

National Parks and the Challenge of Ethical Governance: Conservation or Preservation?

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Introduction

The efforts of environmentalists to put the brakes on modern development to preserve wilderness areas is often told as a struggle between economy on the one hand and ecology on the other. In October of 2002, 60 organizations signed a petition submitted to then-Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Copps to halt expansion of the Chateau Lake Louise, located in Banff National Park, calling this a ‘destructive development’ to the “jewel in the crown of Canada’s national parks system” (CP, 2002). These efforts were the latest in a long series of pushes by environmental groups to protect species and promote respect for ecologically sensitive parks. These efforts resulted in the government’s rejection of a proposal to expand Banff’s town site in 1998. This was in response to the Banff-Bow River task force’s findings that development in the park should be limited. The battle lines are drawn, in this case, between those who argue for preserving nature’s ‘ecological integrity’ and those who argue for sustainable, but also profitable, development and use of wilderness areas.

This paper explores these ideas from a related, if slightly different angle. It begins with the observation of James Cronon, that wilderness is not independent, a “pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can...be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization.” (1996: 69) Rather, wilderness is a paradox, a “human construct, deeply informed by human values, even if those values alter from one époque to another” (MacLaren, 1999: 7). This paper is an exploration of those changing values. One of its purposes is to compare the past and the present configuration of values in order to find insights into the discursive constructions of the present struggle described above. Can the history of national parks be boiled down to little more than economy versus ecology? How different are the argument between developers and environmentalists today from the arguments of the past? What has changed? What can be said about the nature of environmental progress?

A second goal of this paper is to use a comparison of the US and Canadian national parks history to highlight the common ethical dilemmas of parks governance. The governance questions dealt with by politics, and the environmental questions discussed by philosophers and ecologists, have not often encountered one another in meaningful dialogue. Governance involves power relations, authority, and legitimacy. Governance of parks takes place at many different levels, including the level of states and parks bureaucracies, the level of private corporate and nonprofit environmental organizations, and the level of the general public. In exploring the importance of the discursive construction of wilderness and parks in the processes of governance, this paper will focus on the role of state and parks bureaucracies. However, reference is also made to key individuals and their role in creating movements for preservation and conservation.

While there are many factors which could be analyzed, it is most important to view parks in light of the simultaneous development of nature tourism. The activity of wilderness visiting is inextricably tied up with the establishment and development of parks and so has important ethical implications for their governance. In light of this, a final goal of this paper, addressed in the conclusion, is to ascertain the implications of past trajectories for future ethical governance of parks. The focus is on the limitations inherent in the view of parks as ‘natural destinations’: simultaneously wilderness and accessible to human use.

This paper argues that a complex picture exists in which the values of conservation and preservation have conflicted in ambiguous ways to produce a mixed and episodic history of

halting human intervention and management. Although both conservation and preservation refer to efforts to protect the environment, conservation and preservation have key differences in their approach. Preservationists argue that pristine environments, such as grasslands and forests that provided habitats for large animals, should be protected in their natural state. Conservationists argue that natural environments should be efficiently managed to improve their long-term productivity. Conservationists and preservationists differ historically and ethically in their approach, and these differences have had implications for the management of parks over time. As Rosenberg argues, forests provide a good example of the differences: “replanting trees after an area has been clear-cut is a form of conservation. As the trees grow back, the forest is replaced, though not in its original state. *Preservation* means to protect an area in its pristine, primordial state by setting it aside before mankind has had any impact (1994: 1, emphasis in original)”.

National parks are repositories of conflicting values, visions and images and therefore are sites of struggle. They are not timeless and static landscapes to be transferred nostalgically from one generation to the next. As discourses, conservation and preservation are understood to mean sets of shared linguistic practices that enable those who affirm them to understand and interpret themselves and their behaviour relative to the ‘object’. The cultural construction of wilderness, of which parks are a particular manifestation, has deep-seated origins in North American society, and has been a central ethical discourse within the political movement of nature preservation. In turn, this movement has globalized the discourse of nature protection, such that preservationist values now have a strong resonance throughout the elite of modern industrial societies around the globe. However, this belies the particular origins of preservation, which are found in the first beginnings of tourism in the 1890’s, when leisure travel exploded both locally within Britain and through its Empire to the globe (from half a million in 1890 to a million by 1900) (Swinglehurst in Hart, 1983: 40). The geographical expansion of protected areas does not, as a result, imply any abatement in the expansion of human uses of wilderness, nor a control on demand for easy access to its enjoyment.

Conflicts occur partly because the patterns of human use change over time, and these in turn change the social relations of power that affect how parks are used. Accordingly, this paper will argue that the history of national parks in North America reveals a pattern of discursive struggle over the ethics of governance of national parks that has implications for the future path of national parks and environmental thinking and acting. One of the most important ethical dilemmas concerns the intimate linkage between preservationist discourses of nature protection in a pristine state and the use of parks as ‘natural destinations’ for tourism and recreation.

