enjoined to discourage the

> hunting of Beaver by every means in their power and that not more than half the number collected Outfit 1839 by traded during the Current and two succeeding Outfits.[92]

This resolution applied to much of the Northern Department including the Peace River posts. To compensate for the limitations on beaver there was a further resolution

> that all Indians at Posts where this restriction exists and who do not kill Beaver be paid in Goods the value of 10 Skins of Made Beaver for every 9 Skins in small Furs they trade in the course of the year.[93]

At the same time there was the implication that the Company held its own officers partially responsible for the failure of the pre-1841 measures. The Council of the Northern Department went as far as to resolve that "the Governor and Committee be respectfully advised to give notice of retirement from the Service to such Gentlemen as may not give effect to the spirit and letter of the Resolutions now passed for the preservation of Beaver."[94] A letter from Simpson to the Committee in June of 1841 further supported the view that officers had been negligent.

> The trade of many of the districts was not closed up to the date of my last advices, but I have every reason to believe that it will be found to fall short of that of last year, especially in the article of beaver, which I am much concerned to observe is declining very much from year to year, the last collection in this Department being little more than half the average returns of the past ten years. We have in Council from time to time legislated with a view to arresting the progress of this evil, but all our endeavours, I am sorry to say, have been fruitless, owing very much in my opinion to the disinclination of many gentlemen in charge of districts and posts to occasion a reduction in the returns, from an over anxiety as to the appearance of turning their charges to profitable account, and in some cases perhaps, from a mistaken notion that by curtailing the returns they were injuring their own immediate interests.[95]

Simpson's observations could be viewed as irrelevant to the Peace River. The number of beaver taken by the Beaver in the years immediately following the 1841 resolution was very low (see Tables 2.1 to 2.2). In the period 1841 to 1843 the returns at Dunvegan were 557, 670 and 93 respectively.[96] Unfortunately the beaver returns for the years immediately preceding the 1841 resolution are not available. These returns, however, are exceptionally low when compared to the levels recorded for the 1820's and 1830's. One has to conclude that a sincere effort had been made to follow the resolutions by both the Beaver and the Company's officers.

The limitations on beaver were removed in 1844. Apparently the prohibition was successful in restoring the beaver to acceptable levels. The situation in the Athabasca District as of January of 1844 was promising. From Fort Chipewyan Campbell informed Simpson that beaver were more numerous than for the past several years.[97] The London Committee was willing to relax the 1841 resolution in a few districts including the Peace River.

> In order to test in a satisfactory manner the improvement reported, it may perhaps be proper to relax for a season, in two or three districts, the prohibition with regard to beaver hunting, and you will determine in council in what districts such a relaxation shall take place, which of course is to be acted upon only in the winter, the issue of traps for all the depots being strictly prohibited.[98]

This suggestion was acted upon by the Council of the Northern Department in June of 1844. But the prohibition on summer trapping and steel beaver traps was continued.[99]

On the Peace River the returns of beaver rose sharply after 1844 (see Table 2.2). At Dunvegan they were comparable to several years in

the 1820's but well down from 1833. No returns are available from Vermilion in this period. One could suggest, however, that the Company appeared to have been partially successful in restoring the beaver. This statement must be qualified by observing that the Beaver had difficulty, as noted earlier, in trapping "small" furs on a regular basis after 1844 Similarly the trapping of cub beaver apparently resumed in the early 1840's. Unfortunately for the Company the market for beaver in London collapsed in the late 1840's thus negating much of their effort.[100]

While the Company could claim some level of success in the area of fur management the same could not be said about the management of large game. The North West Company's move into the Peace River country reflected the importance of the region's resources of large game animals as much as the importance of fur or an overland route to the Pacific. Alexander Mackenzie's journey of 1792-1793 revealed the Peace River as a rich source of game, in particular moose and bison. Philip Turnor had similarly reported to the Hudson's Bay Company the value of the region. For the North West Company it was to be the resource base for all of its posts in Athabasca. Without the moose and bison of the Peace River the North West Company would have considerable difficulty in continuing its far-flung posts in the Athabasca.[101] This lesson was not lost on the Hudson's Bay Company after 1821. It intended to continue using the Peace River to provide supplies for Fort Chipewyan, the Mackenzie River District, and New Caledonia as well as the annual brigades in the region. This proved to be beyond the resources of the area. By 1821 game resources were under stress. Several years of intensive hunting by the Nor' Westers and the Hudson's Bay Company depleted the wood bison. Its

near extinction in the early 1830's appears to have put additional pressure on the major remaining meat source, the moose. Reliance on one game animal had considerable risks for the inhabitants of the Peace, hence the periods of starvation, particularly in the 1840's. Not to be discounted were the Indian and freemen groups who visited the area in the 1820's and 1830's. Similar to the way they served to exhaust the fur resources they further depleted the bison and moose. The Company's officers faced the severe problem of managing game resources in the face of intensive hunting by these groups.

In addition the Company had difficulty convincing the Beaver to co-operate in hunting game on what the Company felt was a rational sustained yield basis. What was desired was the controlled killing of animals to fulfill annual pre-set provision quotas. They wanted to impose a new order on the already existing "traditional" Beaver subsistence economy. The latter was to be partially replaced by a system in which the Company would, on occasion, dictate the type of game, quantity of animals, time of year and even location of Beaver hunting activities. The flaw in this plan was that the Beaver had evolved their own strategies which were not always compatible with what the Company desired. Both Nicks and Ridington argue that participation in the fur trade had, well before 1821, meant substantial changes for the Beaver in terms of strategy and organization. Ridington suggests that the major change was from communal hunting techniques, which marked the "traditional subsistence economy", to more hunting by individuals.[102] To Nicks, the "emphasis on fur trapping ... tended to disrupt food hunting and gathering activities" by reducing the time available for hunting and taking "hunters to areas

where food resources were in scarce supply."[103] Thus one has the possibility that the effectiveness of Beaver hunting strategies may have been reduced. The biggest problem facing the Company is that the Beaver, like many groups of the Subarctic and the Great Plains, did not share the Company's conception of conservation. Arthur Ray argues that when the Hudson's Bay Company proposed conservation measures "it was introducing a concept which was alien to most of the Indians.[104] This was the result of the nomadic, subsistence lifestyle, religious beliefs, system of land tenure and political system of the Indians.[105] He suggests that a nomadic lifestyle made the idea of conservation difficult in practical terms. Similarly the overlap of land use and the lack of European concepts of land tenure meant that the game resources of an area could be easily exhausted. As for the factor of religious beliefs Ray argues that many groups believed that it was not in their power to address the problems of game shortages but rather, the supply of game depended on the performance of the appropriate religious rituals to appease the spirits involved. How applicable these factors inhibiting conservation were to the Beaver of the first half of the nineteenth century is debatable. Nonetheless, it is a real possibility that the Beaver were operating on a very different conceptual framework from that of the Company. Given this, one should not be surprised if they did not fully co-operate with the directives of the Company.

Despite these considerable problems the Company wanted the Peace River to provide provisions for other areas. By the 1840's the Peace country was supplanted by the Saskatchewan District as the major supplier for New Caledonia and the northern establishments. Company

aspirations had not been consistent with the realities of the situation. By 1850 the major concern of the Company's officers at Dunvegan and Vermilion was obtaining sufficient food for their own consumption. Starvation had been a severe problem in the winter of 1849-1850. The failure of the Company's plans to develop the Peace River as a source of provisions was clear.

Although the Company wanted to maintain the role of the Peace River as a source of provisions there had been some recognition of future difficulties. While George Simpson had been highly optimistic during the winter of 1820-1821 in regards to the state of fur resources he was concerned about the bison. Writing of Fort St. Mary's he noted "[s]ome few years ago Buffalo were very numerous in the vicinity of the Establishment, but are every successive year retiring to a greater distance, being continually hunted and are now rarely to be found within Six and Eight Days March of the Fort."[106] The post had originally been built near the range of the wood bison but, as noted by Leonard Ugarenko, the bison was already severely depleted in the area of St. Mary's within three years. He argues further that the intensive hunting of bison in the period 1818 to 1821 resulted in "major changes in the distribution of the wood bison herds."[107] This is supported by an observation from Edward Smith at Fort Chipewyan in 1822 that the wood bison had shifted their territory westwards towards the Rocky Mountains.

> Fort Vermilion seems to labour under some disadvantage they often consume part of the provisions collected in Summer ... . Dunvegan formerly was a plentiful place--of late years they seem to labour under the same difficulties as Fort Vermilion. Buffalo has been very scarce there some years past they have emptied towards the Mountains. The Slave [Sekani] Indians that resort to St. Johns report they had no Buffalo in their Country

> formerly--which is in and along the Mountains--but now they are plenty ... .[108]

Whether this report was accurate it is apparent that the bison was in decline by the early 1820's--a process that was to be rapidly accelerated during the latter part of the decade.

The period from 1820 to 1823 saw a shortage of bison and other game resulting in starvation among the Beaver. Colin Robertson reported the death of several Beaver near Fort St. Mary's in the winter of 1820 apparently from a lack of game. As for bison they were "some distance away" from the post, beyond the easy range of the post hunters.[109] The situation remained apparently unchanged through the next few years. In the winter of 1820-1821 Simpson as well noted the death of several Beaver from starvation.

> I have letters from Mr. Finlayson bringing the painful accounts, that our people in Peace River are reduced to very great extremities by Famine ... . This misfortune is common all over that District and our Opponents are nearly in the same wretched state ... many of the Beaver Indians have been starved to death, one of our Iroquois, and three belonging to the North West Coy. have shared the same fate, our Fort Hunter Baptiste Bisson, who is without exception the best large animal hunter in North America lived entirely on parchment for several weeks, and whole families existed solely on signed Beaver Skins; the North West Co. were at Dunvegan & Vermilion compelled to kill many of their Horses, and the few seed potatoes that were reserved at St. Mary's have been consumed; in short our affairs in that quarter are in a most unfortunate state.[110]

This continued in the summer of 1822 when it was observed that there was a "shortage of animals on the Peace River."[111] By February of 1823 P. W. Dease at Fort Chipewyan was very pessimistic about the Company's circumstances on the Peace River.

> The news of Peace River is rather gloomy in regards to provisions. For Vermilion is much pinched for the want

> of that necessary article, at Dunvegan there is no complaint, but that dry provisions are rather scarce; and considering that very little provisions were sent down from that place last summer--the Indians exertions in provision hunts is greatly reduced for want of animals by all accounts.[112]

By March of the same year, however, the situation was greatly improved. The clerk at Vermilion at this time remarked that the post hunters were "killing faster than the men can have the meat."[113] Despite the game shortage noted at this time provisions were gathered at Vermilion (and perhaps Dunvegan although no record exists) in 1822-1823 and sent to New Caledonia and Fort Chipewyan. In 1822 Vermilion supplied over 700 lbs of Dried and Fresh Meat as well as ten lbs of Grease for New Caledonia in addition to 300 lbs of Dried Meat and 19 lbs of Pack Cords for Fort Chipewyan. The following year a large quantity of meat (1100 lbs of Fresh Meat) and what was termed "Country Produce" was transported to New Caledonia. This consisted of over 150 moose skins and 50 bison hides.[114]

Through the rest of the decade game supplies seemed to improve. Large amounts of meat in various forms as well as hides were collected in several years. In 1825 Vermilion supplied New Caledonia with 3700 lbs of meat, nearly 600 lbs of grease, 2250 lbs of pemmican and roughly 200 moose skins. In addition over 2000 lbs of meat and 23 bison skins went to Fort Chipewyan. Later in the same year another 1700 lbs of meat went from Vermilion to Fort Chipewyan.[115] Another useful indicator of adequate supplies is the absence of references to starvation in these years. It is apparent, however, from the journals and account books of Dunvegan and Vermilion that the quantities of provisions fell from the levels of 1825. The main reason for this development was the abandonment of Dunvegan in the years 1825 to 1828 and the hunting pressure on

the hinterland of Vermilion. By the summer of 1827 Campbell was greatly concerned with the long term prospects for Vermilion if Dunvegan or another post at a new location was not opened in the near future.[116] An additional problem was the sending of Cree post hunters from Fort Chipewyan onto the Peace River, beginning in late 1825. There are numerous references to their presence in 1825 to 1828 as far up the Peace River as Fort Vermilion.[117] The effect of these two developments was a reduction in provisions originating from Vermilion. In 1826 little was received from the Peace River at Fort Chipewyan. Colin Campbell in August of 1826 noted

> [n]othing has transpired here so far, out of the usual routine, we have had accounts from the most of the natives that resort to this place & in general they have done very well and are still apparently inclined to be industrious, but the scarcity of large animals, with a general complaint of their being very poor, makes us despair of making a good provision trade.[118]

There are no references to Peace River supplying provisions until December of 1827. At that time 150 bags of pemmican and a quantity of dried meat were sent from Vermilion to Fort Chipewyan. In February of 1828 a shortage of large game animals was reported in the vicinity of Vermilion. By May of that year Campbell arrived at Fort Chipewyan with 62 bags of pemmican, 2400 lbs of grease and 800 lbs of meat.[119]

