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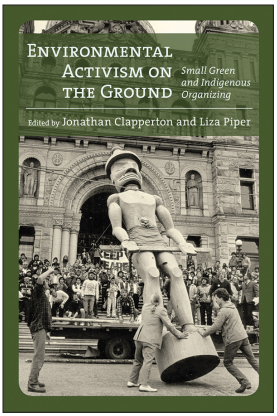

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM ON THE GROUND: Small Green and Indigenous Organizing

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Local Economic Independence as Environmentalism: Nova Scotia in the 1970s

Mark Leeming

Environmentalism in Nova Scotia during the formative years of the 1970s and 1980s was very much a concern of the province's rural population, whose environmental activism strongly resembled the ecological distribution conflicts characteristic of Juan Martinez-Alier's "environmentalism of the poor."[1] The centrality of these groups to Nova Scotian activism, to its successes and its organizational transformation, suggests that the privileged "post-materialist" activist was more the exception than the rule in early Canadian environmentalism, and that a clear look at activist cultures in the industrialized world might reveal much more such diversity than is often acknowledged. After a short historiographical examination of the meaning of "environmentalism," the following pages will trace the thread of local economic independence as environmentalism through several Nova Scotian controversies from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. First isolated local harbour-protection activists, then alliances of local anti-nuclear and anti-uranium activists, will demonstrate the centrality of the local level and an implicit understanding of local environment and economy as a functioning whole.

* * *

Historians are indeed known by the causes they select for emphasis, but the history of environmentalism and environmental movements has been marked since its beginning by a difference of interpretation over both causes and the effects they are meant to explain. One set of researchers has long favoured an exclusive definition, insisting for more than three decades that the "lifestyle" environmentalism of the affluent world in the 1960s—characterized by the pursuit of clean air, clean water, and outdoor recreation—is a qualitatively new development in the social history of the Western world, uniquely deserving of the label "environmentalism," a product of demographic and economic changes following the Second World War, and a social movement set apart from contemporary and antecedent movements. Others favour instead a more inclusive definition, ranking such lifestyle environmentalism alongside prior anti-industrial movements and contemporary environment-themed activism in the less wealthy world, all of them motivated by reactions against modernity, specifically against the undesirable effects of industry, capitalism, and the dominance of scientific thinking.

The roots of the former (exclusive) view lie with one of the earliest and best-known theories of the origin of 1960s environmentalism, put forward by the sociologist Ronald Inglehart in 1977 in a book called *The Silent Revolution*. Inglehart insisted on the newness of environmental concern above all. According to his theory, unprecedented postwar North American affluence freed a generation from exclusive fixation on "material well-being and physical security" and allowed it to pursue "belonging, self-expression, and quality of life," defined as racial, sexual, and generational equality, participatory democracy, clean air and water, and opportunities for recreation in nature.[2] These "post-material" values were not ideals but "amenities," objects of consumption distinguished from consumer items only by their immaterial nature and their appeal to those whose material needs were already satisfied. In other words, "the environment" was a luxury commodity invented in the wealthy West. The theory of post-materialism offered an easily understood explanation for the social movements of the 1960s, and it has proven enormously popular among sociologists and historians of environmentalism, who since the 1970s have often preferred to focus their energies on quantifying or recording the conditions under which new movements emerge and flourish rather

than complicating the explanation of why they emerge. Using measures of resource mobilization, social network integration, and political opportunity, they have pursued the how of environmentalism, frequently to the exclusion of the why.[3]

The historian best known for leaning on the post-materialist thesis is Samuel Hays. Already well known for his 1959 history of American conservation politics, in later works he insisted that conservation "gave way to environment after World War II amid a rising interest in the quality of life beyond efficiency in production," and that the two distinct movements "often came into conflict as resources long thought of as important for their material commodities came to be prized for their aesthetic and amenity uses."[4] His *Beauty, Health, and Permanence* is an excellent history of environmental politics in the United States, but the only variation it acknowledged in the nature of the popular movement was limited to the pace of change in one region or another and the different nature of the issues encountered by, say, rural and urban environmentalists.[5] Hays did not dwell on the possibility of different reasons for action, because the reason was provided by the post-materialist definition of environmentalism. Recent Canadian research on environmentalist history is more nuanced than Hays', but often carries on the (sometimes unspoken) assumption that environmentalism as a phenomenon has largely been the leisure activity of an urban economic and social elite.[6]

The common element among Hays and those who share his view is the assumption that environmentalism as a social movement is exclusive to the affluent global North. That much is to be expected from a group so steeped in post-materialist theory. Turning to the more inclusive analyses, it is appropriate therefore that the major challengers to the post-materialist group come from the fields of global and post-colonial history, and doubly so that they are led by the same man who challenged Hays' careful separation of nineteenth-century conservation and the twentieth-century environmental movement. Ramachandra Guha's work with the Spanish environmental economist and historian Juan Martinez-Alier has revealed a world full of different environmentalisms: reactions to industrialism based on the defence of traditional economies, home places, and non-economic values. Martinez-Alier's best-known book, *The Environmentalism of the Poor*, traced such activist movements in Peru, Ecuador, Indonesia,

India, and beyond. At the heart of their analysis is a return to genuinely environmental explanations for historical change: diverse environmental values are a given, and activism arises when environmental degradation results from industrial development and inequality of power. As Guha wrote in 2006:

> Wherever there is autocracy there are dissenters asking for democratic rights. Where there is capitalism, socialists will rise to oppose it. Where there is patriarchy, there will be women who resist it. The form, shape, and intensity of these protests varies; the oppositional impulse remains constant. So, one might say, wherever there is industrialization, there is environmentalism.[7]