This tension is one which the ‘economy versus ecology’ frame is not so much incorrect as insufficient. The dilemma of conservation vs. preservation is actually more difficult to resolve, since its contradictions are historically integral to national parks. This essential problematic is sometimes captured in government reports and policy statements, for example, the Banff-Bow Valley Task Force Summary Report states that “unless we take immediate action, the qualities that make Banff a national park will be lost” (Banff-Bow Valley Study, 1996: 4). However, despite the seeming solidity of these ‘qualities’, the meaning of national parks is socially constructed, and so these do not provide a manifest, fixed and authoritative foundation for human action. The qualities of national parks are determined by social construction, including through the activity of visiting, rather than naturally endowed singular properties of wilderness. The natural properties that Sir John A. Macdonald valued in the ‘mountain vistas’, their scenic beauty, artistic and aesthetic appeal, and opportunities for sport, health and

recreation that we still value today, are properties of the visiting experience. The ‘wilderness experience’ for many visitors included (in MacDonald’s time as well as today) more problematic features like fires, floods, isolation, schedule inconveniences, lack of amenities, and other hardships. This ambiguity is not invested in wilderness itself, but in the activities and processes of visiting.

This essential tension, between parks as pristine wilderness on the one hand, and tourist destination on the other hand is the focus of the paper. For the purposes of analysis, this problematic is further broken down into three interrelated sets of dilemmas. The first concerns the limited nature of parks, the second concerns human interventions, and the third concerns public and private governance issues. First, one of the most important ethical ambiguities of ‘natural destinations’ is the discourse of parks as renewable resources, which runs counter to the discourse of parks as limited enclosures. The 1996 Report *The Importance of Nature to Canadians* represents the dominant view that “natural areas such as forests and lakes, and the wildlife that use these areas, are renewable resources...the effective management of Canada’s natural wealth will allow annual direct benefits of \$2.0 billion or more from nature-related activities to be provided to Canadians in perpetuity” (DuWors, 1999: 15). Restocking of native fish in aquatic environments and controlled burns to prevent more destructive fires in parks are examples of restorative environmental management designed to keep parks sustainable and stable. Conservationists have long argued that natural environments should be efficiently managed to improve their long-term productivity. Preservationists, in contrast, have emphasized the limited capacity of natural environments to renew themselves and so have focused on the need to preserve parks in as pristine a state as possible.

A second important ethical ambiguity concerns the effects of human intervention in natural processes. Although it concerns economic considerations, this more directly highlights the questions of aesthetic measures of value, and it is manifested, for example, in the early conservationist/preservationist differences over the meaning of ‘beauty’. Being essentially irresolvable, debates about beauty would seem quite to be quite irrelevant. However, these questions occupied a huge amount of effort and continue to underwrite a lot of writing and thinking about wilderness. The main areas of contention between conservationist and preservationists here are the effects of human activities, including tourism, on wilderness. These debates continue today over the implications of restorative practices and the essential historical ‘fact’ of mixing of human and natural processes in parks is commonly accepted.

A third important ethical ambiguity concerns the dividing line between public and private governance of parks. The view that parks are repositories of “natural and cultural heritage” (Auditor General of Canada, 1996; see also Baird, 1967) means that parks are often closely associated with the national identity of Canadians. However, the principles of public and private governance have been in contention since the beginning of the parks system. While preservationists have contended that state enclosure and regulation of parks is necessary to support the integrity of wilderness areas and prevent development by unscrupulous industry, conservationists have been less sanguine about the need for a strict separation between public and private interests.

As Robinson argues, the conservationist/preservationist debate that animated the environmental movement in the early 20th century concerned an essentially incommensurable set of values, even though both sides shared a concern with “wilderness preservation, renewable resource extraction and natural area management”. Robinson describes these essential differences as occupying a spectrum with Romantic sensibilities about nature on one end and

more utilitarian views of ‘enlightened self-interest’ at the other (2004: 371). However, the 3 conflicts described above, between limited and limitless parks, between human intervention and natural processes, and between public and private governance and access, also affected the historical trajectory of national parks. This trajectory included 3 important developmental stages that affect how the activity of visiting parks is viewed and constructed today: the first is a process of discursive ‘taming’ of wilderness, the second is the enclosure of wilderness into bounded and managed zones, and the third is the settlement of wilderness and its conversion into a more mixed metaphor, the ‘backyard’, which is, arguably, ongoing. The remaining sections will explore the discursive origins of parks in John Muir’s preservationism, trace their history in Canada, and compare changes over time.

The Formation of the US National Parks System: Preservationist Origins

The story of national parks in the United States begins with the discourse of preservationism. Preservationists have long argued that harmony between humans and nature could only be achieved by protection of the natural environment in as pristine a state as possible, devoid of permanent human settlements. This ecocentric view is based on an ethical egalitarianism which draws upon, among others, Aldo Leopold’s vision of a land ethic which “enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (Leopold, 1949: 204 in Dobson, 1995: 53). Fundamentally, this view argues that an ecological consciousness arises from an awareness of or identification with the non-human world, and begins with the premise that human intervention in the environment is something that requires justification (Dobson, 1995: 57-60).

In this view, temporary or short-term travel to natural or pristine environments is a means of fostering and cultivating an appreciation of the non-human world, essentially (and perhaps paradoxically) it is a civilizing educational and cultural activity. The establishment of hiking clubs, mountaineering clubs, and hunting and birdwatching activities in the late 19th century coincided with the cultivation of the association of wilderness with health, leisure and recreation. The Boone and Crockett Club, formed in the US in 1887, was an influential outdoor club devoted to hiking, fishing and hunting, and counted Theodore Roosevelt among its members (1999[1887]: 112, Document 57). New social activities like hiking and nature walks advanced preservationist discourses. Through these activities and social networks, collective action became organized around hiking clubs like the Appalachian Mountain Club, formed in 1876, and the Sierra Club, formed in 1892 (Neimark and Mott, 1999: 80-81).