The return of the Company to Dunvegan in the fall of 1828 relieved the stress on Vermilion. As a result the provisioning situation there was greatly improved for the moment. When Campbell arrived at the site of Dunvegan he noted "numerous track of Buffalo in the area."[120] In 1829 289 moose skins, over 100 lbs of pack cords and moose sinews as well as 44 bags of pemmican, 370 lbs of grease and 340 lbs of meat

were provided at Dunvegan for New Caledonia. In the following year 648 moose skins, 150 lbs of cords and sinews, 65 bags of pemmican and 850 lbs of meat were shipped to New Caledonia.[121] This was an attempt by Colin Campbell to fulfill the quotas set by the Council of the Northern Department in the summer of 1829. The Council resolved that Dunvegan was to supply New Caledonia with "Leather, Parchment, Pack Cords, Babiche, and Grease" in August of each year.[122] The quota to be filled included "650 dressed Moose Skins, 100 lbs [of] Babiche snares and Beaver nets, 2000 fathoms Pack Cords [and] enough Grease to make up 50 Pieces."[123] This quota was maintained in 1830 and reduced slightly in 1831 with only 530 dressed moose skins required. This quota continued until 1836.[124]

An incident of note occurred in February of 1830. In his post journal Campbell wrote:

> Our two Fort Hunters arrived & report of having killed 53 Buffaloe--a great many more than we want & they are not fat enough to make dried Provisions, so that the meat will be lost. The snow is so very deep that all large animals cannot run from their pursuers & there will be no doubt a great number wantonly killed--although I do my best by persuasions to prevent it.[125]

Of the bison killed only 23 were recovered for use at Dunvegan.[126] It is apparent that Campbell was having difficulty in getting the fort hunters to co-operate in killing only a sufficient number of suitable (i.e. with enough fat for producing grease) animals. The scheme for effective management of bison had clearly failed. After 1830 there are few references to bison on the Peace. In 1832 there were reports of bison in the Vermilion area "dying of disease."[127] In the winter of

1835 a band of Buffalo were seen near Vermilion.[128] It is not until the early 1840's that they are mentioned again. Campbell told Simpson in March of 1841 that they were starving. The "entire disappearance of the Lynx & Rabbits is a sad affair for the poor B. Indians for the moose are now the only food for them to depend upon, & there are no Buffaloe in this country for some years back."[129] Similarly the clerk at Vermilion in 1842 reported that "by all accounts animals are really scarce all over this part of the Country, indeed the Country is nearly exhausted of Moose & Buffaloe."[130] Nonetheless five bison hides are noted at Dunvegan in 1842 followed by twelve in 1843. The last bison referred to on the Peace River is a "cow Buffaloe" killed near Dunvegan in the spring of 1844.[131]

It is difficult to gauge the impact of the local extinction of the wood bison on the Company's provisioning plans and the circumstances of the Beaver. Ugarenko notes that "the Beaver did not register any complaints when this food resource was practically eliminated. This may reflect the fact that the wood bison were relatively unimportant to their subsistence economy, or at least not as important as moose."[132] While it is important that the moose was the major food source the wood bison was undoubtably a valuable one as well. Its disappearance put the Company and the Beaver in the dangerous position of depending almost solely on the moose. While the beaver are not noted in post journals as complaining about the absence of bison the Company's officers certainly did. To Campbell the lack of bison and the subsequent dependence on the moose was a critical factor contributing to starvation in the area. It is worth noting that the worst periods of starvation among

the Beaver occurred after 1830 when the bison ceased to be a food source. As for its effect on the gathering of provisions the Company experienced great difficulties after 1830 in meeting quotas.

As noted earlier the Council of the Northern Department maintained a provision quota for the Peace River until 1836. This shows a certain amount of inflexibility on the part of George Simpson and the Council as the Peace River had not become a major source of provisions on a consistent basis as had been hoped. The few documents available from this period suggest a failure to provide New Caledonia with the required amounts of meat, pemmican, leather and pack cords. In 1833 Dunvegan sent 1440 lbs of pemmican, 1800 lbs of dried meat and 900 lbs of grease to New Caledonia but no leather or cords.[133] By 1834 Dunvegan was suffering from a lack of game and produced but nine packs of leather for Fort Chipewyan. As well a supply of provisions was picked up by Company servants from New Caledonia in May of 1835. The provisions for 1836 were also unimpressive with 38 bags of pemmican and seven bags of dried meat, most of which was needed for the spring brigade.[134] As for Vermilion provisions were procured for New Caledonia in 1834 but by the spring of 1835 the Company servants and the Beaver faced starvation.[135]

The Council of the Northern Department, as a result of the failure of the Peace River to provide enough meat and leather, removed the provision quota for Vermilion and Dunvegan in 1836. It proposed a new system in which provisions needed for New Caledonia would come from Jasper's House in the Saskatchewan District. These would be shipped to New Caledonia via Dunvegan.[136] This method of provisioning New Caledonia remained in effect until 1840. The introduction of supplies from the

Saskatchewan proved timely for the Company on the Peace River as the period of 1835 to 1840 was one of great difficulty. The winter of 1835-1836 saw a shortage of game which resulted in the starvation of the Beaver near Vermilion and Dunvegan.[137] The year 1835 also marked the beginning of several years of disruption arising from an influenza epidemic. The problem of the appearance of Saskatchewan freemen (1834 to 1837), the Sekani (1839 to 1843) and the Cree and Assiniboine (1835 to 1836) exacerbated the problem. These groups had a negative impact on fur resources and the gathering of provisions as well as utilizing game themselves. The visits of the Cree and Assiniboine appear to have had the greatest impact on large game. When Colin Campbell returned to Dunvegan in October of 1836 he found both Beaver and Cree waiting to trade.

> On arrival here found all the Beaver Indians waiting to get their Fall supplies and a number of the Plains Cree with them--these strangers have been the cause of our Indians not being so industrious as they otherwise would have been in making provisions and they have set fire to the country wherever they will ultimately prevent our Fort Hunters from supplying us amply with Fresh Meat.[138]

As a result of the activity of the Cree large game proved difficult to obtain in the winter of 1836-1837 near Dunvegan.[139] Thus even if the Company had expected supplies from the Peace River after 1836 it is unlikely that this task could have been accomplished.

The Council of the Northern Department at its meeting in the summer of 1839 decided that the "Country Produce" for New Caledonia should start coming "commencing with 1840 from the Athabasca instead of the Saksatchewan as heretofore."[140] This practice proved to be only partially successful in the 1840's as little meat, grease or

pemmican originated from the Peace River but it did manage a reasonable supply of leather. The area continued to suffer from frequent shortages of game with resulting periods of starvation. Such shortages and periods [illegible] recorded each year from 1839 to 1844, in 1848 and in 1849. The [illegible]pany's personnel on the Peace River invariably faced a situation in [illegible]ich survival was the major concern, with the gathering of provisions for shipment relegated to a secondary function. For most of the 1840's Dunvegan was able to send supplies of leather across the Rocky Mountains. The best year was 1842 when over 1000 moose skins were procured. In addition small amounts of leather went to Mackenzie River in 1848.[141] Meat, grease and pemmican were sent from Dunvegan to New Caledonia in 1842, 1844 and 1847 while Vermilion was only able to do so in 1844.[142] In the remainder of the period such supplies came from the Saskatchewan District and were transported to Dunvegan overland from Lesser Slave Lake. This happened in 1840, 1842, 1844 and 1848.[143] Recognition of the lack of game for provisions on the Peace River is apparent in the Minutes of Council of the Northern Department for 1844 when the arrangement was put into resolution form.[144] The Peace River had gone from a highly valued source of provisions for New Caledonia, Fort Chipewyan and the Mackenzie River Districts to supplying only leather to these points. At the end of the period under consideration the situation on the Peace River was bleak indeed. In 1849 several Beaver starved to death and the Company's employees barely escaped starvation themselves.[145]

The decline of the Peace River as a supplier of fur and game was a problem of great significance for the Company. As an explanation one finds little evidence for an extension of the thesis of Calvin Martin

that Indian groups of eastern North America abandoned traditional views on conservation as a result of the impact of epidemics and decided to "declare war" on animals.[146] One has to look instead at a number of factors. Of importance is the state of the resources of the Peace River as of 1821. It would appear that large game, bison in particular, and some types of fur were under considerable stress in the early 1820's. The loss of the bison by the 1830's meant extra stress on the most important food source, the moose. Continued heavy utilization of the area's resources through the 1830's and 1840's meant the development of severe shortages of game and resulted in starvation among the Beaver and the Company's staff. Given these developments the idea of the Company concerning the Peace River as a major supplier of provisions were unrealistic. Just as in the case of agricultural produce, the Company proved to be very slow in reacting to poor results and changing their provision quotas. The Company's operations, which saw Chipewyan and Cree from Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca sent to gather provisions on the Peace River, likely led to further depletion of resources. At the same time as these groups were encouraged to hunt on the Peace River the Company faced the considerable problem of attempting to restrict other groups from hunting and trapping on the Peace River. In this the Company's local management appears to have played a major role. Despite the efforts of individuals like Colin Campbell in getting the groups of Cree and freemen to leave the area, they appear to have had a negative impact on fur and game resources. The appearance of these groups led the Beaver to hunt and trap animals contrary to Company regulations. This means that Ray's argument that the "failure of the Hudson's Bay Company to achieve any

real success in its early conservation programs" was due in part to the unwillingness of the Indians of the Northern Department to co-operate has to be qualified in the case of the Beaver on the Peace River.[147] It is debatable to what extent the concepts of the Beaver and the Company in regards to conservation overlapped but what is clear is that the Company's measures were not successful in maintaining the Peace River's fur and game resources throughout the period 1821 to 1850. Given the problems experienced by the Company on the Peace River it would appear that the topic of resource management in the post-1821 era should be given more attention by fur trade historians.

CHAPTER THREE: "They must be industrious or starve": The Problems of "Indian Management" and Native Depopulation on the Peace River.

As noted in the discussion of assessments of the post-1821 period at the beginning of this study, one of the common assumptions is that the Company managed to establish a new relationship with the Indians of the Northern Department. Indeed, this is often seen as a key element of the Company's monopoly management--policies such as conservation depended on the Company being able to control the actions of their trading partners through exploiting their dependence on the Company as a source of trade goods. The efforts of the Company to change their relationship with Indian groups in the Northern Department have been discussed by a number of historians. Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz have examined the attempt of the Company to install a "new relationship" with the Indians of Eastern James Bay after 1821 which involved the use of a series of rewards and punishments, such as the closure of posts.[1] Paul Thistle argues that the Company desired "an increasingly dominant role in the lives of the Western Woods Cree" of the Cumberland House District after 1821 but had difficulty in curtailing their independence.[2] The situation with the Cree and Assiniboine of the Saskatchewan, Assiniboine and Red River areas has been discussed by Arthur Ray.[3] Common to their discussions is the idea that the Company's attempts to exert greater control in these areas depended on the degree of independence exhibited by groups like the Cree and the extent of the monopoly held by the Company. In areas where Indians had sources

of trade goods other than the Company, they would be under less pressure to accommodate to the demands of the Company.

Extending this idea to the Peace River, where the Company held a virtually complete monopoly after 1821, one would expect a fair amount of success. Indeed, it could be argued that the economy and resource management policies introduced by the Company on the Peace depended, in theory, on the Company's officers being able to modify Beaver behaviour to suit Company objectives. This was to be a significant focus of the Company's activities on the Peace after 1821. In the pre-1821 era the Beaver had a powerful bargaining position which disappeared with the Coalition. The post-1821 fur trade did not offer the range of possibilities for the Beaver that had been available in the era of rivalry. Instead, their isolation from other sources of trade goods and their dependence on European technology constrained their choices, leaving few options when the Company introduced its initiatives. The 1820's were especially dramatic in Company-Beaver relations. The introduction of the new order aimed principally at "OEconomy" forced the Beaver to become acquiescent within a short period of time. Several phases mark this relationship. In the first, from 1821 to 1825, one sees resistance on the part of some of the Beaver. This was climaxed by the violent incidents at St. John in 1823 and Dunvegan in 1824 which led to the closure of these posts. The second phase from 1825 to 1828 saw the Company use the closure of all the posts on the Peace except Vermilion as a means of disciplining "recalcitrant" Beaver. Following the reopening of Dunvegan in 1828

the Beaver appeared to express accommodation with the Company's measures. Yet the arrival of other groups of Indians and freemen on the Peace seemed to provoke "recalcitrant" behaviour on the part of the Beaver. Unfortunately for both the Beaver and the Company the benefits of co-operation were not to be realized and the Peace River fur trade was to undergo substantial decline by 1850. At the heart of this decline was the frequent failure of the area's fur and game resources, causing several periods of starvation and disease for the Beaver and the freemen who remained on the Peace. Their ability to perform as required by the Company was limited by these outbreaks. The trade simply could not continue on a viable basis without effective bodies of Beaver and freemen willing and able to produce fur and provisions. The Beaver and freemen had suffered considerably by 1850 and were to undergo several other periods of starvation and disease later in the century.

