



The Brief

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CANADALAND live in Fredericton: biting the hand that feeds in Irvingland

The Irving family of New Brunswick own more land than anyone in the world except for royalty and the Pope, declared Jesse Brown at opening of the live recording of his show, *Canadaland*, at St. Thomas University in Fredericton on Feb. 19. “How do they use their media monopoly to further their interests? What happens to those who try to compete with them?” Brown queried. Author Jacques Poitras, media activist Tracy Glynn, web videographer Charles Theriault and Green Party MLA David Coon were on hand to discuss the Irving’s and the influence they have on New Brunswick politics and policies.

Brown: Tell us about the current controversy around forestry in New Brunswick?

Poitras: Last year [in 2014] the provincial government announced a plan to allow private industry which has leases on public land, called Crown land, to increase their harvesting. David (Coon) and others have asserted that level of cutting is too high for the forest to be sustainable. This is a level of cutting that Irving and others have lobbied for more than a decade using a variety of public and private pressures.

Brown: How has forestry been doing in this part of the country founded on forestry?

Poitras: New Brunswick essentially began as what one author called it, a timber colony. It was built around cutting wood, sawing wood and using wood to build ships and other things. In recent years, many mills have closed. There were ten leaseholders [on Crown land] at one time and now there are four. What has happened is that Irving has taken over more of the leases that were abandoned by some of the other companies that closed their mills and left. I think it is fair to say that Irving now occupies a bigger piece of the pie than they ever did before and consequently governments feel a certain pressure to accommodate them because their mills are scattered around the province so there are lot of communities that depend on those jobs. The new government that was elected in September during the election campaign promised to review the new forestry plan because there was a lot of criticism from it but they never came out and said they would reverse it. David and others have views of how the forest industry that can be done differently, of how it can still create jobs but not rely on industry so much. The forest industry has taken a hit. That has made the companies that remain, including Irving, even more important relative to the economy.

Brown: To what extent has J.D. Irving Ltd., the government of New Brunswick and Brunswick News worked together in concert to achieve the goals of the Irving family?

Coon: Brunswick News has changed over time depending on who the publisher was. Jim Irving Sr. was never really involved with the paper. What has changed recently is that Jamie Irving is now directly involved in newspapers.

It’s not a secret that J.D. Irving is regularly at the Department of Natural Resources. Also they have a constant presence when there is a story in the media that they take issue with. They’re on the phone or writing letters. Deans of universities get a call when there is an academic speaking out about something related to their businesses. Media outlet managers get calls. Just the other day, I got a letter from Irving complaining about comments I made on CBC in an interview with Terry Seguin. That kind of constant calling and letter writing can have the effect of imposing a chill on the way that people speak about Irving-related businesses or forestry activities that they are engaged in. I’m sure there are many people in this room that have had that experience.

It’s also not just the way that Brunswick News is



Jan Wong, award-winning journalist and author, introducing the *CANADALAND* panel in Fredericton on Feb. 19. Left-to-right: Charles Theriault, documentary filmmaker, *Isourforestreallyyours.com*; Jacques Poitras, author of *Irving Vs. Irving: Canada’s Feuding Billionaires* and *The Stories They Won’t Tell*; Tracy Glynn, NB Media Co-op; and David Coon, Fredericton South MLA/Green Party. Approximately 300 people attended the show, including many members of the media and former reporters and columnists with Irving newspapers. Photo by Caroline Lubbe-D’Arcy.

covering the stories but also what they’re not covering or how they’re placing stories. I was pleased that the news of my forest bill was covered in the *Telegraph-Journal* but on page 5 and it left things out. In the gallery at the Legislature (for the introduction of the Forest Bill), there were representatives of independent mills and woodlot owners. It mentions that there were environmental and Aboriginal representatives there and that’s it. That was interesting that was left out.

Brown: Tell us more about your recent forest bill

Coon: The bill would annul the contracts that were established to guarantee for the next 25 years a significant increase in softwood cutting allowed to J.D. Irving and other companies that hold Crown licenses.