While the impulse to establish national parks began with the preservationist impulses of a few individual naturalists, these quickly became nationalized and then internationalized. This shift was rationalized by the increasing (and seemingly unintended) continuing encroachment on nature reserves by human demands. An important corresponding shift was the professionalization and rationalization of management elite to cope with these encroachments.

It is important to note, as Cronon and others have emphasized, that this view of wilderness was a radical, if not revolutionary, departure from the centuries of fear, mistrust, and foreboding with which wilderness had traditionally been regarded. This psychological ‘taming’ of wilderness has been attributed in the literature to the confluence of a variety of social, economic, and technological factors. It was an outcome of the industrial revolution, the rise of a socially and economically mobile middle class, and the consolidation of European empires, among other things.

John Muir himself played a key role in instituting this cultural shift through his very influential writings of the period. His sequence of “Sierra Studies” in the *Overland Monthly* and his articles in the *Century Magazine* had given him a national reputation (Teale: 1982[1954], xiv). Although motivated to write about his experiences in the wild to convey and entice others to visit as well, Muir’s wilderness life was far from being the kind of leisurely tour that nature tourism by train or car would become. Muir would set out with only tea and bread, would wander through the high country without a blanket or overcoat, and never carried a gun. To use the words of Teale: “John Muir, faring forth into the wilderness unarmed and alone, was the man unafraid. He was unafraid of danger, of hardship, of wildness, of being alone, of facing death. He was unafraid of public opinion. He was unafraid of work and poverty and hunger. He knew them all and he remained unafraid” (1982[1954], xiii). His conviction of the need for wilderness preservation was almost religious, and his work to establish protected areas where others could experience the same education and inspiration was unparalleled.

Similarly, Cornelius Hedges, one of Yellowstone’s advocates, was touched by the concern to preserve wilderness so that it was “never to be changed but to be kept sacred always” (quoted in Marty, 1985: 64). However, from its inception until 1886 when the U.S. Army moved into the park, Yellowstone underwent wholesale destruction by squatters, poachers, bandits and ranchers. This neglect by the government illustrated vividly for preservationists the need for active state control and intervention to prevent abuses by the unscrupulous and avaricious. Preserving wilderness in its pristine state came to mean, ironically, intervening actively to regulate human activities. This lesson was also noted by the Canadian government in setting down the terms of national parks in the first legislation. As Marty states: “although there were no homilies on the value of wilderness in the Act, one very important word was used in connection with the minister’s power in 1887: the word ‘preservation’” (1985: 64). The populism of early advocates marked the national parks with the features of a public good, manageable by the state to ensure “a broader sharing of environmental amenities than the private market could provide” (Hays, 1998: 341). Public governance was, consequently, viewed by many preservationists as key to protecting wilderness.

The arguments of John Muir for the protection of the Hetchy-Hetchy Valley early in the 20th century illustrate the ethical dilemmas of intervention in nature. The city of San Francisco proposed to dam the Tuolumne River within the bounds of Yosemite National Park, sparking a virulent debate that captured the imagination of the public and established the terms for discussion of environmental issues for many years to come. Against rising opposition, in a letter to *Outlook* in 1909, James Phelan argued that the flooding of the Hetch Hetchy Valley would create a crystal clear lake, “a natural object of indeed rare beauty”. John Muir countered that “the beautiful sham lake...would be only an eyesore, a dismal blot on the landscape” (Neimark and Mott, 1999[1908-1913]: 132-133, Document 68; see also Cronon, 1996: 72). Muir depicted the lake’s unnatural origins and processes in ways that cast doubt on humans’ abilities to replicate this natural beauty, and so stood in sharp contrast to the conservationists’ favourable view of human intervention, however limited.

Beauty, and what Cronon refers to as the ‘sublime’ were extremely important in advancing the discourse of preservation. The beauty of wilderness was graphically depicted by painters, artists, writers and photographers, whose work became widely disseminated and appreciated. These works invited visitors to experience these settings personally and intimately. The pictures that John Muir painted with words were equally powerful. Muir can be directly credited with the creation of the protected areas of the Grand Canyon, the Sierras, and Yosemite

National Parks, and indirectly through the Sierra Club, with many others (Hart, 1983: 41). However, as the above suggests, the linkage between preservationist discourses, like Muir's allusions to 'the natural cathedral', and the political processes of parks creation and development, is less straightforward.

While parks and protected areas were a necessary precondition to the kinds of educational appreciation that Muir desired, it is less clear that these were sufficient to achieving the goals that he described. Indeed, the processes of interpretation were well-managed and constructed by government and industry. Although interpretation was something that Muir felt was necessary, his focus was always on the direct, personal experience of wilderness, and indeed he viewed writing and discussion as getting in the way of his more important fieldwork. Through the institutions of parks, with their infrastructure of physical and psychological access, and their extensive interpretation, dissemination and reproduction of wilderness images, Muir's message of direct personal experience was inevitably subject to discursive revision. Preservationism is not in and of itself in contradiction to the 'use' of natural lands, it is, rather, the specific form and purpose of that use that is the issue for debate. The use of images, narrative descriptions of natural beauty, and the wide dissemination of these materials of interpretation framed both wilderness and the parks experience to the public in well-managed ways.