This alternative approach owes a great deal to European social movement theorists, especially Jürgen Habermas, who focused on the role of new social movements as a step beyond the Marxist fixation on distribution struggle as the central conflict of society, and into a more complex set of values and grievances triggered by the rise of modernity. Accordingly, the varieties of environmentalism studied by Guha and Martinez-Alier find their origins in the nature of the relevant power relationships. In the United States, for example, it may take the form of a race-based environmental justice movement, fighting the disproportionate exposure of poor Black and Native communities to environmental hazards, while in India it manifests as agrarian villagers bodily intervening between their village forests and loggers sent by the Indian Forest Department. Nor is there any restriction in this analysis to the post-1945 era; Indian resistance to the Forest Department, for example, was just as fierce when the department's name was prefaced by the word "British." In response to the post-materialists, Martinez-Alier has pointed out that while "the hierarchy of needs among poor people is such that livelihood is given priority over marketed goods . . . livelihood depends on clean air, available soil, clean water." Moving on to his analysis of noneconomic values, he argued that many third-world environmental conflicts are "ecological distribution conflicts" provoked by the imposition of an unfavourable monetary "discount rate" on the sacred sites, home places, and other economically incommensurable

values held by poorer people.[8] Unfortunately, much of the international history remains trapped in the post-colonialists' jaundiced view of the global North: with the exception of the environmental struggles of a racial underclass, post-materialist notions of privileged "amenity" or "full-stomach" environmentalism dominate the view of activists in Europe and North America. Research into environmental justice movements in the industrialized world often focuses on racially framed conflicts rather than on ecological distribution conflicts generally.[9]

As the remainder of this chapter will argue, via the story of one Canadian province, ecological distribution conflicts are a part of the story of environmentalism in much more than only the poorer countries of the world, and post-materialism is a poor explanatory framework upon which to model a complex social movement. Environmental activism on the ground is difficult or impossible to understand without acknowledgement of the multiple ecological distribution conflicts at play in environmentalist alliances, as ably demonstrated by Zoltán Grossman's analysis of Northwest North American anti–fossil energy activism in this volume. Scholarship on developed-world environmentalism would benefit from a broad application of Guha's and Martinez-Alier's ideas in the investigation of activism among all social and economic classes, including environmentalism from below.

* * *

Environmentalism in North America is typically characterized as an urban phenomenon, but the strength of rural activism in Nova Scotia in the 1960s demonstrates the centrality of rural protest groups to the establishment of a provincial movement. Building on the tradition of resource conservation, and augmented by back-to-the-land immigrants comfortable with social movement politics, activists in Nova Scotia reacted to the personal experience of industrial developmentalism by drawing on a global rhetoric of environment, social justice, and democracy. The change from relatively conservative and elite activism in the 1950s to a scientifically populist style in the late 1960s, with the promise of sustained future opposition to government development plans, alarmed the government in Halifax, much as 1960s radicalism alarmed governments everywhere. There was tremendous variety within environmental activism in Nova

Scotia in the 1960s, and attempts by government to control and channel the energy of public opinion with targeted funding produced yet more, leading to the creation of less politically contentious groups in the city, such as the Ecology Action Centre (EAC). Yet the defence of local and traditional economies from the negative effects of state-directed industrial modernity remained central to environmentalist argument everywhere in the province.[10]

Most environmental activism in Nova Scotia in the 1960s and 1970s was isolated, the work of local groups, typically limited to one town and its hinterland (or a group of nearby towns and theirs), with minimal links to other local groups. Almost never did these local groups comprise members from more than a single county, and those that did, such as the South Shore Environmental Protection Association (SSEPA), based their organization on an established economic association within the area (the South West Nova Scotia Lobster Fishermen's Association, for SSEPA). There were common elements, however. Threats to bodies of water, for example, signalled the beginning of a new age in environmental concern at the end of the 1960s. In this, as in so much else, Nova Scotia's experience reflected and amplified the pattern in the rest of North America and the world. The provincial government's quest for economic development during the prior decade had literally changed the face of the province, often for the worse, and the change was not evenly distributed. New industrial projects tended to cluster around harbours for a number of reasons, including ease of access, available workers, clean water supplies, and the availability of the ocean as a sink for industrial waste. By natural extension, the new activism of the era centred on the same locations, the majority of them rural, as local residents fearing for their traditional lifestyles and livelihoods under new land use and water use regimes found the traditional politics of dissent ineffective against polluters working hand-in-hand with government. Fed by direct observation of environmental ills and mistrust of government, as well as by a rising global environmental consciousness, new ideas and patterns of activist behaviour spread across the province from their estuarine enclaves. Environmentalists made increasing use of scientific research, not to convince politicians of their claims as their conservationist forebears had done, but to draw ever greater popular support to their campaigns of political pressure. And with the new style of environmental politics came

a new and lasting pattern of participation, with a much greater presence of women, young people, Mi'kmaq, and working-class Nova Scotians.

An efflorescence of environmental activism at the end of the 1960s built, piecemeal, the conditions for a sustained movement, beginning mostly around polluted harbours such as Boat Harbour in Pictou County and Chedabucto Bay in Guysborough and Richmond counties, and moving from there to other areas and issues.[11] The first instance of populist and non-modern environmental activism as a defence of local economy came at Boat Harbour, where in 1965 the provincial government finally enticed the Scott Paper Company to build its newest, state-of-the-art kraft pulp mill at Abercrombie Point, with an unusual provision in the agreement that had the province rather than the pulp company operating the mill's effluent treatment facility. Seizing on the natural lagoon of nearby Boat Harbour as a cheaper alternative to a purpose-built treatment plant, the Nova Scotia Water Resources Commission put up dams in the lagoon to divide settling and aeration ponds, walled it off from the sea, and constructed a pipeline underneath the East River of Pictou to carry 25 million gallons each day of effluent water, dissolved and suspended bits of wood pulp, and various toxic leftovers from the kraft bleaching process to the new facility. Economically, at least, it was a success story; the Scott mill prospered. Boat Harbour, on the contrary, died. Once a popular site for swimming, boating, and fishing, its waters promptly turned black after the mill opened, as the oxygen demands of decomposing wood pulp left nothing to support life.[12]

Particularly keen to celebrate their sense of belonging to a particular place and particularly ill-treated during the creation of the facility, the Mi'kmaq of Pictou Landing were among the first to react to the environmental downside of developmentalism, though even at Pictou Landing they were not alone.[13] From the perspective of the band's negotiators, the destruction of the harbour was not even supposed to have happened. They had been dispatched to meet with federal and provincial officials early in the province's talks with Scott, after the band indicated that they would not accept the conversion of their reserve's beautiful natural harbour into an industrial facility. In 1966, they were taken to a pulp mill in Saint John, New Brunswick, where water issued clear and clean from the outflow pipe, and were reassured that the same conditions would prevail in Pictou.

