

# **The New England Company and the New Brunswick Indians, 1786-1826: A Comment on the Colonial Perversion of British Benevolence**

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Volume 1, numéro 2, spring 1972

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad1\\_2art02](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad1_2art02)

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Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Fingard, J. (1972). The New England Company and the New Brunswick Indians, 1786-1826: A Comment on the Colonial Perversion of British Benevolence. *Acadiensis*, 1(2), 29-42.

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# The New England Company and the New Brunswick Indians, 1786-1826: A Comment on the Colonial Perversion of British Benevolence

The colonists of British North America in the pre-Victorian period did not trouble themselves about the welfare of the aborigines. The white man might occasionally acknowledge his own ingrained rapacity, but he continued to deprive the Indian of his land and to cheat him in trade. Apart from the efforts of a few indefatigable humanitarians and the dedication of Catholic priests and Methodist missionaries, very little evidence of concern for the Indians can be found in the early nineteenth century. Rations from government to ward off starvation in times of emergency and anxieties eloquently voiced by benevolent governors of the day do not provide an accurate indication of colonial interest. The same can be said of the attention devoted to British North America by the London-based New England Company, a well-intentioned but distant and relatively conservative organization.<sup>1</sup> An examination of this society's Indian enterprise in New Brunswick does afford, however, some insights into local attitudes towards the Indians and into the nature of colonial benevolence, because management of the project and distribution of the funds provided by the parent Company rested in the hands of colonists, not in those of the English trustees. The execution of the venture was largely conducted by a group of leading Anglicans in the loyalist province, compromising clergymen and a board of commissioners "selected from the officers of government and other principal inhabitants."<sup>2</sup> Among the most active members of the board in its

1 The oldest of English missionary societies, the Company was founded by Puritans in 1649 and subsequently endeavoured to maintain a non-sectarian Protestant character. The membership tended to run in prominent, middle-class families which during the early nineteenth century included the Ways, Champions, Harrisons, Esdailes, Maitlands, Busks, Gibsons, Stonards, Sollys, Vaughans, Forsters, Fullers, Martineaus, Meyers, and Warrens. Two members who should be particularly noted were Edward Goldstone Lutwyche, a loyalist and friend and agent of a number of prominent New Brunswick loyalists, and Sir William Pepperrell, the noble loyalist respected for his benevolence and piety. Pepperrell served as governor of the Company between 1807 and 1817, the crucial period for the Company's enterprise in New Brunswick.

2 General Report to the New England Company by the Committee appointed 9 May 1822, New England Company Records, MS. 7969, Guildhall Library, London.

early years can be found such well known figures as Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Carleton, Chief Justice George Duncan Ludlow, Provincial Secretary the Reverend Jonathan Odell, Superintendent of Trade and Fisheries George Leonard, Major, later General, John Coffin, Solicitor General Ward Chipman, and Judge Isaac Allen.

Like the sponsors of other English charitable and missionary organizations active in the colonies, the directors of the New England Company decided after the American Revolution to confine their attention to the remaining British colonies in North America, and more particularly to "New Brunswick which is the part next adjacent to that wherein we have hitherto exercis'd it & which in all the Charters of the Crown is consider'd as part of New England"<sup>3</sup> The principal object of the Company was to 'civilize' Indians: to educate them in the English language, train them in a practical vocation, and christianize them in the Protestant faith. It was always the Company's intention that the natives who received the advantages of this training should spread the benefits of a Christian education amongst the Indian tribes and encourage them to adopt a settled way of life. The objectives of the Company remained the same both before and after the Revolution, but the circumstances differed and the motives of those few colonists interested in the Indians changed. In Puritan New England, founded by religious refugees, the colonists had confronted heathen natives whom they tried to convert; in loyalist New Brunswick, founded by political refugees, the colonists confronted Catholic Indians whom they proceeded to exploit.