In line with this, the 'taming' of wilderness for which Muir was at least partly responsible also enabled another discursive shift to occur, namely the enclosure of wilderness spaces and their separation from the world of civilization. The preservationist movement which fostered the national parks system in the US contained its strand of patriotism and pride in a natural heritage (see Davenport and Rao, 2002: 34) and the sense that (in the case of the US) westward expansion and development threatened the loss of wild areas whose cultural value lay beyond measurable economic calculations. Frederick J. Turner's essay on the closing of the American frontier by the Census Report of 1890 is an important marking point for this enclosure (Neimark and Mott, 1999: 121, Document 60) and reinforced the sense that nature's mysteries, along with the expanse of the frontier, were by this time mostly conquered. In this way, the cultural processes of taming and enclosure of wilderness proceeded to create new visiting activities. Ultimately, these shifts shaped both visitors' own impressions of their experiences, and of the value and meaning of wilderness in general. It was a public educational resource, renewable and transferable to future generations through the institutions and governance infrastructure of parks.

Canada Follows Suit (Sort of): Canada's National Parks

The story of parks described above suggests a series of declines from the height of early preservationism, and the erosion over time of national parks by economic development and an explosion of tourism. In contrast, at first glance, the story of Canadian parks appears to be quite opposite, with a gradual shift away from commercial 'economic' considerations to increasingly more environmentally sensitive legislation designed by the 1980's to protect the 'ecological integrity' of parks, as stated in Canada's National Parks Policy of 1994. The Banff-Bow Valley Task Force Report, for example, emphasizes the early interest in nature and conservation that affected the National Parks Act of 1911, stating: "while tourism triggered the founding of Banff National Park, interest in conservation emerged quickly" (1996: 16). In fact, developments in the US were observed closely by Canadian decision makers, who learned from the decline of Yellowstone. The lesson was that preservation required management.

So, events in Canada followed a similar course to those in the United States in that preservationists in Canada were motivated by similar considerations to preserve and protect wilderness. Canada's first Commissioner of National Parks, James Harkin, liked to quote John Muir. The political programme of Muir and his Sierra Club, formed in 1892 to preserve the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast wilderness, inspired the national parks movement in other parts of the globe, including Canada, New Zealand and Australia (McCormick, 1989: 12). Although it is fair to say that in the 1880's, as Hart argues, "the idea of preserving the wilderness for its own sake was, as yet, somewhat in the future for the government of Canada", Sir John A. Macdonald and others intimately involved in promoting parks were not unfamiliar with the creation of parks in the United States. The examples of the Hot Springs at Arkansas, Yosemite Park, and Yellowstone Park, which "showed unhappy results" from private ownership, were new but far from unknown (Luxton, 1975: 56-57, see also Marty, 1985: 29, 64).

The specific form of the balance envisioned in the first parks legislation between preservation and conservation is a subject of some controversy in the environmental history literature. While some argue that a 'doctrine of usefulness' was an integral focus of the earliest efforts to establish parks and the historical trend of increasing economic encroachment confirms this (Bella, 1987); others have argued that this one-dimensional view obscures the preservationist impulses that guided Parliamentarians present at the establishment of the first park. In fact, MacEachern makes a good case that considerable effort was made to ensure that commercial resource exploitation was specifically excluded from 'use'. A concern with preserving aesthetics can even be considered as a deliberate effort to differentiate Canadian practice from the capitalist excesses that had permitted the destruction of some US parks (2001: 17-18).

The dilemmas of conservation and preservation were similarly in evidence in the early creation of Canada's first national park at Banff. In some ways, the history of Banff has made it an anomaly in the larger picture of changing national park values. It has features, like the CPR railway and the Trans-Canada Highway major transportation routes (features not shared by Yellowstone, for example), that have made it difficult to fully apply the principles of ecological integrity. These principles have been the primary focus of the National Parks Act and Parks Canada's policy statement of 1994. These Acts recognize this anomalous situation (Banff-Bow Valley, 1996: 14). However, this also underscores the changing and ambiguous patterns of national parks discourses, governance and history, and so Banff is a good example of the effects of these conflicting discourses on environmental outcomes.

The 'taming' of the wilderness was starkly symbolized in Canada by the completion of the CPR line and the 'last spike' in 1885. To paraphrase Pierre Berton, the "CPR became the symbolic linchpin of the nation, and the mountain parks, led by Banff, became part of this national dream" (Banff-Bow Valley Study, 1996: 16). The CPR's William Cornelius Van Horne worked closely with the government to advance the cause of national parks creation. Undoubtedly, as Hart has cogently argued, Van Horne's motives were primarily economic. He saw the mountain section as the primary source of tourist revenue to recoup some of the losses incurred in constructing the line through mountains. Nevertheless, when Van Horne approached William Pearce, the Superintendent of Mines, about creating a park at Lac des Arc on the rail line, Pearce expressed misgivings that if the land were given to the CPR it would build power plants at some point in the future and thereby destroy the scenery (Luxton, 1975: 54).

As with the development of tourist infrastructure in the US, these preservationist impulses were also subject to discursive revision and interpretation. Van Horne's philosophy of 'capitalizing the scenery' led directly to a well-orchestrated campaign to promote Canadian

mountain destinations to tourists from Britain and the eastern seaboard of the United States (Hart: 1983, 55, see also Marty, 1985: 48). This campaign included the production of pamphlets, illustrated train schedules, published testimonial accounts and even billboards depicting the mountain scenery and emphasizing the hunting, fishing and mountaineering potential of the 'Canadian Alps'. In addition, in 1885 Van Horne financed tours by members of Parliament and later by the Prime Minister and his wife to the Pacific coast with stopovers at Banff and visits to nearby Cave and Basin hot springs (55).