The experience of the Beaver after 1821 owed much to the views of the Company's London Committee and their chief agent in North America, George Simpson. Their policy was to modify Indian behaviour in accordance with the "work" ethic rooted in the new industrial capitalism. English and European observers judged Indian groups on how well they conformed to European behaviour in this regard. Glyndwr Williams and Peter Marshall argue that North American Indians were usually seen as being at the bottom of a hierarchy of races.[4] In general they were viewed as uncivilized, nonprogressive and inefficient at a time when the Industrial Revolution was producing men with a liking for modern management and change. J.S. Galbraith has shown Simpson as viewing the

North American Indian as inferior and in need of adopting several aspects of European civilization. Simpson's "opinions were shaped by his belief in a divinely ordained hierarchy of races, at the summit of which was his own. The superior races he believed had an obligation to confer the blessing of civilization and commerce on the more benighted peoples of the world, and to rule those who were not able to rule themselves."[6] According to Galbraith the chief criterion of importance to Simpson was a race's attitude towards industry and efficiency.[7] In general the Indians he encountered on his first visit to the Northern Department in 1820 confirmed his view that they were an "uncivilized, improvident people whose moral and intellectual development was retarded. They craved alcohol, which debauched them, and coveted trinkets, which contributed nothing to their welfare. When food was plentiful they gorged themselves, and they then faced starvation in the months os scarcity."[8]

The nature of the new system in the fur trade can be seen in Simpson's 'Report' of 1821.

> The System hitherto followed up by the Compys. Servants, has been ruinous not only to the Trade but to the Natives; Packs, seemed to be a very secondary consideration, they conceived that they had fully gained the objects of their mission by emancipating the Indians, and took no trouble to impress on them the necessity of continuing their exertions; the Indians have therefore fallen into their original apathy, from which it will take a length of time to arouse them; it has occurred to me however that Philanthropy is not the exclusive object of our visits to these Northern Regions, but that to it are coupled interested motives, and that Beaver is the grand bone of contention; I have therefore taken great pains to convince them of the necessity of resuming their hunts with vigour, and that they can only be rewarded in proportion to the returns they bring in.[9]

While these comments were specifically about the Chipewyan trading at Fort Wedderburn on Lake Athabasca they are indicative of Simpson's attitudes.

Simpson proposed a new method of handling the Beaver on the Peace River in the same 'Report'. It is clear that he had a new regime in mind as early as September of 1820 judging from his instructions to the Company servants on the Peace. He wrote to Louis Laronde at Colvile House that, as the Company was by then firmly established on the Peace, the necessity of generosity towards the Beaver could be replaced by economy.

> Your supply of goods will exceed that of last year, but I must beg leave to impress on you, that OEconomy must be studied with unremitting attention; it was necessary to sacrifice property in the early stages of the business in order to attach the Indians to our cause and establish us firmly in the country; that being effected we must change the system and make up for past losses; 'tis Furs we now want, and it is by the number of packs alone that the Govr. & Committee can judge of the talents and merit of the Trader ... .[10]

Industry on the part of the Beaver was to be rewarded and nothing less would be acceptable in the long term. "Every inducement should be held out to the Indians to renew their industrious habits, and intimate that they will be rewarded in proportion to the amounts of Furs they bring us, but if their hunts are neglected, they cannot have their wants supplied."[11]

The same theme was repeated by Simpson in his observations of the Beaver in 1821. Of those on the lower Peace River he wrote:

> on the whole I have no reason to complain of their indolence compared with former years; indeed from all I have been able to collect no doubt remains, that the

> Beaver Indians would in a very short time by judicious treatment and pains being taken to convince them that industry alone could ameliorate their situation, shake off their indolent habits.[12]

The Beaver of the upper Peace River, according to Simpson, had been convinced by Duncan Finlayson at Fort St. Mary's that "they could in no way study their own interests so effectually as by following their hunts with industry and application ... ."[13] Overall he noted that the "Beaver Indians are naturally indolent and have become more so since the opposition, but I think good management and attention would rouse them to exertion ... ."[14]

As noted earlier several new measures were introduced after 1821; the most immediate of which was the reduction of the number of posts on the Peace. It would appear likely that the Beaver faced higher prices for trade goods by the 1821-1822 trading season, though this is not certain. By 1822 the quantity of gifts given by the Company had been reduced with the qualification that the Beaver should not be turned away without sufficient supplies to ensure their survival. Similarly the level of alcohol given as a gift and employed as a trade item was cut in 1822 and, as of 1823, the level of credit allowed the Beaver was reduced.

The impact of these and related measures disquieted the Beaver. Similar discontent with the Company was evident in agitation among the Cree in the Saskatchewan District and the Slavey in the Mackenzie River District.[15] Simpson's reaction to this shows how he viewed the development. In May of 1822, after visiting the Saskatchewan District where

there was particular unrest, he wrote:

> I have made it my study to examine the nature and character of Indians, and however repugnant it may be to our feelings, I am convinced they must be ruled with a rod of Iron to bring and keep them in a proper state of subordination, and the most certain way to effect this, is by letting them feel their dependence upon us.[16]

On the Peace River there was indication of a developing mistrust between the Beaver and the Company. There is little direct evidence of Beaver reaction to the new policies but it is apparent that the new order did not meet with complete approval. At St. John there were poor relations between the Company's employees and the Indians. In the 1822-1823 season Hugh Faries reported that there were members of three distinct groups trading at the post: Sekani (also called "Slaves" by Faries), Beaver and Iroquois freemen.[17] His comments about the Beaver and the Sekani were highly negative with the latter rated as "rascals".[18] As for the Beaver he commented:

> [t]he Beaver Indians of this place are worthless vagabonds, their fur hunt, seldom or ever exceeds from five to seven Packs throughout the year, what furs are procured here, are chiefly got from the Slaves [Sekani].[19]

Faries had difficulty in obtaining the full co-operation of the Beaver in obtaining more furs and provisions. In contrast Faries was pleased with the performance of the Sekani who were the major suppliers of fur and game. He remarked that if the "Beaver Indians would do as well the returns would be rich."[20] There was tension between the Beaver and the Sekani in that the Beaver were reluctant to hunt in the "territory" of the Sekani despite Faries' instructions that they were to do so.[21] This is of interest in that the Company was, after 1821, to discourage

this type of overlap in resource use by different groups. This situation in turn led to a lack of provisions for the Company. The Beaver were particularly "averse to hunting" near the Rocky Mountain Portage which was within the "territory" of the Sekani.[22] Faries explained that the Sekani did not journey to St. John every year. Apparently the length of the trip and the presence of the Beaver were deterrents.[23] As a result they told Faries in the spring of 1823 that they wanted the post to be moved to a "more centrical place".[24] Given the value of the Sekani to the Company at St. John and Faries' negative view of the Beaver and Iroquois it is not surprising that the Company decided to relocate the post at Rocky Mountain Portage for the Sekani.

The situation at Dunvegan after 1821 was more harmonious in terms of Company-Beaver relations. Colin Campbell reported the problems of serious illness among the Beaver as well as a shortage of game.[25] He made little comment about the Beaver but was clearly unhappy with the Iroquois freemen at the post whom he described as "vagabonds" and "an intolerable burden".[26] The Beaver trading at Vermilion created greater problems. Campbell observed that some of the Beaver hunters had left the Company's service in the winter of 1822-1823. His reaction was that they had to be "punished for this to intimidate others from doing the same ...."[27] These individuals did not return in the spring of 1823 as they feared a "thrashing for their bad behavior ... ."[28] When the Beaver came to trade at Vermilion in the same year Campbell felt obliged to lecture them.

> Having received all the Indian skins I am sorry to say

> the whole amounts to very little .... They have many excuses for their doing too little. After warning them that if they were not more industrious that they would get nothing & talking to them upon other subjects proper to encourage their industry gave them a small present of liquor & they went to their bands to drink.[29]

Campbell noted in 1823 that the first two years of Company monopoly had had considerable impact on the Beaver.

> The Coalition has had a very apparent effect upon the Indians--it has put them at a stand--not knowing what to do nor will they do much until they recover from their surprise & find that they must be industrious or starve. The above cause occasioning the state of trade not very favorable but it is expected that it will flourish in a few years.[30]

Events were to take another turn and temporarily frustrate Campbell's ambitions. The murder of Guy Hughes and four employees at St. John in November of 1823 was the principal event. The details of, and reasons for, the murders are difficult to reconstruct with certainity. The major cause appears to have been the Company's decision to move the post to a new location at Rocky Mountain Portage. As early as 1822 plans were being made to relocate this establishment. In that year Edward Smith at Fort Chipewyan noted:

> Saint Johns is to be removed insuing [sic] Summer to the New Caledonia Portage Rocky Mountain ... for the accomodation of the Sekaine Indians that will resort to is--the Lower parts of Peace River have been over come by. Trappers and is now exhausted.[31]

It was not until the summer of 1823, however, that the Council of the Northern Department resolved to move the post to Rocky Mountain Portage. The new post was to have a staff of Guy Hughes, a clerk, and four men (including an Interpreter).[32]

The proposed relocation of the post in the fall of 1823 created considerable anxiety among the Beaver who traded at St. John. As noted earlier relations had been strained. Despite the difficulties of piecing together the details of the murders, Shepard Krech III has managed to produce a credible narrative based on the testimony of Francis Heron who served in New Caledonia at the time of the murders.[33] According to him the Company's plans included moving the post to Rocky Mountain Portage to better serve the Sekani and help restore the game resources of St. John. Part of this plan was that the Beaver who had traded at St. John would have to trade at Dunvegan. This caused great anxiety among the St. John Beaver who became "unanimously determined not to barter at Dunvegan."[34] As Krech observes the Company "seemed not to understand that the Fort St. John's Indians were not affiliated with the Dunvegan Beaver Indians, and that Fort Dunvegan was outside the territory of the Fort St. John's Indians."[35] This was a crucial misunderstanding of the situation on the part of the Company. When its employees left St. John in October of 1823 Guy Hughes remained behind. He was killed by natives at the post, apparently shot. Four men returning to the post a short time later were also killed.[36] Heron reported that the murders were the work of four Indians, although the remainder "viewed the bloody scene with cool indifference, and afterwards assisted in pillaging the place."[37]

Although the Company recognized that at least part of the responsibility for the murders rested with itself they decided on the necessity of stern measures. James Keith at Fort Chipewyan was typical.

Writing of the incident he observed:

> The cause I am sorry to observe from the most correct accounts I have been able to procure are partly of our Creation--1 the precipitale [sic] removal of the Post before the minds of part of its Indians were fully prepared and their prejudices removed--2 The subjecting part of them in consequence of that removal to an additional sacrifice of feeling no less than there [sic] of giving in their hunts and thereby assimilating and intermarrying with Indians at Dunvegan, between whom and themselves there has for many years back existed an unconquerable spirit of inveteracy [sic] and Jealousy which often broke forth into acts of hostility--3. Rather harsh and unpopular usuage--All which combined as far as I have been able to learn may be ranked among the more prominant and efficient causes which led to the fatal and much lamented castastrophe.[38]

Despite this analysis of the causes of the murders Keith recommended strong action in order to re-establish Company control on the Peace.

> The present disturbed and agitated state of the District arising from the tragic events of St. John's is much to be lamented--nor can I forsee any reasonable [way] of speedily allying [sic] it--Promptitude and energy in such cases are particularly required--unfortunately similiar heartache, though on a smaller scale, had been allowed to pass without impunity ... . I am no advocate for harshness or severity where mildness and lenity can be resorted to--I still think such savage barbarities cannot pass unnoticed, nor can the perpetrators be taken or secured, and if secured can they meet with enough punishment.[39]

The Company's immediate response was to send a party of servants in an attempt to apprehend the individuals responsible. There was a natural concern that the murderers themselves might attack Dunvegan or Vermilion or inspire others to do so.[40] A group of twelve armed men under William McGillivray, Samuel Black and William McKintosh was put together and set out in January of 1824 to locate the responsible party.[41] This effort failed, as would all further attempts.

The situation on the Peace River continued to deteriorate in 1824. The upper posts (St. John and Rocky Mountain Portage) were left unoccupied. Samuel Black and Hugh Faries were given the task of establishing "Peace and tranquility with the natives as [they] appear ... to be something hostilly [sic] inclined towards the whites."[42] Of special concern by the fall of 1824 was the fact that the "perpetrators of the horrid and late murder committed at Saint Johns, are still roving about the country free and unmolested ... ."[43] Despite this circumstance Company employees were sent up the Peace to trade with the Beaver who formerly traded at St. John and the Sekani who were to have come to the post at Rocky Mountain Portage.[44] October saw the development of new tensions between the Beaver and the Company. The annual brigade with the trade goods was very late in arriving and this resulted in unrest among the Beaver forced to wait at Dunvegan. One of the Beaver climbed over the walls of the post, apparently bent on theft, and was beaten by one of the Company servants. The outcome of this action was a confrontation between a large group of Beaver "armed with Guns, Pistols & Daggers" and the Company staff.[45] Shots were exchanged, with a clerk injured and one Beaver beaten with a musket before the Beaver withdrew. Hugh Faries, in charge of Dunvegan at the time of the incident, commented following the retreat of the Beaver:

> they were determined to make a tragical scene of it, as that of Saint John's last fall, however we were fortunate enough to escape, they wished to take advantage of our few numbers only two men and the interpreter besides ourselves, they are a set of villains that have been at the head of all disturbances between the whites and the natives for these several years past & themselves always the aggressors.[46]

This event was reported by Faries to Simpson in December of 1824 along with the observation that none of the St. John murderers had been captured.[47] The result of this was a further step in Company retaliation. In July of 1825 the Council of the Northern Department decided, that in addition to the abandonment of the upper Peace, Dunvegan was to be closed. Only Vermilion was to be retained with a small staff and the Beaver formerly of St. John and Dunvegan would be forced to trade there. The purpose of the resolution was explained:

> in consequence of the late much lamented murders and daring atrocities committed by the natives in upper Peace River, and with a view to accelerate the deserved punishment of the principals and abettors thereof, prevent a recurrence and at the same time impress the Indians in general with a due sense of their relative situation and dependence.[48]

It was hoped that since the Company's own efforts had failed to capture the murderers the Beaver would be encouraged to turn them in.[49] The Company felt that those responsible were only a small group. There was a reasonable chance that the Beaver would act against them.