Beginning in 1787 a number of communities in New Brunswick, including St. Andrews, Sussex Vale, Maugerville, Fredericton, Meductic, Woodstock, and Miramichi, were chosen as possible sites for Micmac and Malecite schools by the local board of commissioners. In most cases the schools were not established either because the Indians, despite generous gifts, would not surrender their children, or because the bands wandered away from these particular centres in their usual migratory manner. By 1791 the Company intimated that it favoured consolidating its activities at Meductic, Maugerville, and Sussex Vale, where schools had apparently been opened and the services of missionaries secured, on the ground that the expense of supporting a larger number of Indian communities was too heavy. The commissioners made some efforts to put this plan into operation, but in the mid-1790's they were encouraged by the schoolmaster at Maugerville to try to centralize the enterprise at Sussex Vale where suitable building facilities had been planned. By this arrangement they hoped to introduce economies while instructing a larger number of children than the eight allowed in each of the three existing schools. Moreover, George Leonard, the treasurer of the board, resided at Sussex Vale and was therefore in a good position to supervise the project. At the same time, the

3 Quoted in W. Kellaway, *The New England Company 1649-1776* (London, 1961), p. 280.

Company, which left the detailed appropriation of its grant to the local board, asked that schools in the Fredericton district be maintained. It appears that the interest of the commissioners in an economical consolidation was motivated more by their desire in the 1790's to divert some of the funds to the elitist academy at Fredericton than by a concern for retrenchment.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, the Sussex Vale venture was based on a loosely-defined plan to encourage the Indians to squat on a small plot of Company land and voluntarily send their children daily to the school built on the same location. Once they were old enough, the children were to be apprenticed to local householders, and having learned a trade and having been released from their indentures, they would then form a core of trained settlers amongst the older Indians and by their sedentary example encourage others to give up the wandering existence of their forefathers.

This scheme was implemented with a mixture of humanity and expediency. Coupled with a provision for the education of the children, the commissioners felt that the Company's funds must continue to be employed partially to support the adult Indians, because "to clothe the naked and feed the hungry, whom we have been instrumental in reducing to their distressed situation, appears to be the most benevolent exercise of the power of those to whom the trust of disposing of such charities is committed."<sup>5</sup> Gifts and sustenance also helped to calm the apprehensions of the Indians who were surprised by the sudden concern for their welfare after the American Révolution and feared that this undue attention presaged their conscription, transportation, slavery, or worse.<sup>6</sup> These suspicions could be only gradually allayed, and the unrestricted access of parents to their children seemed to provide both the basis of the trust and an assurance that the benefits resulting from the children's education would be disseminated throughout the tribe.<sup>7</sup> Those commissioners who advocated this conciliatory approach placed great emphasis on the need to encourage the Indians voluntarily to emulate the educational and agricultural practices of the whites by which the former's gradual assimilation would occur.<sup>8</sup>

But the policy of maintaining the integration of the Indian child within his family proved to be impracticable. It depended for its success on the fixed abode and full cooperation of the Indian parents, neither of which could be guaranteed. Eventually in 1803, three of the more impatient of the colonial commissioners — George Ludlow, Isaac Allen, and Attorney General Jonathan

4 Minutes of the New Brunswick Commissioners, 3 May, 20 July, 21 December 1787; 8 February 1789; 4 February 1790; 9 February 1791; 23 February 1795; and 22 February 1796. NEC, MS. 7954.

5 Minutes of the New Brunswick Commissioners, 17-21 October 1808, *ibid.*

6 Say to Commissioners, n.d., Chipman Papers, vol. 13, p. 680, Lawrence Collection, Public Archives of Canada; Leonard to Champion, 18 February 1790, NEC, MS. 7954.

7 Bromley's Report, 22 September 1822, NEC, MS. 7970.

8 Notes by Edward Winslow respecting the Indians and Acadians [1804], Winslow Papers, vol. 9, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton.

Bliss — all advocates of a scheme for separating Indian children entirely from their parents, submitted their resignations on the ground that the Company's extremely generous expenditure, totalling some £800 a year, was still being wasted after fifteen years of endeavour. No children had yet been apprenticed, and none sufficiently educated to profit from such an experience.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Leonard was suspected of having manipulated the funds for his own advantage.<sup>10</sup> It appeared to the three commissioners that the Company was spending money on the educational and moral welfare of children who remained 'uncivilized', and who were very reluctantly and spasmodically sent by their parents to the school in return for such bribes as provisions, clothes, blankets, and tobacco, purchased with the Company's funds.