The reservation of the 260-square-mile Rocky Mountains Park (later Banff National Park) was given royal assent in 1887, with it being envisioned as a "great place of resort...there is beautiful scenery, there are the curative properties of the water, there is a genial climate, there is prairie sport and there is mountain sport; and I have no doubt that it will be a great watering place" (Sir John A. Macdonald quoted in Hart, 1983, 55). Under these circumstances, Banff joined Yellowstone and Royal National Park in Australia as the world's third and largest national park reserved for the preservation and enjoyment of wilderness (Marty, 1985: 41).

The 'taming' and 'encircling' of wilderness is aptly illustrated in the following quote from Agnes Macdonald, wife of Sir John A. Macdonald, during their journey over the CPR rail line:

Every turn becomes a fresh mystery, for some huge mountain seemed to stand right across our way, barring it for miles, with a stern face frowning down upon us; and yet a few minutes later we find the giant has been encircled and conquered, and soon lies far away in another direction (Hart, 1983: 24).

At the same time, early travelers would have been familiar with the destruction of wildfires, floods, and avalanches, and so the taming of wilderness for them was far from complete. The inherent attractiveness of mountain scenery was also not obvious to early visitors. As Marty says "there was little aesthetic enthusiasm for wilderness in the Great Lone Land of the northwest, which was one vast stretch of wilderness punctuated by the lights of isolated villages and farms" (1985: 42). Hazards impacted travel to a significant degree through the CPR line, and resulted in frequent delays and discomfort for passengers. In addition, by 1887 with the Park's inception, the Bow Valley was far from pristine, with the destructiveness reaching a peak with the devastating fires of 1889, caused by the combination of dry felled timber and sparks from the locomotives. Nevertheless, Van Horne's pamphlets conveyed a very different image:

There will be no hardships to endure, no difficulties to overcome, and no dangers or annoyances whatever. You shall see mighty rivers, vast forests, boundless plains, stupendous mountains and wonder innumerable; and you shall see all in comfort, nay in luxury (Hart, 1983: 25, see also Marty, 1985: 69).

As with the American parks, the beauty and sublimity of nature were to become important themes of preservationist sensitivities. However, the interpretation and dissemination of this beauty was a well-managed commercial process. As with the flooding of the Hetch Hetchy, the necessity of protecting the beauty of wilderness was recognized by all parties to the decision to establish parks, exemplified by the CPR's focus on promoting the mountain vistas. This paralleled the efforts by Muir and others in the US to preserve the Sierras. Van Horne, an aspiring amateur artist himself, and the CPR did much to foster the sense, for example, that

“dedication to nature at its most sublime was affecting Canadian art” (Hart, 1983: 31). Photographs commissioned by fall of 1884 were to be made into reproductions or rendered by artists into engravings for the CPR pamphlets. The engravings were produced by projecting photographic images on the block, which the artist would then follow in their design. Embellishments and enhancement were then usually made to improve the image. For example, artist John Fraser, partner of the photographic firm of William Notman, was commissioned by Van Horne to produce such renderings. Often, Van Horne would instruct Fraser to make the mountains more imposing by using wide-angle views of the photographs (35).

Perhaps as a response to the destructiveness observed in Yellowstone, the enclosure of parks and assertion of state control was more in evidence in Canada than in the US, where the public-private split was more explicit. However, concern for maintaining high standards of services and comfort for tourists was also a contributing factor (Banff-Bow Valley Study, 1996: 16) to the exercise of strong state control. Commissioned by the Federal Government in 1886 to “investigate, report, and make recommendations regarding claims arising at Banff” William Pearce insisted that the government retain control of all park land for the purpose of developing recreation areas for public use, and restricting access only to resources that could be developed if there was no destruction of beauty (Luxton, 1975: 56). The Commission of Inquiry set up to settle claims in 1886 in the area ended several seasons of quarrelling among three CPR workers who had stumbled upon the springs at Sulphur Mountain: Franklin McCabe, and William and Thomas McCardell (Marty, 1985: 33). Their inability to establish settlement rights or mineral rights resulted in difficulties in their being able to raise capital to develop the springs as a recreational and curative site. Others closer to government saw no such difficulties, recognizing that the provision of a national park would mean these costs would be borne by the government. McLeod Stewart, an Ottawa lawyer, applied as early as August 29 1885 for a 99-year lease on the area around Banff Springs provided that the government first expend \$50,000 on “buildings, roads, tramways, bridges, paths and other improvements” (Marty, 1985: 40). As Marty states “the speculators alone saw one thing clearly: it was to be a private preserve for the protection of investments and the propagation of dollar bills” (41). The creation of the park ended any discussion of further settlement, squatting, or sale, and these claims were unceremoniously thrown out or settled for nominal sums to recognize what little development had been done.

Informed by the example of the hot springs at Arkansas, and following the advice of P. Mitchell in 1885, Macdonald was inclined to assert the government’s control. A trip to Arkansas by John R. Hall in 1886 also led him to strongly recommend that the government assume absolute control over the hot springs near Banff in order to maintain standards of service and cleanliness (Marty, 1985: 48). However, as the above suggests, private rights to the proceeds of the park was assumed and the commercial motives of the government and the private speculators alike were primary. The precise nature of the public-private split was contested in Parliament by opposition members who objected to the CPR’s plans to profit from the park given that it was already heavily supported by the Canadian taxpayer (61). However, the objection to further government expenditure was overcome by Macdonald’s argument that the government should regulate, develop and administer the park in the public interest.