With an offer of $60,000 compensation for fishing rights on the table and, according to Pictou delegate Louis Francis, a generous supply of alcohol as well, the band's team agreed to the government's terms.[14] When effluent began flowing into Boat Harbour, they realized their mistake. The Saint John lagoons they had been shown were not even receiving effluent at the time of their visit, and $60,000 was a pittance next to the millions it would cost to build a truly state-of-the-art facility, for example, $4 million for the most modest improvements at Boat Harbour proposed by the optimistic and quite conservative Rust report in 1970.[15]

Members of the Pictou Landing Band had good reason to feel helpless in 1970. "I guess we're beaten," was Chief Raymond Francis's assessment, but they would not give up, and in their fight they had allies as well, willing as never before to challenge the authority of the state.[16] Though environmentalist coalition across the province was not yet common, local solidarity was, and non-Native residents of Pictou Landing felt nearly as deceived as the band. Since 1965 they too had been demanding answers from the Water Resources Commission, and had received similar assurances that no pollution of water or air would result from the project. As the progressive degeneration of the harbour and its surroundings confirmed their fears, however, more and more residents turned to a local citizens' committee (eventually named the Northumberland Strait Pollution Control Committee—NSPCC) to press for answers. Municipal councillor and NSPCC member Henry Ferguson wrote for the people of Pictou Landing in 1970:

> With the winds down the harbour we get air pollution from Scott Paper, then with the winds east we again get pollution, this time from Boat Harbour. The fumes are really terrible, almost unbearable. Then we get water pollution coming down the East River from leaks in the pipe across from the Scott Paper Co. to Pictou Landing. Then water pollution from Boat Harbour when the tide is coming up and runs along Lighthouse Beach and into Pictou Harbour.

To that, he added swarms of mosquitoes and gnats, expropriation through flooding of harbour-side land without notice and with minimal

compensation, and threats to the Northumberland Strait lobster fishery.[17] The last was particularly worrying in communities along the shore, where the Maritime Packers Division of National Sea Products reported a 26.7 percent drop in lobster landings in 1968 and a 42.2 percent drop in 1969.[18] In fact, the threat to the fishery became the major rallying point for activists.

Official response to public outrage at Pictou Landing was muted at best. Accustomed to working without heed to local opinion, E.L.L. Rowe, the chairman of the Water Resources Commission and a former chemical industry employee who had designed the leaking sub-river pipeline and had promised minimal disruption to life around Boat Harbour, doubled down on his defence of the facility. He insisted that he personally found the smell of the rotting lagoon and the "rotten egg" hydrogen sulfide fumes from Scott's stacks inoffensive, and that the province could not make funds available for the solution of merely aesthetic problems. He also made it clear that mercury contamination of the mill effluent from the associated Canso Chemicals plant would have to be tolerated, as the development of the plant had "gone too far" and cost too much to be altered.[19] Other officials and politicians holding similar views attracted attention from time to time, including the agriculture minister, Harvey Veniot, who dismissed the affected locals with the oddly poetic epithet "calamity howlers," or the fisheries experts at the Department of Fisheries in Ottawa, who would only repeat that Boat Harbour's effluent had been tested and proven non-toxic to lobster larvae.[20]

Local activists refused to be put off the issue. Unable to secure a hearing and unable to sue the province for nuisance without permission from the government, they turned fully to public opinion as a source of influence. And as a tool for generating public support, they turned to science, with a strong focus on the impact of the facility on the lobster fishery. The NSPCC commissioned a report from Delaney and Associates that followed the brown film of Boat Harbour effluent twenty kilometres down the shore and calculated that about 185 tons of organic solids spilled into the sea from the harbour each day.[21] D. C. MacLellan at the Marine Studies Centre at McGill University found the effluent resulting in an unusually great mortality among the plankton at the base of the Northumberland Strait food chain, and Dr. J. G. Ogden at Dalhousie University answered the

federal fisheries experts by reminding them that, toxic or not, dark brown effluent that blocked sunlight from reaching the sea floor would deprive lobster of both food and sheltering seaweeds. "A sheet of opaque glass put over the lawn is not toxic," he said, "but it will kill the grass. The effluent from Boat Harbour is as effective as a sheet of black plastic."[22] So armed with expert authority of their own, the NSPCC members pursued their environmental justice arguments in the press on behalf of the Mi'kmaq and Northumberland Strait fishermen deceived or ignored by the federal agencies designated to safeguard their interests. Nor were their aims narrowly or selfishly defined; one fisherman-activist told reporter Tom Murphy that compensation for losses might not be welcome, if it allowed the condition of the strait to continue deteriorating. "We want our environment cleaned up, rather than subsidies for a dirty environment," he said.[23]

Boat Harbour represents the most bitterly fought of the late 1960s battles, but it was far from the only one. At the same time as Pictou County was discovering the need for citizen activism, other groups were forming in the province after their own personal experiences with the dark side of developmentalism. Some focused on local economies almost exclusively, for instance those resident on the shores of Chedabucto Bay in 1970, when the *Arrow* oil spill drove home the threat posed by the Canso Strait industrial complex to the fisheries. But none became more than a local cause, until 1972.[24]

The triggering event that brought the province's scattered environmental activists together in a lasting way was a surprise to almost everyone. The first indication to the public that the new Regan provincial government might be considering a nuclear project came in June 1972 from the Halifax *Chronicle Herald*. Claiming to have information from a source inside government, the newspaper reported that the premier had met personally and in secret with representatives of a US company, Crossley Enterprises Ltd., that wished to build a nuclear plant on tiny Stoddard Island, near the southwest tip of the province.[25] Details remain scarce, because the project never moved past the informal proposal stage; however, the plan, as it emerged from further leaks and admissions over the rest of the summer and the following winter, was to build ten US-style light water reactors (LWRs) on Stoddard Island and transmit the electricity generated there directly to New England via undersea cable. Had it been built, the

complex would have been the largest generating station in the world, at 12,000 megawatts, though some immediately doubted that the plan could even work.[26] But the details, or indeed the feasibility of the plan, were not at issue in the summer of 1972, for the simple reason that the details were not available. Members of the Regan government and the publicly owned Nova Scotia Power Corporation (NSPC) initially refused to comment on the leak for several days, and when the premier did eventually speak, he offered only equivocal denials that any earnest negotiations were afoot, which did nothing to quiet speculation.[27] By then, it was too late. The opposition Progressive Conservatives (PCs) had discovered the issue and happily forced Premier Gerald Regan into fresh and ever less credible denials as more information came to light, repeatedly highlighting the government's reluctance to volunteer any facts on new developments.[28] If any issue can be said to have initially united those opposed to the Stoddard Island proposal, it was the secrecy around the project. For every declaration of disinterest by the federal energy minister ("unless," he said, Canadian CANDU reactors could be used instead of American LWRs), there was a countervailing shock, as when Crossley Enterprises' Canadian holding company was revealed to have purchased Stoddard Island in 1971, or when the man who handled the acquisition, Halifax lawyer Ian MacKeigan, was appointed Nova Scotia's new chief justice in 1973.[29] Through a year of uncertainty, suspicion of the government's intentions was the link that bound environmentalists together.