A rather uneasy period followed between 1804 and 1807 during which the Company suspended its financial aid and debated how it might improve the results of its undertaking in New Brunswick.<sup>11</sup> A combination of the plans and initiative of John Coffin, one of the remaining commissioners, and a marked change in the response of the Indians ultimately persuaded the Company to renew its undertaking. Fully aware of the grounds of the earlier resignations, Coffin was now himself in favour of an approach based on infant isolation which he believed would possess both cultural and religious advantages. The interference of Indian parents might be avoided if the board insisted that they could not reside in the same district as their indentured offspring, and bribed them to acquiesce in this deprivation.<sup>12</sup> While the isolation of the Indian child from his accustomed environment during schooling and training might seem bound to militate against the effectiveness of his subsequent influence amongst his people, Coffin and his sympathizers speculated that the example provided by a distinct community of civilized Indians was in the long run more likely to promote emulation by nomadic Indians than the indiscriminate mixing of the two as preferred by the Company.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the adherence of these christianized Indians to the Protestant faith could be assured

9 Ludlow and Allen to Way, 7 April 1803, and Bliss to Way, 2 May 1803, NEC, MS. 7956. It is interesting to note that these three hardliners were supporters of negro slavery until 1800 when Allen alone was converted to an anti-slavery position during an important test case. See R. W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: a History* (Montreal, 1971), pp. 107-9.

10 Leonard to Winslow, 20 December 1805, Winslow Papers, vol. 9, and Coffin to Winslow, 14 July 1806, *ibid.*, vol. 10. Saint John rector, Mather Byles, hinted at the misapplication of Company funds in 1802. Letter of Byles, 24 July 1802, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Journal of Proceedings, vol. 28, p. 292, Archives of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London.

11 NEC Minutes, 1 March 1804, 17 April and 3 July 1806, and 10 June 1807, NEC, MS. 7920/1, pp. 164, 170-2, 180.

12 Synopsis of John Coffin's letter, 1 October 1807, contained in NEC Statement of the Commencement, Progress, and Present State of the Plan now [1814] in prosecution for the Civilization of the Indians in New Brunswick, NEC, MS. 7954.

13 Minutes of the New Brunswick Commissioners, 11 March 1816, *ibid.*

only by depriving the aggressive, well established Roman Catholic priests of all contact with the young, impressionable natives. As Coffin later stated in defence of the plan: "If you do not take the children early they are not only complete Indians but complete Catholics!"<sup>14</sup>

The plan of segregating not only parent from child but civilized from uncivilized Indian was not condoned by the Company in England. Its members wanted to implement a less extreme plan that would encourage apprenticeship but at the same time allow the parents access to their children and provide an infant preparatory school for the smaller children. What the Company agreed in 1807, after being encouraged by Coffin's optimism and the cooperation of the Indians, was to renew support for the schoolmaster, as well as the missionary, at Sussex Vale, and eventually to encourage a similar establishment at Kingston, another loyalist settlement in Kings County. At Sussex Vale the members envisaged an establishment of 40 children of both sexes, with 20 being taught in an infant boarding school and 20 serving locally as apprentices who regularly attended the Company's school. As individual indentures expired, the places were to be filled by the more senior pupils in the infant school.<sup>15</sup> But when Coffin was appointed to the new position of superintendent that same year, he persuaded his colleagues on the reconstituted board of commissioners, which again included amongst its more important members Leonard Chipman as secretary-treasurer, and Edward Winslow, to adopt a scheme which omitted all reference to the infant school and parental access to children. Instead the local board determined

to induce the Indians to give up their children to be bound out apprentices, but not under the age of 7 or exceeding the age of 12 years in English families for education till they should attain the age of 21 and to place the children out as far as practicable in districts which would admit of their attending at stated times the company's schoolmaster and of their being occasionally visited by the missionary.<sup>16</sup>

After their apprenticeship with 'foster' parents had ended, some of the young people were to be supplied with the means of husbandry and settled on a tract of 200 acres purchased for the Company in 1811 and located not far from the Sussex Vale school.