The closing of all of the Peace River posts save Vermilion had no immediate impact. There were reports that the murderers were living freely among the Beaver. Simpson apparently thought of closing Vermilion in 1826.[50] Alexander Stewart wrote to Campbell in September of 1826:

> I am sorry to find the Murders are not well safe but also supported by the upper Indians, consequently no establishment will be made at Dunvegan which otherwise I was authorized to make this fall ... . And moreover I an authorized to say that if the Beaver Indians are determined to give us no other satisfaction the Peace River will be entirely abandoned--but you may use these threats as you may think proper.[51]

This proved to be unnecessary.

In 1826 the Company introduced a quota system for beaver and a ban on the importation of alcohol, moves apparently unopposed by the Beaver when they were told of the measures at Vermilion.[52] Several of the Beaver formerly of St. John came as far as the Battle River where Campbell was willing to trade with them. He observed, after meeting with them in July of 1826,

> [t]here Indians complain much of the great distance they have come for their goods & petition for us to establish the upper parts of this River. But I reminded them of the conduct of the St. Johns Indians & they appeared to avoid discussing any matter regarding the Murders & whom they say they do not know of their present haunts.[53]

Later in the summer he heard reports from this group of Beaver that they had seen two of the individuals responsible for the murders. The latter were able to obtain supplies from "Indians who are up Finlay's Branch--This may came from one tribe to another who are supposed to trade with the Russians."[54] A small number of St. John Beaver had joined them.[55] Campbell, however, was able to record that support for the murderers among the Beaver was declining.

> It appears very evident that the Indians in general do not look upon the Murderers with a good eye although they are afraid to do anything against them for us to re-establish the Post above.[56]

No action appears to have been taken by the Beaver against the murders despite the closure of the upper Peace River until late 1826. A number of reports about the location and intentions of the murderers were circulating with them supposedly as close as the Battle River and as far afield as Fort Liard on the Liard River and with the Sekani on the Finlay River.[57] In October a number of St. John Beaver arrived at

Vermilion, very unhappy with their situation. Campbell wrote in his journal the day of their arrival:

> [t]he Rocky Mountain Indians find themselves so badly situated for the want of their establishment above that they appeared to be much inclined to vent their rage upon the Murderers who they are convinced are the sole cause of their present wretchedness.[58]

By the spring of 1827 Campbell was told that the first efforts had been made by the Beaver to capture the murderers. The Beaver responsible for these efforts was called Mayaze by Campbell and was described as the "leading man" of the St. John Beaver.[59] He sent two young men from his followers as well as a Sekani in the fall of 1826 "with a determination to find out & revenge the sad affair of St. Johns upon the murderers but they cannot be found."[60] Despite this failure he informed Campbell that he would continue to search for the murderers with the Sekani.

> Mayaze who appears still resolved to pursue the Murderers feels confident of punishing them that he may again see the whites established in the upper parts of Peace River. The Slaves [Sekani] are of the same sentiments & I am informed that a party of them are now actually in pursuit of them.[61]

In addition to this Campbell was satisfied with the efforts of the Beaver in supplying furs and provisions as well as their making few complaints about the new beaver quota and alcohol measures.[62] He noted that "as for the ... Indians we have every reason to be satisfied with them."[63] He argued, in a report to be sent to the Council of the Northern Department, that the re-establishment of Dunvegan and "a post for the Secannies at the Portage Rocky Mountain" were badly needed improvements.[64] His chief reasons were that the "Indians appear to be in a perfect state of peace & tranquillity & we have no cause to doubt of

their being well inclined" in addition to his concerns about the state of the fur and game resources in the vicinity of Vermilion.[65] He was clearly concerned that should the majority of the Beaver continue to hunt in the hinterlands of Vermilion they would exhaust the country's game.[66]

Nonetheless the Company decided to retain the closure of the upper river throughout the 1827-1828 season. As in the previous year Beaver from the former posts of St. John and Dunvegan arrived in the fall of 1827 and spring of 1828 to trade furs and provisions at Vermilion.[67] Campbell's principal concerns at Vermilion in the winter of 1827-1828 were the arrival of Cree from the Saskatchewan District and the outbreak of illness and starvation among the Dunvegan Beaver.[68] As for the Beaver Campbell was satisfied with their performance in the face of a shortage of game and an unspecified illness.[69] There was unrest among the Beaver who were upset with the presence of Chipewyan from Fort Chipewyan on the lower river. The effect of the Beaver and Chipewyan overhunting the hinterlands of Vermilion was clear by the spring of 1828 as evidenced in outbreaks of starvation.[70] An examination of the fur returns at Vermilion shows a substantial decline for 1828. The value of the 1828 returns fell to £4127.19.6 from £5720.12.8 in 1827 and £5407.12.3 in 1826.[71] The biggest decreases were in beaver and marten.

The decision to reopen Dunvegan was made in the summer of 1827 (for the fall of 1828) and Campbell first heard of it in October of 1827.[72] This move was accomplished in the summer of 1828 despite the

continued freedom of the St. John murderers. There had been a scare when the latter appeared at Fort Liard but this was without incident.[73] There still existed, as a result, the belief that the murderers were a threat to the Company posts on the Liard and Peace Rivers. Nonetheless Dunvegan was reopened by Campbell in the summer of 1828. He reported no difficulties with the Beaver and faced his greatest problem coping with Iroquois freemen from Fort Assiniboine who were seen as a threat to the Peace River's fur and game resources.[74] The highlight of the summer was the visit of George Simpson in August. Campbell's only comment about the visit of Simpson was that he had a "conversation with the Indians" which "was very much to the purpose & must have great weight with them."[75] Simpson's comments about the state of the Peace River and the Beaver in 1828 are of considerable interest. Writing of the closure of St. John and Dunvegan he observed:

> This abandonment, reduced the whole population of the upper parts of the River to the utmost distress; but they submitted to the privations thus entailed on them by the crimes of a few, without a murmur; and their conduct since then, has been so much to our satisfaction, that we determined on re-establishing the Post of Dunvegan for their accomodation [sic]. They appear grateful for their indulgence, and readily fall in with our intention of discontinuing the credit, and substituting the barter system of Trade. 'Tis probable that the Post of St. John's, or that of Rocky Mountain Portage, may likewise be re-established, and the Trade can well afford this additional Post, as the upper parts of Peace River are beyond all comparison, the richest Beaver Country I ever saw; and if the shadow of a doubt, continues to exist, that the abandonment of a Country is the most effectual way of recruiting it, a glance at the example before us, is only necessary to remove it. I shall now conclude my observations on Athabasca Department, by saying, that I cannot see room for any amendment in the management of its affairs; the business being conducted with great regularity and OEconomy, the Indians in the

> highest order, the Country in excellent condition and the result of the Trade as flattering as we could reasonably desire.[76]

Malcolm McLeod, travelling with Simpson at the time, noted:

> the Fort was found perfectly entire, and the Beaver Indians have ever since evinced the most friendly and submissive disposition. Indeed from the commencement of this unfortunate affair, the Indians of the two lower establishments [St. John and Dunvegan] could not strictly be charged with any share in the massacre at St. John's. Many are the opinions, and indeed many of them very opposite, relative to this melancholy subject. Whoever were the perpetrators, and however substantial the proof against any of them, such it is, that three or four of the St. John's Indians have kept aloof ever since; frequenting the country along the edge of the mountains between the head waters of the River du Liard, and the mouth of Finlay's Branch. Upon such an occasion as this, it could not be supposed that the Governor would pass through the Country without adverting to those outrages, and recommending proper conduct in future on the part of all the Indians in this quarter ... . The frolics of old, from liquor, were in like manner alluded to ... . They [the Indians] appeared much pleased with what is said to them.[77]

Simpson's visit and the reopening of Dunvegan marks the end of an era of considerable tension. From 1828 to 1850 relations between the Beaver and the Company were greatly improved. It is apparent from Simpson's comments that he viewed the closure of the upper Peace as highly successful in bringing the Beaver back into a state of "subordination" and in restoring the fur resources. Simpson was correct in several of his comments: the Peace River fur returns did improve wtih the reopening of Dunvegan and the problems of "Indian management" were less. The Company was unable, however, to eliminate credit on the Peace and the barter system did not replace it. As for the "richness" of the Peace Simpson was overly optimistic. The Peace River fur trade and the

area's value as a source of provisions was to decline substantially over the next two decades. Although Simpson was satisfied in 1828 that the Beaver were willing to "submit" to the wishes of the Company new problems were to develop. An "obedient" workforce was not sufficient to ensure success. The presence of "strangers" such as freemen, Cree, Sekani, Slavey, Assiniboine and Chipewyan who hunted on the Peace compounded the Company's problems in attempting to manage the harvesting of fur and game resources. The Beaver felt obligated to break Company regulations concerning the trapping of furs in order to reap the benefits for themselves. Campbell was clear in his comments about the willingness of the Beaver to co-operate but for the presence of the other groups.[78] The other major difficulties which threatened the Peace River fur trade were the frequent bouts of starvation and disease which reduced the effectiveness of the Beaver as suppliers of furs and provisions. While the Company could attempt to bring in a new order to their operations by modifying policies and practices, the increasingly severe disruption of the trade caused by these outbreaks was outside of their direct control with the exception of supplies for emergencies and vaccination. The impact of these problems served to threaten the profit and, indeed, the survival of the Peace River fur trade. For this reason a brief overview of the impact of the various periods of epidemics and starvation is needed here.

A number of historians and anthropologists have noted the presence of several ailments in central British Columbia and northern Alberta in the first half of the nineteenth century, including smallpox, venereal

disease, measles, influenza, whooping cough, tuberculosis and alcohol addiction.[79] It is frequently difficult to gauge the impact of the various illnesses on the Beaver, given that is is sometimes unclear which disease is involved from the description of symptoms in primary sources. While the level of depopulation which occurred among the Beaver is open to debate it is apparent that the Beaver experienced serious disruption as a result of a number of diseases. The result was a substantial level of depopulation and reduction of effectiveness for the Beaver which caused Company observers great concern and set back the "production" of furs and provisions. As with the periods of starvation, disease served to reduce Beaver independence, making them rely more on the Company. By the end of the period under consideration a pattern of Beaver dependence on the Company in times of distress was established.

It is important to note that European disease among the Beaver was not unique to the period after 1821. The shortage of documents from prior to 1821 renders it difficult to assess the impact of European diseases that likely were introduced through contact with the employees of the North West Company and/or other Indian groups involved in the fur trade. Alexander Mackenzie observed in 1792 that the Beaver were "afflicted with but few diseases".[80] Philip Turnor, in the same year, mentioned only the problem of alcohol addiction.[81] The first reference to more serious problems comes from Thomas Swain, at Mansfield House in the winter of 1802-1803, who also noted alcohol addiction and a "Disorder".[82] Swain mentions that the Beaver stopped a group of

XY Company employees from travelling up the Peace because of their concern about disease.

> Mr. Keith and his five canoes was [sic] oblidged [sic] to return down the River again as the Natives this morning told them if they offered to go up the River they would kill them, their reason was owing to some Disorder that came amongst their Country people this Summer which killed 10 of them, and they said it was the New Co. that brought bad medicines amongst them which was the occasions of the Deaths.[83]

Given the nature of this observation it is difficult to go beyond speculation in looking for a particular disease but it does at least provide some evidence for European diseases on the Peace River as early as 1802, less than twenty years after the arrival of the North West Company. The "Disorder" of 1802 was followed by an "Endemical disorder" in 1803 which apparently killed a number of Beaver.

The period of greatest rivalry on the Peace, 1815 to 1821, was marked by the occurrence of a number of ailments. Colin Robertson was particularly struck by the rate of mortality among the Beaver he observed during the winter of 1819-1820 at St. Mary's.

> The Natives of Peace River are naturally of a delicate constitution, and so much addicted to spirituous liquors, that nine out of ten dies of a rapid decline. The first symptom is the hollow cough, and when this once seizes them, four or five months puts a period to their existence ... . We had about forty Indians [illegible] fall, and strange as it may appear, there were [illegible] two men in that number, that could be termed aged, and neither of these exceeded fifty or sixty years, and I am told upon very good authority, that these individuals were the oldest men of the Tribe.[84]

Krech notes that deaths among the Beaver in 1819-1820 were due to an epidemic of measles.[86] Whatever the disease, it is clear that the

Beaver were badly affected. In July of 1820 Charles Thomas noted that the "Beaver Indians have done little or nothing ... in the Fur or Provision way--the sickness prevalent last winter still afflicts them ... ."[87] Simpson referred to this development in a letter to Duncan Finlayson on the Peace River in September of 1820: "it is with concern I learn that there has been a great mortality amongst the Beaver Indians this year, and that we have lost many valuable hunters ... ."[88] Despite the apparent seriousness of the situation among the Beaver it is not clear what disease was involved, other than it would appear to have been respiratory in nature. There was, according to Simpson, a severe outbreak of smallpox among the "Chipewyan Lands" which "carried away whole bands" in 1820 but he makes no connection between this and the Peace River.[89]

That the Beaver suffered from several ailments is clear from Simpson's description of them in his 'Athabasca Report' of May, 1821.