In addition, there is little doubt that such objections were also overcome by the acceptance of mining, lumbering and other industrial revenue-generating activities within the park. Enclosure meant the eviction of squatters, the settlement or elimination of their rights, and the imposition of strict governmental control over development. These actions were not seen as being in conflict with the enjoyment of tourists, such as sport hunting, which was not banned in

the park until 1890. The Stoney Indians of the Bow Valley were not given any hunting rights. The enclosure of their land in the park cruelly justified the removal of their rights to hunt in the park (Marty, 1985: 57). Enclosure was suited to wilderness lands that were “unspoiled by contact with humans” (Mowforth and Munt, 1998: 117), and was wholly facilitated by the simultaneous and parallel enclosure of aboriginal people onto reservations.

This brief history of the historical trajectories of parks in Canada and the US suggests that similar processes of taming and enclosure characterized the invention and development of parks over time. The taming of wilderness occurred both physically and psychologically. In the US, the taming of wilderness was arguably a more explicit process of interpretation over time, in which the precepts of preservation had to settle with the precepts of conservation. Nevertheless, the trends of taming, enclosure and management continued. In Canada, physically, the construction of the CPR line had the effect of making it accessible. Psychologically, in both the US and Canada, the artistic and photographic depiction of wilderness had the effect of constructing it as healthy and pleasurable to experience. Even though it had different forms and effects in Canada and the US, the enclosure of wilderness invested the state with the primary authority to govern, and so limited the types of legitimate activities and claims that could be made with respect to parks. Integral to the process was the facilitation of tourist visits to parks, at first directed toward enticing the elite, and then to producing a mass market of wilderness consumers.

The Past And The Present: What Has Changed?

One of the purposes of this paper, described above, is to compare the past and the present configuration of values in order to find insights into the discursive constructions and dilemmas of ethical governance today. What has changed and what has stayed the same? What can be said about the nature of environmental progress? Does the history related above support the view that economy and ecology have been the driving forces shaping national parks discourses, or is the picture more complex?

Canadians did not experience the same kind of debate over principles of preservation that shaped the US national parks system. In fact, in 1968, Roderick Nash stated: “Canadian public’s sensitivity to and enthusiasm for wilderness lags at least two generations behind opinion in the United States (McNamee, 2004: 24). It is difficult to identify clear milestones, like the Hetch Hetchy dam debates, that shaped the Canadian national parks to the same degree as the experience in the US was shaped by the conservationist/preservationist split. Nevertheless, as suggested above, there have been discursive tensions that have led to episodic periods of more or less limited forms of intervention and management (MacEachern, 2001: 14-15). The tensions have been reflected in the bureaucratic history of the parks, whose jurisdiction has come variously under the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Department of Environment, and the separate agency Parks Canada. These are embedded, as well, in the inconsistencies of policies of Parks Canada, which has variously worked to balance ecological integrity with public accessibility, revenue generation, and the interests of its employees.

Since the National Parks Act of 1988, ecological integrity and protecting ‘intact ecosystems’ has been the overarching principle driving governance of national parks. Informed by the (at that time) new global concept of sustainable development, a 1988 amendment of the National Park Act made the maintenance of ecological integrity the Parks Branch’s “prime directive” (MacEachern, 2001: 16), and established ‘wilderness zones’ within parks which

prohibited activities that were “likely to impair the wilderness character of the area” (Auditor General of Canada 1988, 58). These years were also accompanied by a doubling of the areas protected in Canada from 3 percent of ecosystems in 1989 to 7 percent in 2004 (Dearden and Dempsey, 2004). Efforts continue to create, by 2008, at least eight new parks, thereby preserving an additional 100,000 square kilometers (McNamee: 2004, 15). Nevertheless, this still falls short of the 12% of lands and waters of Canada given as a guidelines by the WWF in their Endangered Spaces campaign begun in 1989 (Hummel, 1995: xiii).

Although the exact meaning of ‘ecological integrity’ is in question¹, the Banff-Bow Valley Report of 1996 solidified the view that concern for ecological integrity should override the demands for tourism. Among the factors contributing to this shift was the incorporation of Banff into the World Heritage Convention of 1983 and Canada’s signing of the 1992 International Biodiversity Convention (Banff-Bow Valley Study, 1996: 12). In accepting limits to growth and calling for self-restraint and discipline in planning, this Report nevertheless sought a compromise among the many conflicting visions of Banff’s future. There is much to applaud from the early days of rampant commercialism and tourist promotion that would suggest a major progressive shift in thinking on the part of the Canadian public, decisionmakers, and tourists themselves. This would seem to indicate considerable environmental progress has been made in the period between Banff’s creation and the consolidation and growth of the national parks system we see today.

However, there are some important difficulties with this view. Although the values and principles guiding parks policy have clearly changed, the processes of discursive interpretation and construction, and the trends discussed above (taming and enclosure) continue as they have in the past. Events in the US illustrate this well. In the US, the trend away from protection and toward conservation deepened through the Depression, as “visits to national parks soared from 6.3 million in 1934 to 16.2 million in 1938” (McCormick, 1989: 21). National parks, begun as symbols of “unspoiled” wilderness, gradually became also political and cultural symbols of national pride and the objects of social engineering. While the early values of park management had followed a ‘scenic wonders’ view which held the parks in a kind of historical ‘art museum,’ gradually this was replaced with a “more temporally extended view that included manipulation of successional processes to obtain certain ends, often a more ideal or stable type of biota” (Bratton, 1985: 128).