Although Coffin's written plan did not openly contradict the Company's wishes, the segregation it implied did unmistakably represent a course of action

14 Minutes of the Indian Committee, 12 September 1822, NEC, MS. 7920/2, p. 94.

15 Minutes of the Indian Committee, 2 July 1807, NEC, MS. 7920/1, pp. 190-1.

16 General Report to the New England Company by the Committee appointed 9 May 1822, NEC, MS. 7969. Subsequently Jonathan Odell also rejoined the board. New members in 1808 and over the next few years included the William Hazens (father and son), Joshua Upham, George Sproule, Ward Chipman Jr., George Mountain and William Franklin Odell.

which had been opposed by the rump board four years earlier. The change of mind by Coffin and the other commissioners grew out of practical rather than theoretical considerations: the Indian parents now appeared willing to give up their children to the rigours of isolation and virtual slavery. While the Indians had until this time steadfastly resisted such a policy, the reason for their capitulation is not difficult to explain. Evidence indicates that the New Brunswick Indians, left undisturbed in their hunting grounds until the influx of loyalist settlers, were very quickly dispersed and their livelihood threatened by the spread of settlement.<sup>17</sup> In these circumstances, their initial suspicion of the New England Company's attention to their welfare was soon steadily overcome by the humane features of the first plan as it developed, and, above all, by the welcome subsistence it provided. The suspension of this scheme in 1804 coincided with increasing economic distress amongst the Indians as permanent white settlement expanded. In order to recapture the earlier attention and the rations given by the whites, the Indians soon began to acquiesce in the demands of the Company's commissioners. Deprivation produced submission. While commissioners like Winslow had been unalterably opposed to forcing the Indians to give up their children at the time of the resignations in 1803, they were ready to adopt the system of child apprenticeship as soon as the Indians voluntarily offered to surrender their children. The previous objections were therefore surmounted by 1807 when the distress of the Indians had turned them into tractable dependents of the New England Company.<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, the plan for child apprenticeship was no more successful in making a permanent impression on the way of life of the Indians at Sussex Vale than had been the earlier system of voluntary schooling. Over and above the theoretical fallacy of all such civilizing schemes, the actual practice in New Brunswick was characterized by its own peculiarities. As it transpired, the opportunities for education and apprenticeship were apparently confined to a small number of Indian and half-breed families, and, after the initial implementation of the new plan, inadequate attempts were made to extend the scheme to Indians "totally in an uncivilized state".<sup>19</sup> The second generation of apprentices tended to be the children of the first. Nor did the educated Indians appear to be living amongst their own people and thus disseminating

17 Costin to Winslow, 23 March 1804, Winslow Papers, vol. 9.

18 Leonard to Winslow, 2 January 1805, *ibid.*, vol. 9; Winslow to Lutwyche, 30 August 1806, *ibid.*, vol. 10. By the 1820's, however, the Indians were regaining their independence because the growth of the timber trade provided them with employment as timber cutters. Minutes of Special Committee, 19 July 1822, NEC, MS. 7920/2, p. 89.

19 Draft letter to the Commissioners, 17 January 1815, NEC, MS. 7956. By 1818, 53 children had been enrolled under the arrangements of 1807. Of these 2 died; 11 absconded or were discharged; one was qualifying as an Indian teacher-missionary (he was eventually sent to England where he died at grammar school); 26 were active apprentices; and 13 had been released from their indentures and were providing for themselves. Minutes of the Indian Committee, 9 March, 16 and 22 June 1818, NEC, MS. 7920/2, p. 21.

the benefits of civilization as the Company required. The members in England fully appreciated, for example, the advantages of training the girls as domestic servants, if they were ultimately to marry Indians outside Sussex Vale, "but their remaining servants in English families is of no further advantage to the objects of the charity than as regards the individuals".<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the Company considered the grant of £20 allowed annually to masters during the course of an apprentice's indenture an extravagant and unnecessary expenditure at a time when labour was scarce in New Brunswick and the apprentices were therefore valuable to their masters even without the allowance. At the same time, repeated instructions to provide an infant school for the younger children were disregarded by the colonial trustees who remained unalterably opposed to the plan in the light of the earlier failures and because they could not find suitable managers for such a school. The commissioners preferred to apprentice infants instead of boarding them in a benevolently run institution until they were at least seven years old,<sup>21</sup> and children were apparently bound out long before they reached the age of seven, as young in fact as eight months. Consequently, the Company became fearful that the impression created in England by the inhumane practice of requiring the helpless and confused Indians to surrender their tender babes into bondage might prove very damaging to its reputation.<sup>22</sup> It was also a matter of some concern to the Company that the children were thereby deprived of the opportunity to learn their own language. What benefit could they be to their fellow Indians unless they were bilingual? Finally, the morality of the masters was called into question. The objects of the charity would be completely defeated if the whites showed a bad example, and by 1822 a significant proportion of the children supported by the Company were found to be the products of illicit miscegenation.<sup>23</sup>