Like in B.C., the land has never been ceded by the First Nations in New Brunswick but you would never know that was the case or that there were even First Nations in New Brunswick by reading Brunswick News.

Brown: The (proposed) legislation is directly contrary to the interests of the Irving’s and they did cover it in their paper. Your complaint is that it’s on page five, it’s marginally covered and the way it’s covered characterizes it as something of interest to fringe voices and nothing to be taken too seriously. Is that accurate?

Coon: Media tends to talk to the powers-that-be and tends to reflect the conventional wisdom. If you are not connected to the powers-that-be or if you are not speaking in the narrative or the voice of conventional wisdom then you don’t tend to have much of a place in the media.

If you read the business pages of Brunswick News, you don’t get a robust sense of business enterprise in New Brunswick. You certainly don’t get much of a sense of their businesses with respect to forestry. It would be hard to know that there are independent mills in the province and what their struggles are. It would be hard to know anything about the economic role of private woodlot owners and the contracting businesses they run.

Brown: Let’s talk about private woodlot owners. I read on the CBC that the prior government said that private woodlot owners would be positively impacted by the deal the Alward government struck to give more Crown wood to the Irving’s. Is that true?

Theriault: Not at all. I discovered that our mill in Kedgwick, the Irving mill, had been turning wood away. The mill workers were supposed to work two shifts, 12 months a year. They were only working one shift and seven months a year. We were lacking wood and the Irving company was saying it was because the government wasn’t giving the mill enough wood. The Deputy Minister at the time said that we should have more than enough wood: 83,000 cubic metres of wood was supposed to be going to Kedgwick but the Mayor and the people from the mill said, no, we’re not getting it. For three years, they were taking that wood, which was coming from the Miramichi area, and sending it elsewhere, instead of Kedgwick. That robbed our people of \$3 million over three years. That hurts our economy.

The mill was cutting 400,000 cubic metres a year and employing 60 people but they were not buying any wood from the private woodlot owners. In 1982, the Crown Lands and Forest Act stated that the industry was supposed to buy from private woodlot owners before having access to Crown forest. The price paid to the woodlot owners had to be the same price they paid the province. It was kind of fair. In 1992, Frank McKenna came along and changed that law. Industry no longer had to buy from private woodlot owners. Overnight, the price of wood dropped 40%. The private woodlot owners were paid 40% less and the province was paid 40% less. Those with private woodlots now can’t make enough money to pay for the gas to cut the wood.

Brown: One has to wonder what is not getting said because of the lack of other media outlets. What happened to the *Carleton Free Press*?

Glynn: A few years ago, the *Carleton Free Press* was started by Ken Langdon who used to work for a Brunswick News newspaper, the *Bugle-Observer*, in Carleton County. He was met with numerous roadblocks put up by Irving. First, a court injunction was used to try and stop him. It argued that his newspaper would cut into the *Bugle*’s advertising rates. That injunction did not go forward. In the end, the paper ended up shutting down because the Irving paper, the *Bugle Observer*, had cut their advertising rates, making it very difficult for the paper to make a go of it.

The above transcript of the CANADALAND show in Fredericton has been truncated and edited for clarity. To listen to the entire show, go to canadalandshow.com and listen to episode 71.

Maine residents oppose relaxing of environmental rules for J.D. Irving mine

By CONNOR ALBERS

Augusta – J.D. Irving, Ltd is facing more public opposition to its attempts to change environmental regulations, this time in neighbouring Maine.

J.D. Irving is already under fire in New Brunswick for the heavy-handed lobbying that resulted in a forestry strategy for the province’s public forest that guarantees the company an additional wood supply for the next 35 years. The additional wood supply will come from de-classifying conversation forest and increasing clearcutting and herbicide spraying.

Aroostook Resources, a J.D. Irving company, plans to mine zinc and copper at Bald Mountain in Aroostook County, Maine. The company has been lobbying to loosen the state’s Department of Environmental Protection’s regulations for mining projects since at least 2012. Critics charge the proposed changes would allow unlimited groundwater contamination from mines, decrease the size of buffer zones between mines and public lands, and reduce the responsibility of mining companies to clean up toxic wastewater.