> Their constitutions are delicate, most probably owing to their want of attention to personal comforts and unrestrained use of ardent spirits; few attain the age of Fifty years and pulmonary complaints make dreadful ravages among them.[90]

This condition continued into the early 1820's. In his assessment of the Peace River District in 1822 Edward Smith wrote of a "previlient sickness" at Dunvegan which had caused several deaths and interrupted trade.[91] Colin Campbell at Vermilion in 1823 observed that the number of Beaver at the post was "much diminished" due to "consumption--a disease very prevalent amongst them."[92] In 1823-1824 there are several references to "sickness" among the Dunvegan Beaver. This resulted in

several deaths in the spring of 1824 and created problems for the Company in that the fort hunters were frequently ill and thus the Beaver were forced to stay at Dunvegan.[93] This "consumptive" disease was not mentioned after 1824.

The next major disease to be recorded on the Peace was whooping cough. The clerk at Fort Chipewyan in November of 1827 observed that the "hooping cough had found its way in P.R. [Peace River] and they've the same apprehensions that we entertain of our Indians i.e. if infected therewith their exertations [sic] will be but feeble, otherwise we would anticipate better results."[94] By the next spring Campbell reported that three Beaver had died at Vermilion from the "chin cough" and nine had died at Dunvegan, including two men and a "number" of women and children.[95] The disease apparently ran its course at Dunvegan fairly quickly but it was present at Vermilion as late as November of 1829.

While serious the whooping cough was not of the same significance as the series of influenza outbreaks which occurred from 1835 to 1840. Ray has identified epidemics of influenze in the Northern Department in 1835 and 1837, both of which affected the Peace.[96] Influenza "usually affects primarily the respiratory passages" and results in the "inflammation of the respiratory and/or alimentary canal."[97] The first sign of influenza in 1835 occurred in June and July as far west as Norway House. It apparently reached the Athabasca by the Athabasca brigade.[98] The first reference to influenza on the Peace was in late October of 1835. The clerk at Vermilion noted in his journal that "tous les Sauvages étoient bien malade de la maladie de Influenza."[99] The Beaver and

Chipewyan suffered to the extent of the deaths of two men [illegible] those of several women and children. To make matters worse most of the Company servants were affected was well as the majority of the fort hunters. It reached the state in which the clerk at Vermilion was unable to find two men well enough to travel to Fort Chipewyan.[100] According to Edward Smith at Fort Chipewyan in late December of 1835 the focus of the epidemic on the Peace was Vermilion but Dunvegan had been affected to a small extent.[101] Colin Campbell at Dunvegan does not mention the influenza outbreak in the winter of 1835-1836.[102] Ray suggests that this may be explained by the "late arrival of the disease-carrying brigades" and the fact that "by the time the crews arrived, the Indians had already scattered to their winter hunting grounds."[103] In this situation and others the timing of the epidemic was crucial. In addition to the importance of the time of year for epidemics the band system of the Beaver and other subarctic groups provided protection from disease. In winter the Beaver bands were widely dispersed which greatly slowed the spread of disease. Nicks argues that it is easy to overestimate the impact of epidemics because of this.

> [E]xcept where deaths seriously depleted a population, or economically crucial elements such as hunters, the very flexibility of band membership, considered the sine que non of hunting, gathering and trapping societies, provided some buffering of the population against total annihilation ... .[104]

The 1835-1836 influenza epidemic thus appears to have been limited to those Beaver and Chipewyan trading at Vermilion (including deaths among the Hay River Chipewyan) leaving Dunvegan relatively unaffected.

The epidemic was not mentioned after April of 1836, leaving one to conclude that it was finished.

More serious for the Peace was a second bout of influenza which hit in the fall of 1837. This appears to have begun in the Athabasca District in that year and spread northwards as far as Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River and Great Slave Lake.[105] The impact of this disease is difficult to determine as smallpox affected the Northern Department at the same time. Of the deaths recorded on the Peace River between 1837 and 1840 some were attributed to each of these diseases by Company observers. In February of 1838 Campbell noted an undisclosed number of deaths at Dunvegan, possibly as a result of smallpox.[106] By the end of March Campbell had administered a vaccine for smallpox at Dunvegan. Nonetheless by the end of 1838 the situation at Dunvegan was not improved. A.R. McLeod wrote of Dunvegan that "unfortunately the Indians have suffered a fatal loss in the course of the last summer to the number of thirteen victims to disease. This unexpected & deplorable calamity produced a great decrease in trade, both in furs & provisions."[107] The low beaver returns and the gathering of only one-third of the previous year's level of provisions demonstrated the impact of the epidemic.[108] While the worst of the epidemic, whether influenza or smallpox, appeared to be over in 1838 deaths among the Beaver were noted in 1839 and "illness among the Beaver" was present as late as January of 1840.[109] The 1840's was apparently free of major epidemics among the Beaver but in 1851 a major outbreak of influenza killed, according to Eden Colvile, at least 50 individuals, including 24

hunters.[110]

The other major factor in the decline of the Beaver was starvation. This apparently accounted for more deaths than disease but both frequently interacted. When the Beaver suffered from influenza or other diseases they often failed in their hunts. Of particular importance was the death of hunters. Nicks proposes that the hunters of groups like the Beaver were often the first to die in times of game shortages as they expended the most energy in the pursuit of game.[111] If this happened then the families dependent on them were likely to perish. Krech observes that a number of factors could result in starvation: faunal depletions; climatic conditions which made hunting difficult and/or killed animals; animal diseases; population cycles of the animals hunted for food; movement of game animals.[112] In addition to these ecological and environmental causes of starvation Krech notes that starvation likely also resulted from "such historic factors as epidemic disease, faunal declines, and the shift of human populations to less-productive subsistence regions (because of interethnic hostilities, trapping or trading as middlemen in the fur trade, or dependence on posts in times of hunger)."[113] Both Nicks and Bishop argue that although starvation was "no doubt known aboriginally" the fur trade led to greater problems.[114] Writing of the Beaver in the period after contact Nicks observes "there is evidence that a change towards emphasis of fur hunting disrupted the food quest and aggravated the possibilities of starvation."[115] Futhermore, in the "boreal forest hunting and gathering bands needed to be mobile in order to exploit available food

resources which were unevenly distributed in both time and space. Fur trapping not only took time away from the food quest; it often took hunters to areas where food resources were in scarce supply."[116] Krech emphasizes the importance of faunal depletion in the Peace River where "such depletions were most serious."[117] The need for provisions beginning in the 1780's and the subsequent utilization of the food resources of the Peace had led to the extinction of the wood bison as well as decreases in the quantity of moose. The worst periods of starvation occurred after the elimination of the bison, suggesting that the forced reliance on only one major large game animals was dangerous.

Prior to the 1830's starvation is seldom mentioned by observers on the Peace. There was a period of starvation in 1820-1821, arising from a shortage of game in conjunction with a respiratory ailment. The result of this was the death of several Beaver. Fortunately game improved by the mid-1820's and there were no more reports of starvation until the 1830's.[118] This circumstance appears to have been limited to the Beaver at Vermilion as Campbell made no mention of difficulties at Dunvegan other than a brief shortage in October in 1834.[119] At Vermilion Charles Ross wrote of "severe starvation" in March of 1835.[120] Several Beaver came to Vermilion in quest of meat but Ross was unable to help as there was "only enough fresh meat for Company men."[121] The situation on the Peace would only get worse in late 1835 with the beginning of several years of disease. One of the obvious effects of influenza and smallpox was a curtailment of hunting, adding starvation to an already terrible situation.

Following this the Beaver had to face a lengthy period of game shortages and starvation from 1840 to 1844. In the spring of 1840 Beaver at both Vermilion and Dunvegan were suffering to a great extent. The game shortage continued into the summer months. At Vermilion two Beaver hunters and their families arrived with the intention of obtaining meat. The clerk at the post warned them that they would not be allowed to stay long as meat was scarce. He blamed the situation on the hot and dry summer weather and a number of fires near the post which served to keep game away. Much to the displeasure of the Vermilion clerk several Beaver families arrived in August and September to live off the provisions there,[122] He noted that they exhibited great anxiety. An example of this hysteria is evident in his comments concerning a Beaver hunter and his family on their arrival at Vermilion.

> Sapatate & party is still haunted by Ghosts, Hobgoblins & Enemies or Devils--he assures me that he had not slept a wink since he left being constantly on the alarm i.e. seeing Devils & Strangers every night--what in the name of wonder possesses all my Beaver Indians--I am only apprehensive that this foolish alarm or fear will become general & spread amongst them all. Kept them Idle during the Fall hunt which will be a severe loss to the post, both in provisions & furs--I have done everything in my power to dispel such a foolish impression from their minds--but all are death [sic]--even one of my own men Obichon is in some bodily fear, of something he does not know himself.[123]

Unfortunately the journal contains no further references to this problem. The arrival of Cree and Assiniboine on the Peace in the late 1830's greatly disturbed the Beaver and may have been responsible for this fear of "Strangers". To the Company employee, caught up in the specifics of the dreams, such anxiety was viewed as highly irrational.

The shortage of game continued into 1841. Campbell wrote to Simpson in March of 1841 that "our Returns in Peace River will again be poor this year and owing to the same cause as last--The Indians have suffered much by starvation & of course could not exert themselves in collecting Furs."[124] In the winter of 1841-1842 the situation grew worse. The Company servants at Dunvegan were forced to send provisions to a large party of Beaver led by the "Beaver Chief Mayaze" who were "near Death".[125] By April of 1842 a total of eight Beaver were dead from starvation and several Beaver were at Dunvegan and Vermilion, living off the Company's provisions. The full extent of the winter's shortage of game was not apparent until the summer of 1842. At this time Sekani arrived at Dunvegan and related the deaths of 59 members of the tribe. No improvement was shown in late 1842 when Beaver and Sekani came to Dunvegan. By February of 1843 reports of severe starvation began to come in to Dunvegan. In an effort to keep the Beaver from travelling to the post Company employees were sent out with provisions and ammunition for them.[126] Despite this effort a number of Beaver and freemen died. Several members of both groups had retreated to a lake to fish in an attempt to survive the emergency. Of those who wintered at the "Fishing Lakes" five Beaver died (two adults and three children) as well as a freeman, named Bastanois, and eight members of his family.[127] In addition there were rumours of cannibalism. The clerk at Fort Chipewyan reported in May of 1843 that the "news from Peace River are really distressing, we hear nothing but Starvation & Cannabalism and this is a great reason why the Returns from that Quarter are so low."[128]

Eight more deaths near Dunvegan were recorded in June of 1843.[129] The winter of 1843-1844 saw a continuation of the game shortage but not as severe as the previous winter. The winter months were described as "hard times". A scarcity of snow made game hunting more difficult. Seven Beaver died near Dunvegan in April in 1844.[130] Despite Company concerns that there would be further starvation in the summer of 1844 the situation apparently improved.[131]

There were no further references to starvation until 1848 to 1850. This period saw the worst starvation on the Peace. It reflected the deterioration of the area's large game resources. This new shortage of game became apparent in the summer of 1848 at Dunvegan. After a routine winter game became scarce in the spring and problems rapidly developed. Several Beaver were reported starving near Dunvegan in July. The establishment was expected to supply provisions for New Caledonia but it could only manage four bags of pemmican.[132] The winter of 1848-1849 was particularly severe for the Beaver on the upper Peace. Several Beaver starved to death and there was a report of a large family in which one of the men survived through cannibalism.[133] The situation continued into the summer of 1849. The clerk at Dunvegan, returning to the post in July of 1849, commented: "Found the people all well in health but starving as they have been since my departure in May--not a mouthful of anything to eat in the store."[134] In July and August only one moose was brought into the post and the servants were forced to live off the meat of bear and fish. The Beaver even resorted to taking pemmican away from a group of Cree they encountered near

Dunvegan in September of 1849.[135]

One observer who visited the area in the summer of 1849 was Eden Colvile. Based on his short stays at Dunvegan and Vermilion in August he suggested to Sir J.H. Pelly in London that the former should be moved to "some other point in Peace River for some years, so as to allow the country to recruit."[136]

> At Dunvegan they complain of a scarcity of provisions, owing to the large animals in the neighbourhood of the establishment having been too closely hunted. At the fort the people had lived for some time during last spring upon a species of fish called "suckers", which when dried as they were in the sun, contain very little more nurishment than a pine shingle, & during last winter 40 Indians, men, women, & children perished by starvation.[137]

Colvile wrote to Simpson that "neither at Vermilion or this place [Dunvegan] was there a single bag of pemican, & I am remaining here till the Fort hunters bring in a moose, which with some potatoes & some very bad dried meat must take us on to Stuarts Lake."[138]

The severity of the situation on the Peace decreased during the winter of 1849-1850 as reflected in the improved returns of fur and provisions. While few moose were killed that winter, over 300 were taken in 1850. Despite this success very little was available for provisions to be shipped to New Caledonia.[139] The Fort Chipewyan clerk noted that although there had been improvements on the Peace the "news [was] not very favourable."[140] It was not until May of 1851 that the Peace River returns were termed "good".[141] The decline of the Peace as a supplier of provisions was reflected in the Company strategy of providing pemmican for the Mackenzie River District from the Saskatchewan

District in the 1840's. The Peace River was now to provide provisions when possible, though the bulk would come from elsewhere, and leather for New Caledonia. The shortage was also evident in the periods of starvation for the Beaver and freemen in the 1840's.