Unsurprisingly, the earliest reactions from existing ENGOs (environmental non-governmental organizations) focused on the issues of government secrecy and public participation. But local fishermen were not content to let established agencies—governmental or activist—monopolize the issue, when one of the key unknowns about the project was the potential impact on ocean ecosystems of a large reactor complex in the middle of the richest lobster fishing area in the province. Thermal pollution and entrainment were well-known concepts among interested fishermen.[30] Organized over the winter of 1973, the new South Shore Environmental Protection Association (SSEPA) would go on to hold a central role in the province's environmental movement for a decade. For now, it targeted all three levels of government in an attempt to defeat the Stoddard Island proposal politically, rather than merely request public participation or

work at public education. Following the lead of the Southwestern Nova Scotia Lobster Fishermen's Association (and sharing members with it—essentially a joint organization), SSEPA won unequivocal support from Barrington and Yarmouth municipal councils, PC offshore resources critic and MP for South Shore Lloyd Crouse, and Liberal Social Services Minister and Shelburne County MLA Harold Huskilson, by impressing upon them that, in the words of fishermen's association president Glen Devine, "this whole area [and its voters] depends entirely on fish."[31] Under the leadership of author and activist Hattie Perry, SSEPA found its greatest success in October 1973, when Premier Regan attended a public meeting in the tiny village of Barrington Passage, about ten kilometres from Stoddard Island, and found waiting for him hundreds of nearby residents who wanted only one thing. He gave it to them: a clear promise for public consultation on any proposed nuclear plant in Shelburne County, and another that no project would be approved that might harm the fishery.[32]

Political pressure won a victory for SSEPA. The assurances given at Barrington Passage, combined with the failure of the proponent to quickly address the federal Atomic Energy Control Board's (AECB) suggestion of CANDU reactors, seemed to spell the end of the Stoddard Island proposal by 1974. There was, however, no corresponding revival of trust in government and no dissolution of the groups that led the fight. If anything, the continued commitment of the Regan government to two badly functioning heavy water plants built to supply the Canadian nuclear industry in the late 1960s at Glace Bay and Port Hawkesbury suggested a continued interest in nuclear technology.[33] SSEPA continued enthusiastically to lead opposition to any and all nuclear development schemes, leaning on other groups' research and adding their own on alternative energy sources and the health effects of radiation. This research and activism drew on an international discussion of nuclear dangers but always returned to the threat posed to the local fishing economy and the lack of appreciable local benefit.[34] SSEPA led Nova Scotian opposition to New Brunswick's Point Lepreau reactor project, on account of the shared Bay of Fundy ecosystem. SSEPA also showed its continuing concern over the threat of government secrecy at an Environmental Control Council public hearing in Yarmouth a month after the Barrington Passage meeting, where according to the ECC, "the people present cited the example of the apparent lack of an

environmental assessment study for the Strait of Canso [refinery and shipping complex] as evidence that these kinds of projects and developments can and will go forward without public approval."[35]

Environmentalism in Nova Scotia did not remain such a congeries of independently operating parts after the Stoddard Island episode. Success bred further cooperation, first against New Brunswick's reactor project, then against the Nova Scotia government's encouragement of chemical forestry. Regional cooperation in the mid-1970s also developed very much like the budding intra-provincial cooperation in Nova Scotia. Phone trees, frequent correspondence, and infrequent meetings linked small groups from the Chaleur Environmental Protection Association in northern New Brunswick to SSEPA in southwest Nova Scotia, mostly around the issue of New Brunswick's proposed reactor but particularly within the context of a proposed single regional electrical utility (the Maritime Energy Corporation). Political cooperation at the regional level begat activist cooperation at the same. New Brunswick's reactor project, however, unlike Nova Scotia's, enjoyed the strong support of both the provincial government in Fredericton and the federal atomic energy agency. As a result, Nova Scotia's established activist network protested impotently from the sidelines of a provincial debate in New Brunswick dominated by pro-nuclear positions. In the end, New Brunswick's anti-nuclear moment did not arrive until 1979, in the aftermath of the Three Mile Island disaster in the United States, and Nova Scotia activists could achieve no more than the withdrawal of their own government (along with Prince Edward Island) from the regional utility, incidentally removing the main motivation to pursue regional activist cooperation.[36]

The defence of local economies remained a feature of Nova Scotian environmental conflicts, large and small, throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, but no episode so effectively gave a voice to those defenders as the battle over uranium mining in 1982 and 1983. The province's initial venture into uranium mining during the 1970s had little to do with energy policy and much to do with the continued quest for regional economic development. With the encouragement and assistance of the federal government, provincial governments in Atlantic Canada in the middle years of the decade set about attracting capital investment in the form of geological exploration and active mining.[37] Just like oil and gas extraction,

also on the province's development agenda, mining rarely makes for stable or lasting economic blessings, but from the perspective of a growth-hungry polity, potentially mineable deposits of zinc, lead, silver, copper, iron, tin, and uranium were too tempting to resist. The first hint that uranium might be found in commercially attractive quantities sent geologists rushing into the sandstone region of the province's north shore and Fundy shore in 1976, and from there into the Cobequid Highlands and the vast South Mountain Batholith, stretching from Halifax to Yarmouth.[38] As a favoured development project, uranium mining was promoted by the province as an engine of economic growth, but it also threatened the security of existing industries, especially agriculture in the heavily explored Annapolis Valley area.