The planned project would take the form of a 100 acre pit mine, which J.D. Irving claims “has the potential to create tens of millions of dollars in economic activity and hundreds of jobs over a multi-decade time frame.”

J.D. Irving is the pulp and paper wing of the Irving family’s group of companies, all of which are privately held, and therefore not submitted to the same level of public accountability and financial transparency as publicly-traded companies. James K. Irving inherited the company from his father in 1992, with the proviso that he would renounce his Canadian residency in order to avoid paying taxes in Canada. He resides in Bermuda.

As in New Brunswick, the proposed environmental deregulation has resulted in stiff public opposition. In late February, about 100 people voiced concerns with the relaxing of the state of Maine’s environmental protection legislation for the J.D. Irving’s mine at a public hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources in Augusta. Environmentalists, farmers, hunters, fishing enthusiasts and landowners were among those present at the hearing.

The proposed rule changes were submitted in a Bill by Democratic representative John L. Martin and Democratic Senator Troy Jackson at Irving’s request, and have both Democratic and Republican support. The changes were rejected by the Legislative Committee in 2014 and sent back to the DEP for redrafting amidst concerns over public health and environmental pollution. Despite the previous rejection, the bill submitted this year is identical to the previous version.

Opponents of the mine say that the type of mining Irving plans to carry out presents serious ecological risks, specifically to aquatic wildlife.

Bald Mountain is in close proximity to the Fish River system of lakes, which is habitat for brook trout and a wide variety of other aquatic species.

A recent report published by the Natural Resources Council of Maine, “Bald Mountain Mining Risks, Hidden from the Public,” describes how hard rock mining exposes sulfide-containing rock to air and water, creating large quantities of sulfuric acid. “The acid also leaches out heavy metals naturally present in the rock, many of which are extremely toxic to fish



Bald Mountain in Maine. J.D. Irving wants to mine the area for copper, zinc and gold and has been lobbying the state to relax its environmental rules for the mine. The mine would be the first metals mine in the state of Maine in 40 years. Photo courtesy of Natural Resources Council of Maine and Lighthawk.

and other aquatic organisms,” the report states.

The mine’s opponents have raised concern that the proposed new rules extend the period of time a company is allowed to deliberate on cleaning up mining waste. It is common practice to leave toxic byproducts from mining in earthen-dammed tailings ponds until the company is ready to begin cleanup of the fluids.

Opponents fear the dams might leak or collapse, contaminating groundwater, rivers and streams of northern Maine with massive amounts of wastewater. They cite the example of the Mt. Polley mine disaster in British Columbia in 2014 where a tailings dam collapsed, dumping 2 billion gallons of wastewater into nearby bodies of water.

Residents are concerned how such a spill from the mine could harm the local economy and jobs. The fishing industry, “adds \$36 million dollars to the Aroostook economy every year... If it was ruined, all those jobs would disappear; those jobs that can last lifetimes,” says Shelly Mountain, a resident of Mapleton. Additionally, jobs in wildlife tourism far outnumber the estimated 700 jobs Irving claims they will create, most of which will be temporary.

A small minority of supporters of the proposed changes to the mining rules were present at the hearing. They included Matthew Muzzy, a geotechnical engineer representing Sevee and Maher Engineers Inc. His firm profits from the design and construction oversight of containment structures for mining waste. He said the old rules did not allow space for any mining applications, and that the proposed changes will allow mining projects to take place. “I believe the rules are strict. What they do is give an applicant a chance to be an applicant,” said Muzzy.

Hillary Lister of Maine Matters Research and Consulting disagreed. She said the permits given out under the proposed rules are much more lenient about disposal of hazardous materials, including not only sulfuric acid, but also radioactive byproducts like uranium and radon. “They [the hazardous materials] would be approved for disposal on site as part of the mining permit issuance.”