The overall impact of the periods of disease and starvation on the Beaver and freemen populations is difficult to determine. Indeed, there is considerable disagreement among anthropologists concerning the situation among subarctic groups between those who support a "catastrophic" perspective and those who reject large-scale depopulation. Among the best known advocates of the latter view is June Helm who argues in an examination of the Dene of the Mackenzie River area in the nineteenth century that "drastic depopulation" did not occur.[142] This is based on the idea that precontact population estimates are too high--she notes that in the case of the groups inhabiting the Mackenzie populations were relatively low due to the practice of infanticide and the occurrence of starvation.[143] On the other side of the argument one finds writers like Shepard Krech III and Collin Yerbury. Krech argues that several subarctic groups, including the Beaver, were severely affected by disease, starvation, hostilities and faunal depletion--all of which were at least partly the result of participation in the fur trade.[144] On a similar note Yerbury argues that "perhaps the most catastrophic consequence of contact was the introduction of European diseases. Depopulation, migration, and starvation stemming from the onslaught of disease resulted in a realignment of social relationships and in profound changes in the

already altered aboriginal way of life."[145]

The level of depopulation among the Beaver and the freemen is open to question because of the nature of the documentation. Population statistics are available for the 1820's and 1830's when the clerks at Vermilion and Dunvegan were instructed to keep track of such matters. Unfortunately there are no census returns for the earlier period or for the 1840's when depopulation was apparently at its worst. The process of calculating and comparing Beaver populations for the period of first contact to 1850 is a complex one. Population estimates for the precontact Beaver must be especially open to question. The key to these estimates is Alexander Mackenzie's observations in 1792-1793. When he arrived at the New Establishment he stayed long enough to meet the Beaver of the lower Peace. He wrote in his journal that the "number of people belonging to this establishment amounts to about three hundred, of which; sixty are hunters."[146] Later on he travelled to the junction of the Peace and Smoky Rivers where Fort Fork was located. Here he met with 70 men, presumably Beaver although he does not state this explicitly.[147] If this was the case one has a total of about 130 Beaver hunters. Based on the observation of 60 hunters for a total population of 300 at the New Establishment one gets a five to one ratio. Application of this ratio to the entire Peace gives a total population of 650 Beaver. Mackenzie further writes that "Beaver and Rocky Mountain Indians, who traded with us in this river, did not exceed an hundred and fifty men, capable of bearing arms; two thirds of whom call themselves Beaver Indians."[148] Nicks identifies the Rocky

Mountain Indians as Sekani from the extreme upper Peace.[149] The total of 100 (two thirds of 150) Beaver hunters does not correspond with the above calculations of 130 based on the New Establishment and Fort Fork totals. Jenness suggests that the figure of 100 Beaver hunters applies to only Fort Fork and has to be added to the 60 of the New Establishment.[150] Jenness, however, argues that the 50 Rocky Mountain Indians were Beaver even though Mackenzie clearly states that they were not.[151] Thus one has the problem of interpreting Mackenzie's observations, especially the identification of which groups were Beaver and Sekani. Out of this confusion one has to conclude that there were, according to Mackenzie, at least 100 Beaver hunters and perhaps as many as 130 to 150. Using the five to one ratio one has a total population of 500 to 750.

Mackenzie's observations have been used by a number of people to calculate the precontact population of the Beaver. Jenness, based on the idea that Mackenzie identified 210 hunters as Beaver, has the highest estimate of 1500 Beaver circa 1790.[152] His ratio is roughly seven and one-half individuals to each hunter. If he is wrong in his interpretation of Mackenzie and there were only 100 to 150 hunters, one gets a total population, using this ratio, of only 750 to 1125. Mooney argues for a precontact population of 1250.[153] Ridington, Dempsey and Babcock all have calculated a precontact population of roughly 1000 based on Mackenzie.[154] John Nicks suggests that, based on the later totals of the 1820's and 1830's, these estimates are all too high in that they employ a ratio of individuals per hunter of six

to seven and a half to one.[155] Nicks opts for a lower ratio of four or five to one. The limited census data (see Tables 3.3a--3.3e) is inconclusive concerning the formulation of such a ratio. One sees a fair amount of variation and confusion is created by the problems of who were considered "hunters". Does this include only those noted as "men" in the census data or does one also have to include those termed "male adolescents" or "youths" (as distinct from "boys")? If one considers "hunters" to consist of the individuals listed as "men", "male adolescents" and "youths", as suggested by Colin Campbell in 1827, one has 154 "hunters" in 1822, 127 in 1827 and 117 in 1828 for the entire Peace River and a range of 70 to 101 at Dunvegan from 1833 to 1838 (see Tables 3.3a--3.3e).[156] This gives a ratio of roughly four individuals per hunter in 1822, four and one-half in 1827 and five and one-quarter in 1828 for all of the Peace River. The data for the Beaver trading at Dunvegan from 1833 to 1838 suggests a ratio of roughly five to one (see Table 3.3e). Based on this one has to agree with Nicks that unless there was a great difference in demographic patterns among the Beaver between 1790 and the 1820's and 1830's that one should use a ratio of four or five to one, thus making the estimates discussed above too high. In defense of the higher estimates one has to point out that the data is limited and efforts at calculating the Beaver population prior to 1822 and after 1838 are based on speculation.

Another early population estimate is that of Thomas Swain, stationed at Mansfield House in 1802-1803. He noted that the Beaver included "not above two hundred men in number from the age of 15 years

to 70--which is scattered from the entrance of Peace River to the Rocky Mountains."[157] Swain was unable to see much of the Peace and had to depend on gathered information. His suggested total of a maximum of 200 men is probably too high but using a ratio of five to one Swain provides a maximum population of roughly 1000.

After Swain the next person to provide a population estimate was George Simpson. In 1821 he noted that the Beaver "may be computed at about 130 to 150 hunters."[158] He also gives the useful information that there were 20 to 30 freemen hunters on the Peace at this time.[159] The number of 130 to 150 hunters for the Beaver is remarkably close to that of Mackenzie, and may have been based on his, suggesting little depopulation from 1792 to 1821. Such a conclusion, however, is based on but a few early estimates and thus is open to question. Based on a ratio of five individuals per hunter one can calculate an 1821 population of 650 to 750 Beaver. As for the freemen one has to be careful about such calculations. Later statistics give wide fluctuations in their numbers and the size of groups (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). One has a smaller group size of only three to four. Thus given Simpson's observations there were probably something like 60 to 100 individuals associated with the freemen.

The first "census" of the Beaver, in 1822 (see Table 3.3a), gives a total of 605 Beaver at the three posts which, in addition to the 298 Sekani at St. John was consistent with the previous estimate of 650 to 750, calculated on the observations of Mackenzie and Simpson. The number of hunters was not given but if one assumes that most of the

men and youths performed this function (101 men and 53 youths) then one again returns to a figure close to the estimate of 130 to 150 hunters. In 1823 Campbell noted that the number of Beaver had been "much diminished within a few years past."[160] Unfortunately he did not provide more specific information. The 1826 figure represented only those Beaver who traded with the Company, hence the low total.[161] The 1827 and 1828 totals were considerably lower than the 605 reported in 1822. In addition the number of hunters (127 in 1827 and 117 in 1828) is much less than the 154 noted in 1822.[162] One explanation for this is the possibility that with the closing of Dunvegan in 1825 several of the Beaver of the upper Peace did not travel to Vermilion in 1826-1827 and thus were not recorded. With this in mind one is still looking at a rate of depopulation of roughly ten per cent for the Beaver from 1822 to 1828. Krech has recently argued for the possibility of a higher rate of depopulation, as much as one-third or one-fourth, among the Beaver in the 1820's.[163] While the data available for the 1820's suggests that this was unlikely, one has to agree with Krech that the level of depopulation was clearly substantial.

As for the freemen one sees a considerable increase in numbers for this period, especially 1826 to 1828. It could be argued that the decline in the position of the Beaver was a result of larger numbers of freemen and Chipewyan trading regularly at Vermilion in the mid-1820's. Nonetheless the Beaver remained the major suppliers of fur although the freemen and Chipewyan produced larger amounts of fur and provisions on a per hunter basis.[164]

The major difficulty in assessing the status of the Beaver and freemen populations after the 1828 "census" is that the later enumerations are limited to Dunvegan. One has the additional problem that there appears to have been a shift in the pattern of trading at Dunvegan and Vermilion in the 1830's. A greater number of Beaver traded at Dunvegan than in the previous decade (see Tables 3.3a-3.3e). Campbell recorded 298 Beaver at Dunvegan in 1829, a figure not far off the total of "upper Peace River Indians" noted in 1827 and 1828.[165] It is, however, much smaller than the 401 Beaver who traded at Dunvegan and St. John in 1822. Again one has the possibility that some of the Beaver who traded at St. John in 1822 went elsewhere in 1829, though there are no comments about such a development from Campbell or other observers. The remarks made by Campbell do suggest that most of the Beaver who traded regularly with the Company did come to Vermilion in 1827-1828, including those who traded at St. John before its closing.[166] Thus one has to conclude that a substantial population decline took place among the Beaver of the upper Peace in the 1820's, not forgetting the possibility that some of the former St. John Beaver may have been trading elsewhere.

By 1830 Campbell observed the beginning of a change in demographic patterns among the Beaver, with a larger portion of them trading at Dunvegan. In 1833 most of the Beaver appear to be trading at Dunvegan. The clerk, William McKintosh, recorded that 101 men traded furs at Dunvegan.[167] The period 1835 to 1838 saw a pattern established in which 70 to 75 hunters and their families traded at Dunvegan.[168] This

period was marked by influenza, smallpox and starvation. The impact of this can be seen in the period's "census" data. One sees a reduction of 60 individuals from the highest total of 1837-1838. This represents a ten to fifteen per cent decrease. A large number of widows and orphans were noted in 1835-1836, indicating a loss of hunters.[169]

Unfortunately after 1838 there are no enumerations available for the Beaver and the freemen, making it difficult to assess the impact of the difficulties of the 1840's, especially 1848 to 1850 in which 40 Beaver were reported to have died from starvation, and the early 1850's when influenza may have killed as many as 50 Beaver.[170] While it is difficult to come to a definite conclusion about the rate of depopulation among the Beaver from 1790 to 1850, such conclusions being dependent on the widely varying calculations of the precontact population, the available data and observations forces one to conclude that one is looking at several severe periods of depopulation among the Beaver, including the mid-1820's, 1835 to 1840, 1840 to 1843 and 1848 to 1851. Even if these do not represent a "catastrophe", as Helm might suggest, it is hard to believe that the Beaver could easily cope with the frequent occurrence of such problems.[171] The occurrence of frequent periods of starvation suggests, as Krech argues, significant faunal depletion.[172] The change in demographic patterns, which shows a major shift towards the Dunvegan area, suggests particularly severe depletion on the lower Peace. The result of such problems was a reduction of the effectiveness of the Beaver as trappers and hunters. The Company may have succeeded in making the Beaver more "obedient"

with the closure of the upper Peace River in the 1820's but they were unable to protect the Beaver from all of the difficulties caused by the introduction of European diseases (with the exception of vaccination after 1830) and the occurrence of starvation. With the beginning of the worst periods of disease and starvation in the late 1830's and 1840's one sees a marked decline in returns and profits with a corresponding rise in credit given out as the Beaver faced difficulties in meeting their debt obligations (see Tables 1.1a--1.1b). The success of the Company's efforts in greatly reducing expenses mattered for little when the Company's chief source of furs and provisions, the Beaver, were unable to effectively participate in the fur trade.

CONCLUSION

From this survey of a number of management problems faced by the Hudson's Bay Company in the Peace River area after 1821 one has to conclude that some reassessment of the effectiveness of the Company's monopoly management in the Northern Department is needed. The Peace River fur trade, as it stood in 1850, was very different from what George Simpson, the Council of the Northern Department and the London Committee had foreseen in 1821. They had desired the establishment of a profitable trade, adequate supplies of all types of furs which would ensure the long-term survival of the trade, sufficient game and agricultural produce for the use of the Peace River posts and for "export" to other areas where the Company operated, and an effective working relationship between the Company and the Beaver. These objectives were to be accomplished through the introduction of "modern" management practices, a series of conservation schemes aimed at maintaining the Peace River's fur and game resources, and a new regime in the area of "Indian management". Their concerns and methods were not unique to the Peace River but, rather, were applied to several areas of the Northern Department after 1821. Success on the Peace River depended on planning and effective strategies; the co-operation of staff in implementing these strategies, a positive attitude on the part of the Beaver towards the Company's efforts, favourable environmental and ecological conditions, control of the actions of Indian and freemen groups in other areas, and an absence of other negative factors such as epidemics. Not all of these essential conditions were

within the direct control of the Company. The achievement of commercial success was more difficult than a matter of reducing costs and increasing the efficiency of operations.

As of 1850 the Company's situation on the Peace River was one of great concern. The value of the area in terms of returns, provisions, and profit had declined considerably from the 1820's and 1830's. Several severe episodes of starvation and disease had been experienced, with particularly grave difficulties in the years 1848 to 1851. Clearly there had been a failure on the part of the Company to fulfill all of its objectives. This was the result of a lack of the necessary conditions mentioned above.