In line with the enclosure of parks and the consolidation of state control, the preservationists= focus on the pristine beauty of age-old vistas became challenged by the conservationist value of deliberate management. Although in part driven by the development of scientific ecology and an improved understanding of ecological dynamics, the shift to conservationist management further legitimized the development of parks specifically for public recreational uses. The scientific principles of conservationist management held considerable currency in the US until around the 1960’s, when an ‘outdoor recreation crisis’ occurred in which visits to national parks began to exceed the capacities of these facilities. Concern began to be expressed over the ecological damage that recreational use was creating (Foresta, 1984: 62). However, by this time, to use the words of Bratton, the attitude was that “we think we=ve done it all” (1985:126).

By the 1960’s, the recognition of increasing problems led to a preservationist resurgence and critique of development plans. The response was to promote nature tourism as an

¹ Parks Canada defines it as “a state in which ecosystem structures and functions are unimpaired by human-caused stresses and where native species are present at viable population levels” (Searle, 2000: 31).

educational activity, as one that was accessible to a mass public market rather than simply an elite activity. In the US, Bratton refers to this as the ‘people plus’ era of management, begun with Mission 66, a ten-year program begun in 1956 to “rejuvenate old...facilities, to improve roads, and to build many new developments, including 130 new visitor centers” (1985:126-7). Conservation involved the reworking of visiting as an educational activity. Visits were designed to foster appreciation for the need to preserve wilderness, and therefore create the conditions for a popular support base to maintain parks.

In Canada, the shift to ecological integrity has had less effect on the longer-term cultural processes of taming and enclosure than one might suspect. Federal government economic priorities on deficit reduction resulted in cuts to interpretive and public education programs from the 1980s (Searle, 2000: 57). Funding for ecological research to better manage parks was also slashed, along with money for infrastructure. At the same time, marketing and promotion was emphasized, aimed at “attracting more visitors for longer stays over more of the year” (Searle, 104). Increases to user fees and privatization of parks services (Searle, 2000: 104) were designed to permit Parks Canada to increase revenue. Despite the continuing strength of the public’s commitment to ecological integrity, these trends have undermined the preservationist ethical foundation by reconstructing the activity of “visiting wilderness”. As a commodity like any other, there is less to distinguish a camping trip from a vacation to, for example, Disney World’s Wilderness Lodge theme park, where wildness is exhibited as tamed and controlled. As Higgs argues, “the public, upon whom park managers rely for political support, are being encouraged by Wilderness Lodge culture to value a tamed sort of wildness that may leave them much less tolerant of the discomforts of a real park” (Higgs, 1999).

The lack of a clear delineation in Canada between preservationist and conservationist politics makes it more difficult than in the US to identify a clear trend from preservation to conservationist ethics. However, the reading of the script of parks development, maintenance and restoration in terms of progressively more ecological integrity should be approached with caution. Although the values and principles guiding parks policy have clearly changed, the processes of discursive interpretation and construction continue to produce policies that are halting and inconsistent. The recent focus on ecological education and interpretation follows the patterns in the US, and depend still on ever-expanding visits to facilitate growth. The meaning of visiting has changed over time. However, whether the purpose of facilitating visits is to associate wilderness with health (as in the case of the hot springs), to foster appreciation of wilderness, or to build a support base for public valuation of parks, the process is never straightforward. These changes, therefore, should be viewed as less transformative than transient.

The Ethical Limitations of ‘Natural Destinations’

The 3 sets of conflicts described above, between limited parks and unlimited uses, between human intervention and natural processes, and between public and private governance, continue to affect decision making today. The extensive and intensive growth of human uses of parks, exemplified by the trends of taming and enclosure, continue. This means that the essential ambiguities of conservation and preservation are as important and vital today as they were at the founding of the first national parks in the US and Canada. These ambiguities amount to a set of ethical limitations ingrained into the conservationist/preservationist struggle to govern parks. An

assessment of the dilemmas of ethical governance of parks, therefore, should take account of these limitations.

Historically, parks are contending with the cumulative effects of unchecked pressure by humans to tame and enclose wilderness. There has been growth in the numbers of visitors and the relative economic importance of nature tourism. This form of 'extensive growth' includes the invention of new forms of nature tourism, like whale-watching, heli-skiing and polar bear watching, that push the physical boundaries of wilderness outward. In Canada, for example, Ivor Petrak, who led the refurbishing of CP's mountain hotels in the 1950's, envisioned the park around the Banff Springs Hotel as an all-season destination. The development of skiing in the 1960s led to year-round tourism, and the resulting increase in visitors meant that humans were increasingly present during sensitive wildlife seasons of mating and birthing (Banff-Bow Valley Study, 1996: 16-17). The theme of tourist marketing everywhere, not only in parks, is the "year-round" destination (Aguiar, et. al. 2005: 123-140). Similarly, humans are now present in some previously inhospitable environments like the open oceans, remote jungles, and the polar north.