Lister has been following Irving’s practices in the state for decades, and voiced concerns about both the company’s track record and the State’s lenient enforcement. “They’ve had the biggest clear-cut violations in state history, yet the maximum fine is \$70,000. That’s nothing for them to pay off.”

Connor Albers does radio reporting for WMPG, Greater Portland’s community radio station.

In Brief

Changes to the Aquaculture Activities Regulations will exempt the **aquaculture** industry from the Fisheries Act provisions that “prohibit the release of deleterious substances into water frequented by fish.” Despite opposition since the beginning of the regulatory change process, which started in 2011, the government of Canada has moved ahead in implementing the changes. “We have been fishing alongside the aquaculture industry for decades and we know the impacts open-pen salmon farms can have on the traditional fishery. When the salmon aquaculture industry is poorly regulated it places our industry and livelihoods in jeopardy. We have grave concerns about the contents of the Aquaculture Activities Regulations, particularly the emphasis on aquaculture industry self-monitoring and regulation, and the capacity of DFO to enforce the proposed regulations,” says Maria Recchia, Executive Director of Fundy North Fishermen’s Association.

Transportation Not Deportation in Vancouver is celebrating the end of an agreement between Metro Vancouver Transit Police and the Canada Border Services Agency. The change comes after a Mexican woman hanged herself prior to deportation in 2013. Weeks before her death, Lucia Vega Jimenez was stopped by the Transit Police for fare evasion. Canada Border Services Agency was called and they arrested Jimenez when a database check revealed she had been previously deported from the country. An individual must now be wanted on an outstanding warrant before officers can make a similar arrest. Transportation Not Deportation says transit should not be a border checkpoint.

Walmart workers in the U.S. won a victory in their struggle for dignity and a living wage. After pressure from worker movements like OUR Walmart and Low Pay is Not Ok, Walmart announced in late February that within one year, all current Walmart workers will be paid at least \$10/hour, and that newly-hired workers will start at \$9/hour, with an opportunity to earn \$10/hour with six months. While still below a basic living wage of \$15/hour, the increase is an improvement over the poverty-level \$7.25/hour (the US federal minimum wage) that most Walmart workers previously earned. Walmart’s net sales were \$473.1 billion last year.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org. To list your event, email: community@nbmediacoop.org.

TREEvia Night: Fundraiser for the Conservation Council. What bird in our forest sings a song that sounds like “Hey, free beer?” What tree’s tea was used to treat scurvy? What company controls most of our public forest? Save your answers for TREEvia, a special night of fundraising for the Conservation Council on Wednesday, March 11! Round up a team and enjoy a night of tree-themed trivia, laughs, and specials on drinks and wings at Dolan’s Pub. Registration: \$10 per member. Sign up your team (max. 6 players/team) by contacting Tracy at forest@conservationcouncil.ca or 506-458-8747. All proceeds support the Conservation Council. Prizes will be given to the TREEvia winners and for best team spirit. And remember to get creative with your TREEvia team name and costume!

Bread & Roses with the Alex Bailey Swing Band. An International Women’s Day Event and Fundraiser for the NB Coalition for Pay Equity. Thursday, March 12 at 8:00pm at the York Street Train Station, 380 York St. An evening of swing dancing with the Alex Bailey Swing Band, testimonies from workers affected by pay inequity and feminists on in our community on their work in the past year. Endorsers: Reproductive Justice New Brunswick, Fredericton Youth Feminists, Fredericton & District Labour Council, Fredericton Voice of Women for Peace, STU Women’s Studies & Gender Studies and FAUST. Tickets on sale now at Westminister Books and at the door. Contact: info@equity-equite.com.

NB Media Co-op Story Meetings. Join us at our monthly story meetings in Fredericton where we discuss politics and current events and decide what to put in this paper every month. To find out the meeting time and venue, email info@nbmediacoop.org.

Cinema Politica believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary-screening network in the world. Cinema Politica Fredericton screens films on Friday nights. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: cinemapolitica.org.

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