Much of the Company's vision for the future of the Peace after 1821 was based on George Simpson's conception of the value of the area. His views were formulated in the winter months of 1820, and should be described as highly optimistic. He believed that with sufficient "OEconomy" and fiscal management, the area's fur and game resources would recuperate and with more effective "management" of the Beaver and freemen the Peace would become highly profitable. The Peace River did produce substantial profits in the late 1820's and 1830's. Simpson, however, was overly optimistic about the area's fur and game resources. Even in the early 1820's these resources were under pressure. His idea that the Peace should be able to produce provisions and agricultural produce for other areas proved to be highly impracticable. Such a cost-cutting measure, however, had great appeal. Simpson, as well as the London Committee, did not give up on it easily. New resolutions

were continually passed by the Council of the Northern Department, aimed at fulfilling the supposed promise of the area's natural resources. One could argue that at no time in the period 1821 to 1850 did the Peace River come close to producing sufficient provisions for these objectives. Particularly poor was the Company's performance in growing wheat and barley to produce flour. Thus it would appear that in this area as well Simpson's aspirations were flawed.

As for the methods employed to fulfill its objectives one has to note in fairness to the Company and Simpson that several of their policies introduced after 1821 were successful. The Company was able to utilize "modern" management principles, chiefly a rationalization of the Company's Peace River operations, with the result that expenses were greatly reduced. The major successes were in the areas of eliminating posts, reducing manpower, and lowering gifts and amounts of alcohol. Substantial profits were produced for several years, in particular the years prior to 1837. Profit levels fell badly after Outfit 1837 as a result of a slump in fur returns. Part of the blame for this development was with the Company's conservation measures. In particular the idea that the Beaver could trap sufficient "small" furs in the place of beaver proved to be unrealistic. The Company met with greater success in introducing a new order in Company-Indian relations. The period prior to 1825 was, however, one of spectacular failure with the violent incidents of 1823-1824. The Company was able to respond to this challenge to their interests through the closure of St. John and Dunvegan. After the latter was reopened in 1828 the

Company experienced no further major difficulties.

As for the effectiveness of the Company's officers one has to argue that they attempted to fulfill the Company's objectives. While Simpson had considerable complaints about the effectiveness of the Company officers on the Peace prior to 1821 he was satisfied with the performance of the post-1821 officers. The major figure of the Peace River fur trade after 1821 was Colin Campbell, a former employee of the North West Company who spent much of his career on the Peace. He was one of the few individuals who received a positive assessment from George Simpson is his so called "Character Book" of 1832.[1] Campbell appears to have been very active in attempting to fulfill the Company's directives on the Peace. His length of duty on the Peace River suggests that the Company was satisfied with his performance.

While it has been argued in this study that problems existed in the original plans and methods of the Company, the key developments injuring the health of the Peace River fur trade were products of factors outside of the immediate control of the Company. The Company's conservation program was undermined by the "migration" of several groups of Indians and freemen to the Peace to hunt fur and game. While some, such as fort hunters from Fort Chipewyan, were directed to do so by the Company, the majority were uninvited and created problems. The Company's officers, especially Colin Campbell, were forced to expend considerable energy in controlling the movements of these groups. In these efforts they had only limited success. The other key developments were the frequent periods of disease and starvation

which greatly reduced the ability of the Beaver and the freemen to perform their function as suppliers of fur and provisions. These developments were beyond the competence of "modern" management and the new order in the Company associated with Simpson's administration.

The experience of the Company on the Peace River suggests that the accepted view of the great success of its monopoly management may be in need of some revision. While it is clear that the Company was highly profitable after 1821, one should not let this obscure the difficulties faced by the Company even in areas like the Peace river where it had a solid monopoly. The emphasis placed on the efforts of Simpson to reorganize the Company's operations, especially in the reductions of costs, has led some historians like Innis to underestimate the importance of the other factors required for long-term profit, in particular conservation and the condition of their Indian trading partners in regards to disease, hostilities, starvation and dependence on the Company. Measures of economy and efficiency could not produce long-term profit by themselves if sufficient fur was not available or an area's Indians were decimated by disease. From the example of the Peace River it is highly apparent that evaluations of the Company's monopoly management have to consider the role of Indians and freemen in the fur trade. Recent studies, such as those by Ray, Yerbury, Thistle, Francis and Morantz, have made a valuable contribution to understanding the involvement of Indians groups in the post-1821 fur trade and their relationship with the Company.[2] These authors have also served to re-establish the importance of resource management.

In addition to the establishment of these subjects in looking at the Company's monopoly management, the Company's activities on the Peace suggest that the image of Simpson as a highly effective administrator who successfully rationalized the Company's operations in the Northern Department is open to question. While costs were reduced on the Peace river, as they were in the Northern Department as a whole, several measures proved to be highly inefficient. One sees a problem in some measures, such as reducing the number of dependents at the posts, hindering other objectives, such as self-sufficiency. Simpson's ability as a planner also has to be questioned, given his initial proposals for the Peace River. The problem is not in the failure of these plans, but in the reluctance of Simpson to change objectives and strategies in the face of repeated failures. While one has to admire his strong vision and optimism, these qualities were not always positive forces as they led to a great deal of inflexibility.

The same criticism applies to the Company's London Committee, whose views were derived from the new industrial capitalism and the accompanying ideas of modern management. The result of their isolation from the conditions of the Northern Department was the formulation of policies, such as an end to credit and the elimination of dependents, which were not as useful to the Company as might be supposed. The directors and Simpson had pre-set ideas on the role of the Indians in the Northern Department. They had little appreciation for an Indian viewpoint, seeking instead a new system in which submission to Company directives and "industry" were the key elements.

More studies of how the Company managed specific districts after 1821 and coped with individual management problems, such as conservation, are required for a more complete assessment of the Company's monopoly management in the Northern Department. If the Company faced considerable difficulties on the Peace River one has to wonder how it fared in neighbouring districts such as New Caledonia and the Mackenzie River. While one can not argue that the Company's operations after 1821 were unprofitable the example of the Peace River suggests that these profits were not achieved with great ease as some authors have suggested. Failure was frequent. A number of problems must be given more consideration. The evolution of the Peace River fur trade after 1821 also shows that studies of the Company's management have to include a perspective that allows greater consideration of the groups of Indians and freemen who participated with them in the trade. In the case of the Peace River one could hardly describe the post-1821 period as one of great success for the Beaver. If the relationship between the Company and the Indians of the Northern Department was a "partnership" as recently suggested by Francis and Morantz, then this has to receive greater consideration in business and management studies related to the Hudson's Bay Company.[3]

Endnotes.

INTRODUCTION

1. Michael Bliss, Northern Enterprise: Five Centuries of Canadian Business. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987, p. 197; E.E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870, v. II., London: the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959, p. 499.

2. Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History (Revised Edition). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970, pp. 286-7.

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APPENDIX No. 1: Tables.

Table 1.1a. Credit Advanced by the H.B.Co. on the Peace River, 1825-1826.

	Outfit 1825		Outfit 1826	
	# of Debtors	Value (MB)	# of Debtors	Value (MB)
Upper Beaver Indians	73	1011	82	796
Vermilion Beaver	69	575	70	439
Chipewyan (Hay River)	20	476	19	351 1/2
Freemen	10	178	10	142 1/2
TOTAL	172	2240	181	1728 1/2

SOURCE: HBCA. B.190/a/3 fos. 18, 35.

Table 1.1b. Credit Advanced by the H.B.Co. at Dunvegan (in MB).

YEAR	BEAVER INDIANS	FREEMEN	TOTAL
1838	N.A.	N.A.	497
1843	2073 1/2	366	2439 1/4
1845	1499	N.A.	1499*
1849	834	N.A.	834*
1850	1860	133 1/2	2116 1/2
1851	2948	N.A.	2948*

*Only Beaver Indian Debts, freemen debts not given.

SOURCE: HBCA, B.56/d/1 fos. 25-6; HBCA, B.56/a/6 fo. 10; HBCA, B.56/a/9 fo. 4; HBCA, B.56/d/3 fo. 32; HBCA, B.56/d/4 fo. 27; BCPA, Dunvegan Account Book 1848-1849, n.p.; HBCA, B.56/d/6 fos. 15-6.

Table 1.2. H.B.Co. Expenses and Returns on the Peace River, 1819-1821.

	1819-1820	1820-1821
Expenses:	£5888.5.0	£4907.5.7
Returns:	£1903.5.4	£3473.15.6
Loss:	£3985.0.8	£1433.10.1

SOURCE: George Simpson, 'Report,' in Rich. Journal of Occurrences., p. 385.

Table 1.3. Number of Packs for the Peace River Posts, 1821-1848.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1821	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1822	18	27	23	68
1823	29 1/2	24 1/2	19	73
1824	15	29	46	90
1825	Closed	38	30	68
1826		Closed	72 1/5	72 1/5
1827		"	76	76
1828		"	83	83
1829		41	55	96
1830		43	N.A.	43+
1831		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1832		"	"	"
1833		47	40	87
1834		N.A.	37	37+
1835		53	N.A.	53+
1836		26	38	64
1837		55	39	94
1838		57	40	97
1839		25	10	35
1840		44	20	64
1841		39	24	63
1842		32	22	54
1843		28	23	51
1844		45	34	79
1845		41	24	65
1846		54	25 1/2	79 1/2
1847		52	27	79
1848		60	N.A.	60+

SOURCE: HBCA. and PAA. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's.

Table 1.4a. Peace River Returns, Outfits 1821 to 1849 (in £'s Sterling).

E=Estimate

OUTFIT	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1821	£900-1350E	£1350-2025E	£1150-1725E	£3400-5100E
1822	£1500-2250E	£1225-1825E	£1454.7.0	£4180-5540E
1823	£1386.12.8	£2204.13.11	£3709.5.10	£7300.12.5
1824	Closed	£3232.12.7	£2120.2.TO	£5352.15.5
1825		Closed	£5407.12.3	£5407.12.3
1826		Closed	£5722.2.8	£5722.2.8
1827		Closed	£4127.19.6	£4127.19.6
1828		£2903.6.0	£2750-4125E	£5660-7025E
1829		£3285.14.6	N.A.	£3285.14.6+
1830		N.A.	N.A.	£2650-3975E
1831		N.A.	N.A.	£4350-6525E
1832		£3706.16.10	£2553.1.11	£6289.18.9
1833		N.A.	£1850-2775E	£3500-5500E
1834		£2650-3975E	N.A.	£5000-7500E
1835		£1300-1950E	£1900-2850E	£3200-4800E
1836		£2750-4125E	£1950-2925E	£4700-7050E
1837		£3600	£2400E	£6020.6.10
1838		£1250-1875E	£500-750E	£1750-2625E
1839		£1930.11.6	£1050-1575E	£2980-3500E
1840		£1950-2925E	£1200-1800E	£3150-4725E
1841		£1896.18.5	£1050-1575E	£2950-3475E
1842		£1073.10.1E	£1288.3.1	£2361.13.2
1843		£2250-3375E	£1700-2550E	£3950-5825E
1844		£4382.15.2	£1300-2600E*	£5700-7000E
1845		£4795.13.8	£1275-1925E	£6000-6700E
1846		£2600-3900E	£1350-2025E	£3950-5925E
1847		£3000-4500E	N.A.	£4250-6500E
1848		£1596.4.9	N.A.	£2750-3250E
1849		£1340.0.5	N.A.	£2500-3000E

* Based on £100 per pack as the upper limit.

Estimations are based on the number of packs (see 'Notes').

SOURCE: HBCA. and PAA. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's, Outfits 1821 to 1849.

Table 1.4b. Notes on the Value of Packs and Estimations of Peace River Returns in £ Sterling.

The value of packs varied considerably depending on the composition of the packs. Those with large numbers of valuable furs (including beaver, marten and fox) averaged £70-80 each (in Outfit 1823 90 packs brought £7300.12.5 for an average of over £81 each). Later on when beaver declined the value of packs fell considerably. In Outfit 1842 51 packs fetched £2361.13.2 for an average of only £46 each. For most years with returns available the average value of a pack was £50-75. Thus the estimated values are calculated by multiplying the number of packs by a minimum pack value of £50 and by a maximum value of £75.

Table 2.1. Number of Beaver From the Peace River Posts, 1821-1828.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1821	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1822	1247	1248	1269	3764
1823	1969	1492	1216	4677
1824	1055	1567	2575	5197*
1825	Closed	2292	1291	3583
1826	"	Closed	3515	3515
1827	"	"	3348	3348
1828	"	"	2153	2153

*The total includes 1300 beaver from Fort Chipewyan so the Peace River total should really be 3897.

SOURCE: HBCA. and PAA. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's, 1821 to 1828.

Table 2.2. Number of Beaver From the Peace River Posts, 1829-1851.

YEAR	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1829	1665	N.A.	1665+
1830	1882	N.A.	1882+
1831	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1832	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1833	2494	1861	4355
1834	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1835	"	"	"
1836	"	"	"
1837	"	"	"
1838	"	"	"
1839	"	"	"
1840	"	"	"
1841	557	"	557+
1842	670	"	670+
1843	93	274	367
1844	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1845	1410	"	1410+
1846	1213	"	1213+
1847	N.A.	"	N.A.
1848	"	"	"
1849	1437	"	1437+
1850	1549	"	1549+
1851	2019	"	2019+

SOURCE: HBCA., PAA., and BCPA. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan and Vermilion, 1829-1851.