The first new citizen action against uranium exploration in Nova Scotia came from an apparently unexpected source: the Women's Institutes. Nova Scotia's Women's Institutes began existence early in the twentieth century as service clubs for rural women, promoting education, civic engagement, and cultural activities. By the 1970s, however, they were often dismissed as conservative assemblies of older women still in the "citizen-apprentice" mode, and rapidly being left behind by the more progressive and politically savvy "citizen-activist" organizations like the Voice of Women for Peace and its even more recent peer organizations.[39] Yet the institutes were far from moribund or unresponsive to changing times, and in fact had much in common with the feminist peace groups that joined the earliest anti-nuclear activism in Halifax. The pesticide debates of the late 1970s drew a great deal of attention in agricultural communities and among institute members who considered the health of farm families a traditional women's issue. Some institutes also enjoyed a reinvigorated membership with the arrival of back-to-the-land families including women with experience in peace and social justice activism. Early in 1980, several Women's Institutes received information and assistance from the Department of Environment toward setting up Environmental Awareness Committees, and within months institutes in Hants and Kings counties were already at work gathering information on uranium mining.[40] By November, the Women's Institutes of Hants County moved from gathering information into building support for an anti-uranium movement, via presentations at the Farm Women's Conference in Truro and preparations

for a very leading questionnaire to be printed in the local paper, supposedly to determine the extent of popular concern about the health and economic effects of uranium mining.[41]

In early 1981, a rare Maritime-wide anti-nuclear gathering under the banner of the fast-fading Maritime Energy Coalition served to unite interested parties in demanding a moratorium and inquiry into uranium mining, but a common set of demands alone made for neither a full-scale movement nor a strategy for organizing one.[42] What remained to be found was a triggering event, something personal.

The winter of 1981 provided one, as news spread that one of the companies with claims in the Vaughan/New Ross area southwest of Windsor was no longer looking for uranium so much as looking at a mineable deposit of it. If any single factor turned uranium from the obscure preoccupation of a relatively small number of peace activists, anti-nuclear groups, and Women's Institute members into a major environmental controversy, it was the prospect of an actual uranium mine operating within a few years at a known site in close proximity to the most productive agricultural region in the province. With the encouragement of Women's Institute members who had spent most of the previous year studying the issue, statements of support for a moratorium on uranium mining and prospecting came from the Hants and Digby counties' Federations of Agriculture, and from the provincial NDP leader Alexa McDonough. Most worrying of all from the industry's perspective, the West Hants Municipal Council's vote to request a provincial moratorium was the direct result of the work of the Women's Institutes.[43]

Making the public aware meant appealing to people's personal identification with their home place and their economic interests in the same. Publishing a map of the province's combined uranium claims did that, offering visual proof of the extent of uranium prospecting in the watersheds of populous coastal settlements. So too did constant reminders of the incompatibility of uranium mining and agriculture, an echo of the economic justice arguments made by south shore fishermen during the Stoddard Island nuclear debate. In the aftermath of the 1982 provincial election, which saw uranium mining become a major campaign issue, activists redoubled their efforts to reach the public and persuade Nova Scotians of the danger and foolishness of uranium mining. The Annapolis

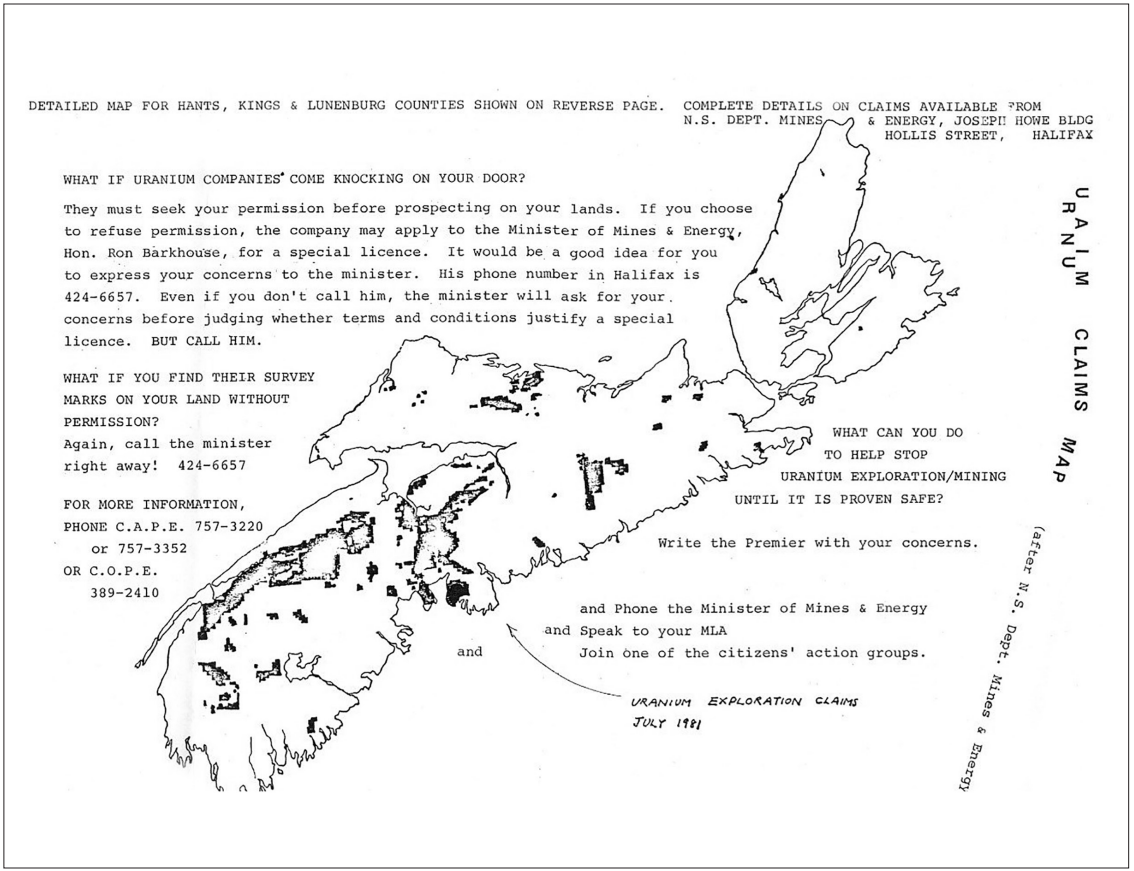

FIGURE 9.1: Uranium Claims Map. Courtesy of the Ecology Action Centre Fonds (MS-11-13), Dalhousie University Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Valley Branch of the Nova Scotia Medical Society resolved in November of the same year to join the call for a full moratorium, followed two weeks later by the General Council of the provincial Medical Society.[44] Agricultural groups continued to lend their names to the effort as well: the Cream Producers Association, the Kings County Federation of Agriculture, and more.[45] And new local anti-uranium groups sprang up like spring grass. Rather than expand geographically, members of the first single-issue anti-uranium group, Citizen Action to Protect the Environment (CAPE), helped local activists start their own groups in Kings County (Kings Association to Save the Environment [KASE]), in Vaughan (Residents Enlisted to Save Communities from Uranium Exploration [RESCUE]), in New Ross (Communities Organized to Protect the Environment [COPE]), and in Chester (Citizens Against Uranium Mining [CAUM]). In Cumberland County and in Colchester County, established anti-nuclear activists launched into anti-uranium campaigns as well, all of them, like the South Mountain groups, arguing that uranium mining held the potential for ruin in agricultural communities.[46] As ever in Nova Scotia, the diverse economic character of local communities, along with the difficulty and expense of communication and assembly for working people in scattered towns and villages, made local organization natural and much more attractive to activists with no pressing reason to form unitary provincial groups.