In contemporary times, there are additional pressures not to just visit, but to settle in and near wilderness areas. This has been the logical extension of the historical intensification of uses. Just as early visitors jumped very quickly from horseback to automobile, with its increased environmental impact; so the trend today is to incorporate the features of permanent and semi-permanent amenities such as vacation homes, lakeside cottages, resorts, and RV lots. These forms of visiting require more resources, amenities, and infrastructure to sustain, and have a greater impact on the surroundings than previous forms. As well, residents of parks are ambivalent about continued expansion, which is understandable in that many make their living from the tourist economy. The survey conducted in spring of 1996 as part of the Banff-Bow Valley report resulted in contradictory responses: residents in the town of Banff supported tourism and residential growth while opposing commercial expansion. In fact, despite official policy designed to limit settlement in Banff National Park, the townsite's population has increased an average of 7% per year since 1950 (Searle, 2000: 48). Visiting and settling are more and more difficult to differentiate.

The first question, then, concerns whether parks are sustainable as bounded environments in the face of unlimited expansion and intensification of human uses. In 1972, the Wildlands League produced a definition of wilderness that included, among other things, the idea that wilderness should be "an ecological unit of a size sufficient to be essentially self-regulating. It should be large enough to ensure physical and psychological separation from the man-dominated environment" (Hummel, 1995: 183). Continuing pressure to expand access and to intensify recreational uses suggests that the assumption of a strict division between parks and their surroundings will likely be asserted with declining levels of success. Especially, the idea that wilderness can be framed as a renewable resource should be thrown into question.

One important source of expansion of demand is the global level. Mowforth and Munt note that, globally, one of the most rapidly growing sectors of tourism, as a response to the growth in an environmental sensibility and perhaps more education, has been visits to protected areas and pristine wilderness (1998: 98). Coupled with this has been the increasingly fierce level of competition among destinations as a result of deregulation of air transport, higher real incomes, and a reduction in capacity of supply as areas are built up (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998: 67; see also Searle, 2000: 15). The steady drumbeat of extensive and intensive expansion of uses of wilderness that has characterized the last 130 years will not likely abate. New

pressures, like the pressure for settlement close to park lands, and the pressure for more intensive uses of parks lands, will continue.

Similarly, the issue of public and private domains has important implications for the discursive construction of parks specifically and wilderness in general. There are some important senses in which this issue goes beyond the economy versus ecology frame, and encompasses issues that should be central to the ethical governance of parks. In the 1990s Parks Canada approved the *National Business Plan, 1995/96-1999/2000*, which proposed to double revenue from \$35 to \$70 million, through fee increases, user pay policies, and new profit-based enterprise units. In the words of the Banff-Bow Valley Task Force, this represented a shift from a “philosophy of public service to entrepreneurship” (1996: 19). A 1987 study by StatsCan revealed that some 90% of Canadians participated in some kind of ‘wildlife-related activities’ (quoted in Hummel, 1995: 29). These efforts pointed toward revaluing wilderness in terms of costs and benefits, including the benefits to be lost when wilderness is destroyed. In part, this can be attributed to the increasing willingness to assign values to wilderness based on economic methods of measurement. It is now quite commonplace to hear in public discourse, even among the business community, the economic arguments in favour of ‘leaving things alone’. This language is, nevertheless, conservationist rather than preservationist. It frames wilderness in instrumental terms.

It is worth remembering that William Van Horne’s ambitious plans to ‘capitalize the scenery’ in 1885 did not in their essence run counter to the ‘public’ interest in unifying the country. The economy versus ecology frame had no currency at that time, since the two goals were ethically equivalent. As noted above, the Canadian state has always claimed a strong stake in managing some selective public lands in the interests of the general good. However, the extension and consolidation of state control should not be unproblematically identified with the provision of the absolute good of environmental protection and the benefit of future generations, as it is in Canadian legislation. The variability of policies and philosophies of management over time belies the state’s claim to be able to encompass and fulfill these ethical goals in an absolute sense. This lack of permanence represents a real limitation on the oft-repeated claim that parks are to be transferred in as pristine a state as possible to future generations. The transience of the state’s and even the public’s interest in sustaining wilderness is in sharp contrast to the permanence and irreversibility of environmental changes.

The last ethical limitation of ‘natural destinations’ concerns the meaning and form of human intervention into natural processes. This is probably the thorniest question of all, and is at the heart of the conservationist-preservationist divide. What is the trajectory of this question today and in the future? If we extend the trends of the past 100+ years: from taming to enclosure; from enclosure to settlement; and from extensive growth to intensive use; a very different metaphor for wilderness emerges. Increasingly, the metaphor for wilderness is one that seems intuitively to be its opposite: the backyard. This metaphor encompasses a suburban, managed, exclusive, economical, cultured and thoroughly conservationist ethic.

In general, at the very least, the concept of wilderness should be revisited and redefined in historical and social context. John Muir’s writings, his example, and his metaphors, of the ‘natural cathedral’, the landscape, and the immediacy of the wilderness experience, posed important and essential questions about the human-nature relationship. One of the most important of these implications was the ethical imperative to justify human intervention in natural processes. Preservationist thinking began from this point. From the flooding of Hetchy Hetchy Valley to the present-day dilemmas of ski resort expansion, the same questions remain.

William Cronon advises those who think about wilderness to find “the wildness that dwells everywhere within and around us” (1996: 89). In this regard, a lot depends on how we interpret this wildness and how we frame and understand ‘wilderness-oriented’ activities. As wilderness increasingly becomes our familiar backyard, it also risks becoming as pedestrian and domesticated as all backyards, and consequently as less like itself.

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