Table 2.3. Cub Beaver Traded at Dunvegan, 1829-1851.

YEAR	TOTAL BEAVER	CUB BEAVER	SOURCE
1829	1665	608	PAA. 74.1/120 fo. 9.
1830	1882	692	Ibid., fo. 9.
1833	3494	773	HBCA. B.56/d/1 fos. 11-2.
1841	557	225	PAA. 74.1/121 n.p.
1842	670	236	HBCA. B.56/d/2b fo. 26.
1843	93	33	HBCA. B.56/d/3 fos. 20-1.
1845	1410	625	HBCA. B.56/d/4 fo. 20.
1846	1213	563	HBCA. B.56/d/5 fo. 16.
1849	1437	562	B.C.P.A. Dunvegan Acct. Bk. 1848-9.
1850	1549	498	B.C.P.A. Dunvegan Acct. Bk. 1849-50.
1851	2019	819	HBCA. B.56/d/6 fos. 15-6.

Table 2.4. Number of Muskrat From the Peace River Posts, 1822 to 1850.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1822	50	470	712	1232
1823	161	120	219	500
1824	89	183	833	1105
1825		Closed	786	786
1826		"	566	566
1827		"	1030	1030
1828		"	1576	1576
1829		47	N.A.	47+
1830		53	"	53+
1831		N.A.	"	N.A.
1832		"	"	"
1833		1033	1174	2207
1841		373	N.A.	373+
1842		1863	"	1863+
1843		3244	2885	6129
1844		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1845		141	"	141+
1846		3317	"	3317+
1847		N.A.	"	"
1848		"	"	"
1849		26	"	26+
1850		0	"	0+

SOURCE: HBCA., PAA. and B.C.P.A. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's, 1822 to 1850.

Table 2.5. Number of Marten From the Peace River Posts, 1822-1850.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1822	540	1813	762	3115
1823	175	316	713	1204
1824	75	342	682	1099
1825	Closed	Closed	1719	1719
1826		"	1914	1914
1827		"	2627	2627
1828		"	1510	1510
1829		475	N.A.	475+
1830		588	"	588+
1831		N.A.	"	N.A.
1832		"	"	"
1833		281	133	414
1842		318	N.A.	318+
1843		579	770	1349
1844		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1845		3870	"	3870+
1846		4453	"	4453+
1847		N.A.	"	N.A.
1848		"	"	"
1849		226	"	226+
1850		388	"	388+

SOURCE: HBCA. and PAA. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's, 1822 to 1850.

Table 2.6. Number of Lynx From the Peace River Posts, 1822-1850.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1822	19	10	9	38
1823	21	14	5	40
1824	2	3	4	9
1825	Closed	Closed	56	56
1826		"	79	79
1827		"	280	280
1828		"	879	879
1829		962	N.A.	962+
1830		742	"	742+
1831		N.A.	"	"
1832		"	"	"
1833		34	4	38
1841		3	N.A.	3+
1842		5	"	5+
1843		6	15	21
1844		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1845		70	"	70+
1846		497	"	497+
1847		N.A.	"	N.A.
1848		"	"	"
1849		424	"	424+
1850		163	"	163+

SOURCE: HBCA., PAA. and B.C.P.A. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's.

Table 2.7. Number of Fox From the Peace River Posts, 1822-1850.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1822	27	82	14	123
1823	6	23	5	34
1824	0	15	6	21
1825	Closed	Closed	31	31
1826		"	9	9
1827		"	24	24
1828		"	72	72
1829		103	N.A.	103+
1830		224	"	224+
1831		N.A.	"	N.A.
1832		"	"	"
1833		29	3	32
1841		4	N.A.	4+
1842		137	"	137+
1843		53	"	64
1844		N.A.	"	N.A.
1845		90	"	90+
1846		138	"	138+
1847		N.A.	"	N.A.
1848		"	"	"
1849		135	"	135+
1850		40	"	40+

SOURCE: HBCA., PAA. and B.C.P.A. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's, 1822 to 1850.

Table 2.8. Number of Otters From the Peace River Posts, 1822 to 1850.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1822	7	13	16	36
1823	10	23	11	44
1824	14	27	19	60
1825	Closed	Closed	43	43
1826		"	20	20
1827		"	37	37
1828		"	32	32
1829		11	N.A.	11+
1830		11	"	N.A.
1831		"	"	"
1832		"	"	"
1833		23	18	41
1841		6	N.A.	6+
1842		10	"	10+
1843		5	6	11+
1844		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1845		17	"	17+
1846		17	"	17+
1847		N.A.	"	N.A.
1848		"	"	"
1849		8	"	8+
1850		11	"	11+

SOURCE: HBCA, PAA, and B.C.P.A. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John, 1822 to 1850.

Table 2.9. Number of Bear From the Peace River Posts, 1822 to 1850.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1822	15	50	61	126
1823	27	18	26	71
1824	7	22	42	71
1825	Closed	Closed	96	96
1826		"	78	78
1827		"	93	93
1828		"	130	130
1829		40	N.A.	40+
1830		56	"	56+
1831		N.A.	"	N.A.
1832		"	"	"
1833		85	91	176
1841		155	N.A.	155+
1842		262	"	262+
1843		292	251	543
1844		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1845		199	"	199+
1846		222	"	222+
1847		N.A.	"	N.A.
1848		"	"	"
1849	—	265	"	265+
1850		197	"	197+

SOURCE: HBCA, PAA. and B.C.P.A. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's, 1822 to 1850.

Table 2.10. Number of Fishers From the Peace River Posts, 1822 to 1850.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1822	7	11	3	21
1823	0	2	1	3
1824	0	1	2	3
1825	Closed	Closed	6	6
1826		"	4	4
1827		"	6	6
1828		"	3	3
1829		4	N.A.	4+
1830		10	"	10+
1831		N.A.	"	"
1832		"	"	"
1833		9	2	11
1841		2	N.A.	2+
1842		24	"	24+
1843		16	4	20
1844		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1845		39	"	39+
1846		26	"	26+
1847		N.A.	"	N.A.
1848		"	"	"
1849		52	"	52+
1850		17	"	17+

SOURCE: HBCA., PAA. and B.C.P.A. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's, 1822 to 1850.

Table 3.11. Number of Wolverines From the Peace River Posts, 1822 to 1850.

YEAR	ST. JOHN'S	DUNVEGAN	VERMILION	TOTAL
1822	29	36	19	84
1823	19	17	17	53
1824	0	0	2	2
1825	Closed	Closed	47	47
1826		"	24	24
1827		"	16	16
1828		"	14	14
1829		6	N.A.	6+
1830		37	"	37+
1831		N.A.	"	N.A.
1832		"	"	"
1833		55	42	97
1841		21	N.A.	21+
1842		128	19	147
1843		31	N.A.	31+
1844		N.A.	"	"
1845		37	"	37+
1846		30	"	30+
1847		N.A.	"	N.A.
1848		"	"	"
1849		37	"	37+
1850		39	"	39+

SOURCE: HBCA., PAA. and B.C.P.A. Account Books and Post Journals for Dunvegan, Vermilion and St. John's, 1822 to 1850.

Table 2.12a. Freemen at Vermilion, 1826-1828.

YEAR	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	SOURCE
1826	24	8	6	10	HBCA. B.224/d/2 fo . 116.
1827	29	10	7	12	HBCA. B.224/a/2 fo . 54.
1828	55	15	9	31	HBCA. B.224/a/3 fo . 22.

Table 2.12b. Freeman at Dunvegan, 1829-1837.

YEAR	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	SOURCE
1829	56	14	10	22	PAA. 74.1/120 fo . 9.
1830	61	13	11	37	Ibid., fo . 7.
1831	----------	----------	N.A.	----------	----------
1832	----------	----------	N.A.	----------	----------
1833	76	17	13	45	HBCA. B.56/d/1.
1834	----------	----------	N.A.	----------	----------
1835	50	14	10	26	HBCA. B.56/a/3 fo . 5.
1836	50	11	12	27	HBCA. B.56/a/4 fo . 9.
1837	48	10	12	26	HBCA. B.56/a/5 fo . 7.

Table 3.1 Population of Freemen at Vermilion, Spring 1826-Spring 1828.

YEAR	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	TOTAL	SOURCE
1826	8	6	10	24	HBCA. B.224/d/2 fo .116.
1827	10	7	12	29	HBCA. B.224/a/2 fo . 54.
1828	15	9	31	55	HBCA. B.224/a/3 fo . 22.

Table 3.2. Population of Freemen at Dunvegan, Spring 1829 to Spring 1837.

YEAR	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	TOTAL	SOURCE
1829	14	10	22	56	PAA. 74.1/120 fo . 9.
1830	13	11	37	61	Ibid., fo . 7.
1833	17	13	45	76*	HBCA. B.56/d/1 n.p.
1835	14	10	26	50	HBCA. B.56/a/3 fo . 5.
1836	11	12	27	50	HBCA. B.56/a/4 fo . 9.
1837	10	12	26	48	HBCA. B.56/a/5 fo .

*Includes one invalid.

Table 3.3a. The Population of Beaver Indians on the Peace River, Spring 1822.

	Men	Youths	B	G	C	W	TOTAL
Fort Vermilion Beaver	38	16	58	31	0	51	194
Dunyegan Beaver	33	28	0	0	148	74	283
St. John's Beaver	30	9	0	0	52	37	128
TOTAL	101	53	58	31	200	162	605

B=Boys G=Girls C=Children W=Women

SOURCE: HBCA. B.39/e/4 fo . 18.

Table 3.3b. Peace River "Census"--1826.

	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	TOTAL
Beaver (Lower Peace)	75	104	125	84	388
Beaver (Upper Peace)	40	58	62	52	213
Beaver TOTAL	115	162	188	136	601
Chipewyan	13	21	23	5	63

SOURCE: HBCA. B.224/d/2 fo . 116.

Table 3.3c. Peace River "Census"--1827.

	M	W	MA	MC	FA	FC	TOTAL
Beaver (Upper Peace)	55	82	13	82	1	61	294
Beaver (Lower Peace)	47	63	12	69	5	51	247
TOTAL	102	145	25	151	6	112	541
Chipewyan	12	21	4	18	0	7	62

M=Men W=Women MA=Male Adolescents MC=Male Children
FA=Female Adolescents FC=Female Children

SOURCE: HBCA. B.224/a/2 fo . 54.

Table 3.3d. Peace River "Census"--1828.

	M	W	MA	MC	FA	FC	TOTAL
Beaver (Upper Peace)	46	61	13	68	5	50	245
Beaver (Lower Peace)	50	80	12	83	2	62	289
TOTAL	96	141	25	151	7	112	532
Chipewyan	12	19	4	19	0	8	62
Saulteaux	3	2	2	2	3	6	18

M=Men W=Women MA=Male Adolescents MC=Male Children
FA=Female Adolescents FC=Female Children

SOURCE: HBCA. B.224/a/3 fo . 22.

Table 3.3e. Population of Beaver Trading at Dunvegan, Spring 1829 to Spring 1838.

YEAR	MEN	WOMEN	MA	BOYS	FA	GIRLS	TOTAL
1829	48	86	19	75	4	66	298
1830	51	101	20	118	3	95	388*
1833	101	130	----------285----------				526**
1835	70	109	25	111	0	109	424
1836	76	114	10	120	0	112	432
1837	75	116	10	125	0	120	446
1838	75	105	0	113	0	95	386

*Includes 40 Beaver from Fort Vermilion.

**Likely includes a large portion of the Beaver from Fort Vermilion.

MA=Male Adolescents.

FA=Female Adolescents.

SOURCE: HBCA, B.56/a/3 fo. 5; HBCA, B.56/a/4 fo. 9; HBCA, B.56/a/5 fo. 7; HBCA, B.56/a/6 fo. 10; HBCA, B.56/d/1 fo. 22; PAA. 74.1/120, 2 May 1829 and 20 April 1830.

APPENDIX No. 2: Figures.

The material on this page has been removed because of the unavailability of copyright permission. It contained a map of the environment of the Peace River area (Figure No. 2). The source of this map was Leonard G. Ugarenko, 'The Beaver Indians and the Fur Trade on the Peace River, 1700-1850,' M.A. Thesis, Department of Geography, York University, Toronto, 1979, Map 5.

The material on this page has been removed because of the unavailability of copyright permission. It contained a map of the Northern Department of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1832 (Figure No. 1). The source of the map was Arthur J. Ray, 'Diffusion of Diseases in the Western Interior of Canada, 1830-1850,' Geographical Review 66 1976, p. 140.

The material on this page has been removed because of the unavailability of copyright permission. It contained a map showing the location of fur trading posts on the Peace River from 1815 to 1821 (Figure No. 3a). The source of this map was Leonard Ugarenko, 'The Beaver Indians and the Fur Trade on the Peace River, 1700-1850,' M.A. Thesis, Department of Geography, York University, Toronto, 1979, Map 19.

The material on this page has been removed because of the unavailability of copyright permission. It contained a map of the location of the Hudson's Bay Company posts on the Peace River from 1821 to 185[illegible] (Figure No. 3b). The source of this map was Shepard Krech III, 'The Beaver Indians and the Hostilities at Fort St. John's,' Arctic Anthropology 20(2) 1983, p. 36.