The uranium controversy in Nova Scotia was relatively short-lived, on account of the successful transformation of the provincial Royal Commission on Uranium Mining (declared shortly after the election) from an apolitical sideshow to a major source of political embarrassment for Premier John Buchanan's Progressive Conservative government, which had come into power in 1978 determined to avoid engaging with the environmental controversies that had dogged the previous Liberal government under Gerald Regan. While it lasted, the inquiry gave advocates of local economic autonomy and traditional industries a venue in which to air their views, which they did with enthusiasm. From the very first hearing, in New Ross, Lunenburg County, where Michael Keddy warned the audience that "it is only after exploration has taken place that the Landowner sees the folly of putting his trust in someone whose interests lay not in the land but in the provincial deficit,"[47] presenters returned again and again to a claim of authority based on a close relationship with the land and

a warning against economic developmentalism that favoured industries profitable to governments and metropolitan populations at the expense of locals. The connection with fishing industries was clear, and at least one presenter, the celebrated pollution-fighter Robert Whiting, promised to pursue court action under the federal Fisheries Act if uranium mining went ahead.[48] Agricultural communities provided more numerous commentators, however, like Ron Leitold of New Germany, who derided transnational mining companies' inability to make "a personal commitment—concern, devotion, loyalty, love (call it what you will) for a particular area and its way of life," or Jacqueline Sanford of Avonmouth Farms in Summerville, who explicitly warned about the impact of uranium mining on farmers, and against trading "three hundred years of land settlement at great cost, in patient work . . . for a dozen or so years of doubtful gain and two thousand years of filthy radiation."[49]

Though it is sometimes common to attempt a distinction between environmental defence of a home place and economic defence of the same, it is clear from the testimony of those who made claims of authority based on affinity with the land that the idea of pristine nature and the division between human and environment held little sway over their minds. The most articulate statement of their indivisibility came when Muriel Maybe and the Lunenburg County Women's Group drew upon Aldo Leopold's land ethic to describe how "we are obligated to respect and cooperate with the land if we hope to ensure our continued existence . . . we are, in fact, members of a community of interdependent parts. We need the soil, the water, the plants, the animals."[50] Maybe was by no means alone, however, and others, like SSEPA's Hattie Perry, still speaking in defence of the local fishing economy, made equally explicit reference to the fact that "one cannot separate man from the environment, for what affects one affects the other."[51]

The more explicitly political presentations to the inquiry frequently included localist themes and environmental justice arguments. In fact, the discontents of metropolitanism formed a shared language of environmental activism across Canada. In British Columbia's uranium inquiry, and especially in Saskatchewan's, anti-uranium activists had vigorously challenged the imposition of environmental risks on western Canadian hinterland areas in order to produce benefits that would accrue mainly

to urban centres and to the national capital.[52] It had not escaped notice in Nova Scotia that since the withdrawal of the Vaughan/New Ross claimholder from Nova Scotia the project had been pursued by the federal Canada Development Corporation, with the support and encouragement of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.[53] "They are here in Nova Scotia," argued CAUM's Brian McVeigh, "because this province acts as a hinterland for exploiting cheap resources to feed the manufacturing mecca of the central region of Canada, where one in three light bulbs are powered by nuclear power."[54] Worse yet, for several of the rural presenters, was the compounded imperial pressure from the provincial capital; as an angry Robert Finck complained to Inquiry Commissioner Robert McCleave in Bridgewater, "it's just another example of second-class citizens getting the dirt while the Halifax gentry get the gravy."[55]

* * *

These brief vignettes of Nova Scotian environmentalism serve to illustrate the simple proposition that environmental activism in the province was not always, or even often, concerned with "the environment" in abstract, nor with world-spanning issues of universal impact (though there was much connection of local and global issues). Fishermen, farmers, and foresters in Nova Scotia's 1970s and 1980s were environmentalists involved in ecological distribution conflicts, well aware of the interdependence of ecological systems and local economies, and keen to defend that unified human environment against industrial development that discounted the values of people in place. As C. J. Byrne complained at a hearing of the Royal Commission on Uranium Mining, governments pursuing economic growth in simple numerical terms were too ready to listen to "some bloody economist or systems analyst talking about costs as if he or she were talking about buying jellybeans down at the corner store or Woolies [when] they never talk about the other and more serious cost, the heartache and sorrow brought about because people have to leave an area they have learned to live with and love."[56] Few of these activists would have recognized themselves in Ronald Inglehart's description of the "post-materialist" environmentalist, or in the narrowly racial definition of an environmental justice advocate.

Notes

1 Juan Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (Northampton, UK: Edward Elgar, 2002).

2 Ronald Inglehart and Jacques Rene-Rabier, "Political Realignment in Advanced Industrial Society: From Class-based Politics to Quality-of-Life Politics," *Government and Opposition* 21, no. 4 (1986): 456–79.

3 Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977). This is not actually a very new idea of environmentalism, especially if one adheres to a broad definition including the Romantic movement; it echoes what Aldous Huxley wrote in the essay "Wordsworth in the Tropics," in *Do What You Will* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956 [1929]). For the sociologists of environmentalism, see J. Craig Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 527–53; David Snow, Louis Zurcher, and Sheldon Ekland-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements," *American Sociological Review* 45, no. 5 (1980): 787–801; Peter Eisinger, "The Conditions of Protest in American Cities," *American Political Science Review* 67, no. 1 (1973): 11–28.

4 Samuel Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955–1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3.

5 Ibid.

6 For example: Ryan O'Connor, *The First Green Wave: Pollution Probe and the Origins of Environmental Activism in Ontario* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Jennifer Read, "'Let Us Heed the Voice of Youth': Laundry Detergents, Phosphates, and the Emergence of the Environmental Movement in Ontario," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7, no. 1 (1996): 227–50; Mark MacLaughlin, "Green Shoots: Aerial Insecticide Spraying and the Growth of Environmental Consciousness in New Brunswick, 1952–1973," *Acadiensis* 40, no. 1 (2011): 3–23.

7 Ramachandra Guha, *How Much Should a Person Consume? Environmentalism in India and the United States* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 8. Guha credits the definition to G. M. Trevelyan in the 1931 Rickman Godlee Lecture, titled "The Calls and Claims of Natural Beauty." Similar ideas appear in Mahesh Rangarajan, *Fencing the Forest: Conservation and Ecological Change in India's Central Provinces 1860–1914* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); and E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991).

8 Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Juan Martinez-Alier, *Ecological Economics: Energy, Environment, and Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor;* R. Guha and J. Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (London: Earthscan, 2006); Jurgen Habermas, "New Social Movements," *Telos* 49 (1981): 33–37. Also, with Habermas, Nick Crossley, *Making Sense of Social Movements* (Buckingham, UK: Open U Press, 2002).

9 For example, Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," *Environmental Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1989): 71–83; Carl Zimring, *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Eileen McGurty, *Transforming Environmentalism: Warren County, PCBs, and the Origins of Environmental Justice* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Andil Gosine, *Environmental Justice and Racism in Canada: An Introduction* (Toronto: Emond Montgomery, 2008).

10 Mark Leeming, *In Defence of Home Places: Environmental Activism in Nova Scotia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

11 Other areas on the list of hosts of estuarine environmental movements include Shelburne Harbour, Mahone Bay, Bedford Basin, and Purcell's Cove. Ibid., 16–24.

12 Rust Associates, *A Review of the Boat Harbour Waste Treatment Facilities for Nova Scotia Water Resources Commission* (Montreal: Rust Associates, 1970).

13 The Mi'kmaq are the Indigenous inhabitants of Nova Scotia, and Pictou Landing is home to one of many small territories reserved to their ownership.

14 "Special Report: The Death of Boat Harbour," *Mysterious East*, September 1970, 21.

15 "The Death of Boat Harbour," 23.

16 "The Death of Boat Harbour," 22. The Pictou Landing Band did eventually win in court a recognition of the deception perpetrated in part by the federal government, and a settlement in 1993 that paid $35 million: Settlement agreement, 20 July 1993, http://boatharbour.kingsjournalism.com/wordpress/wpcontent/ uploads/ pdfs/15.199335millionagreement.pdf (accessed March 2013, site discontinued).

17 Henry Ferguson to Rust Associates, 24 March 1970, http://boatharbour. kingsjournalism.com/wordpress/documents/ (accessed March 2013, site discontinued).

18 "The Death of Boat Harbour," 22.

19 "The Death of Boat Harbour," 26. Reverend D. Glass, Sharon–Saint John United Church Stellarton, to Premier G. I. Smith, 16 August 1970, http://boatharbour.kingsjournalism. com/wordpress/wpcontent/ uploads/pdfs/09.1970smithfromchurch.pdf (accessed March 2013, site discontinued). Dr. J. B. MacDonald to Rust Associates Consulting Engineers, 22 March 1970, http://boatharbour.kingsjournalism.com/wordpress/ wpcontent/ uploads/pdfs/07.1970macDonaldLetterComplete.pdf (accessed March 2013, site discontinued).

20 "Special Report: The Death of Boat Harbour," *Mysterious East*, September 1970, 23. Reverend D. Glass, Sharon–Saint John United Church Stellarton, to Premier G. I. Smith, 16 August 1970, http://boatharbour.kingsjournalism.com/wordpress/ wpcontent/ uploads/pdfs/09.1970smithfromchurch.pdf (accessed March 2013, site discontinued).

21 "Report by J. A. Delaney and Associates on Pollution in Boat Harbour," box 116.6, Dalhousie University Institute of Public Affairs/Henson College fonds, UA-26, Dalhousie University Archives and Special Collections (hereafter DUA-SC).

22 "The Death of Boat Harbour," 22, 26.

23 "The Death of Boat Harbour," 22.

24 Silver Donald Cameron, interview by author, 1 November 2011. Others of the type included the Cole Harbour Environment Committee and the opponents of the Anil Hardboard Plant in Lunenburg County. See Leeming, *In Defence of Home Places*, 30–39.

25 "Air of Secrecy Surrounds Talks," *Chronicle Herald,* 6 June 1972, 1.

26 Alan Ruffman, interview by author, 21 February 2012. "Information Packet No. 1 on the Proposed Stoddard Island Nuclear Power Plant," March 1973, vol. 2, no. 2, Ecology Action Centre fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS-EAC).

27 "Regan Denies Talks," *Chronicle Herald,* 8 August 1972, 3.

28 "Nuclear Danger Feared," *Chronicle Herald,* 13 June 1972, 17.

29 "Federal Assistance for Proposed Nuclear Plant 'not likely unless . . . ','' *Chronicle Herald*, 10 June 1972, 2; Ralph Surette, *Montreal Star*, 22 September 1973, clipping file, vol. 2, no. 2, Ecology Action Centre fonds, PANS-EAC.

30 A complex of the proposed size, operating at full capacity, would have used 10 million gallons of water each minute, and released it back into the ocean 20 degrees warmer than taken. And regardless of temperature, the volume of water would have included a great many living creatures, few of which would survive their passage through the cooling system.

31 "Lobster Fishermen Would Fight Plant," *Chronicle Herald,* 17 June 1972, 4; "Some Facts on the Problems and Dangers of Atomic Energy," December 1972, vol. 3421, no. 20, PANS-EAC; "Necessary to Get All the Facts, says Regan," *Chronicle Herald,* 25 October 1973, 10; "Participate in Energy Policy," EAC application to O.F.Y., 1973, box 39.6, Ecology Action Centre fonds, Dalhousie University Archives and Special Collections (hereafter DAL-EAC).

32 "Necessary to Get All the Facts, says Regan," 10.

33 Bruce Little, "Glace Bay Plant: Trying to Fix Costly Blunder," *Montreal Gazette,* 16 May 1973, 33; AECL, *Canada Enters the Nuclear Age* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 337; Robert Campbell, "Heavy Water: Jewel to Millstone," *Mysterious East,* August 1970, 11–13. The Glace Bay plant was officially opened in 1967 but did not function until 1975, while the Port Hawkesbury plant began operations in 1970 but operated at far less than full capacity until refurbished in 1974.

34 The risks posed by low-level radiation exposure were (and still are) a well-known and bitterly contested point of debate among activists, nuclear scientists, and medical researchers in much of the world, as they had been since the famous Russell-Einstein Manifesto on radioactive fallout in 1955. See, for example, Roger Clarke, "Control of Low-Level Radiation Exposure: Time for a Change?" *Journal of Radiological Protection* 19, no. 2 (1999): 107–15.

35 ECC meeting report, 26 November 1973, box 41.20, DAL-EAC.

36 For more on regional anti-nuclear and other environmental activist cooperation, and on the New Brunswick and PEI movements, see Adrian Egbers, "Going Nuclear: The Origins of New Brunswick's Nuclear Industry, 1950–1983," (master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 2008); McLaughlin, "Green Shoots," 3–23; Mark Leeming, "The Creation of

Radicalism: Anti-Nuclear Activism in Nova Scotia, c.1972–1979," *Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (2014): 217–41; Alan MacEachern, *The Institute of Man and Resources: An Environmental Fable* (Charlottetown: Island Studies Press, 2003).

37 Province of Nova Scotia, Department of Mines and Energy, *Uranium in Nova Scotia: A Background Summary for the Uranium Inquiry – Nova Scotia, Report 82-7* (Halifax: Government of Nova Scotia, 1982), 3–9.

38 Bruce Little, "Shades of the Klondike in Atlantic Canada," *Atlantic Insight* 1, no. 2 (1979): 25; Province of Nova Scotia, Department of Mines and Energy, *Uranium in Nova Scotia*, 3–9. Companies exploring for uranium in the province included Lacana, Gulf, and Noranda on the north shore, and Esso, Aquitaine, Shell, Eldorado, Norcen, and Saarberg on the southern mainland.

39 Frances Early, "'A Grandly Subversive Time': The Halifax Branch of the Voice of Women in the 1960s," in *Mothers of the Municipality: Women, Work, and Social Policy in post-1945 Halifax*, ed. Judith Fingard and Janet Guildford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 28, 36.

40 Jocelyn Rhodenizer, South Berwick Women's Institute, to EAC, 17 September 1980, box 43.2, DAL-EAC; Document on NS Women's Institutes, 21 January 1980, vol. 3433, no. 38, PANS-EAC.

41 "Farm Women's Conference," *Rural Delivery* 5, no. 8 (1981); Burlington and Summerville Women's Institutes, *The Hants Journal,* 25 February 1981, 5.

42 "Conference on Health Effects of Radiation, Moncton," 20–22 February 1981, box 30.10, DAL-EAC.

43 Al Kingsbury, "Uranium Moratorium Urged," *Mail-Star* (Halifax), 13 March 1981, 52; "Aquitaine Mines a Rich Vein of Controversy," *Atlantic Insight* 3, no. 8 (1981): 16; EAC Board of Directors Meeting minutes, 28 January 1981, vol. 3420, no. 25, PANS-EAC; Burlington Women's Institute, "Brief Presented to the West Hants Municipal Council on the Subject of Uranium Mining," 12 March 1981, vol. 206, no. 28, Royal Commission on Uranium Mining fonds, PANS (hereafter RCU).

44 *Chronicle Herald,* 6 November 1981, Clipping File, vol. 206, no. 28, RCU; "Medical Society of Nova Scotia General Council, Community Health Committee Report," 20–21 November 1981, vol. 201, no. 10, RCU.

45 *Chronicle Herald,* 26 October 1981, Clipping File, vol. 206, no. 28, RCU, vol. 206, no. 28.

46 Donna Smyth, "The Public Debate Begins," *Rural Delivery* 6, no. 7 (1981).

47 Michael Keddy, transcripts of New Ross hearing, hearing #1, 2 April 1982, vol. 195, no. 12, RCU.

48 Whiting was well known for his leadership of a campaign of public pressure to clean up the Anil Hardboard plant in Lunenburg County in the early 1970s. Robert Whiting, transcript of Chester hearing, hearing #21, 7 July 1982, vol. 198, no. 3, RCU.

49 Ron Leitold, transcript of Bridgewater hearing, hearing #3, 20 April 1982, vol. 195, no. 16, RCU; Jacqueline Sanford, transcript of Vaughan's hearing, hearing #19, 25 June 1982, vol. 197, no. 12, RCU.

50 Muriel Maybe, Lunenburg County Women's Group, transcripts of Bridgewater hearing, hearing #3, 20 April 1982, vol. 195, no. 16, RCU. Other good examples include Ron Leitold, New Germany, transcripts of Bridgewater hearing, hearing #3, 20 April 1982, vol. 195, no. 16, RCU; and Norma Flynn, RESCUE, transcripts of Vaughan hearing, hearing #19, 25 June 1982, vol. 197, no. 12, RCU.

51 Hattie Perry, transcripts of Barrington hearing, hearing #14, 8 June 1982, vol. 197, no. 2, RCU.

52 Ralph Torrie, "BC's Inquiry and Moratorium," *CCNR's Transitions* 3, no. 1 (1980); Jim Harding, *Canada's Deadly Secret: Saskatchewan Uranium and the Global Nuclear System* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2007).

53 Ernest Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement 1919–1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979); Margaret Conrad, "The Atlantic Revolution of the 1950s," in *Beyond Anger and Longing: Community and Development in Atlantic Canada*, ed. Berkeley Fleming (Fredericton: Acadiensis, 1988), 55–98; Jennifer Smith, "Intergovernmental Relations, Legitimacy, and the Atlantic Accords," *Constitutional Forum* 17, no. 3 (2008): 81–98.

54 Brian McVeigh, transcripts of Chester hearing, hearing #5, 30 April 1982, vol. 195, no. 21, RCU. Michael Marshall pointed out that mining companies accustomed to operating in the Canadian North, where they felt few constraints on their activities, failed to see the difference between Nova Scotia and Canada: transcripts of Halifax hearing, hearing #10, 21 May 1982, vol. 196, no. 6, RCU.

55 Robert Finck, transcripts of Bridgewater hearing, hearing #3, 20 April 1982, vol. 195, no. 16, RCU.

56 Dr. C. J. Byrne, transcripts of Halifax hearing, hearing #10, 21 May 1982, vol. 196, no. 6, RCU.