While the many deficiencies in the local management of its charity might have provided the Company with ample reasons to explain the shortcomings of the Sussex Vale venture, the lack of sufficient reliable information prevented the members in London from immediately reaching this conclusion, though they soon suspected that their trust was being badly abused. When the local

20 Company to Chipman and Coffin, 4 March 1817, NEC, MS. 7956.

21 See synopsis of Coffin's letter of 1 October 1807; Company resolution of 1809; Commissioners' reply of 1810; and Company response of 5 June 1810 in the NEC Statement of 1814, NEC, MS. 7954.

22 Draft letter to the Commissioners, 17 January 1815, NEC, MS. 7956. But to judge from a contemporary letter in one of England's leading evangelical publications, the activities of the Company were not well publicized in the mother country. *Christian Observer*, XI (1813), p. 778.

23 Bromley's Report, 22 September 1822, NEC, MS. 7970. The superintendent seems to have treated questions of the rape of the Company's female apprentices and illegitimate births in an off-hand, almost jocular fashion. See Coffin to Chipman, 13 January 1809, and examination of Molly Ann Gell before JP, 6 January 1809, Sussex Indian Academy Papers, Nos. 17, 19, Chipman Papers, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.



commissioners did occasionally try to explain the problems they confronted, rather than implicate themselves, they encouraged the Company to believe that the major obstacle to the success of the enterprise could be found in the interference of the Catholic priests. Because the Company considered that this explanation was deliberately oversimplified, the members slowly came to the valid conclusion that the effectiveness of the Catholic clergy in ministering to the Indians could be attributed to their more enterprising approach. The Catholic missionary had one great advantage over the minister of the New England Company: the former sought his objectives by learning the Indian languages, and for this initiative was rewarded by his bishop with a curacy in Lower Canada after a short period of service living amongst the Indians; the latter, in contrast, was either too lazy or unimaginative to learn the native dialects and therefore looked to less arduous means of achieving the desired ends.<sup>24</sup> This explains why the Company's Anglican missionary to the Indians at Sussex Vale, the incompetent Oliver Arnold, stoutly defended the system of apprenticeship, claiming that the only effective arrangement was to take "hold of the children very early in life, before their religious principles are formed".<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the major cause for the lack of success at Sussex Vale, the members of the Company, sincere in their intentions and conscientious in the disbursement of the funds entrusted to their care, eventually questioned the wisdom of supporting an enterprise in which most of the benefits appeared to be going to unworthy executors and masters rather than to the Indians. Arnold was a case in point. Next to Coffin, who served as superintendent, Arnold was the man most centrally involved in the New England Company's operations in New Brunswick. In 1787 he had taken charge of the Sussex Vale school. Three years later, on a title from the Company, he was ordained an Anglican clergyman by Bishop Charles Inglis and in 1794 he also became the missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to the white community, a joint appointment which was unlikely to benefit the Indians.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Arnold became too financially involved in the venture to represent an impartial vehicle of local benevolence, and he stood to gain handsomely from the munificence of the Company. In 1803 he described his instruction of the Indians as an unpleasant task,<sup>27</sup> but he was amply rewarded for it. In addition to the salary of £50 a year he received for most of the period as missionary to the Indians, Arnold reputedly kept between four and seven apprentices in his home after 1807, for each of whom he was paid an additional £20 on

24 Minutes of the New Brunswick Commissioners, 11 March 1816, NEC, MS. 7954.

25 Arnold to Chipman, 26 February 1816, NEC, MS. 7956. For indentures see that of Paul Bovis, Chipman Papers, vol. 13, p. 29, Lawrence Collection, and of Francis Paul, NEC, MS. 7954.

26 Letter of Inglis, 15 March 1790, SPG, *Journal of Proceedings*, vol. 25, p. 274; SPG Minutes, 20 May 1791, *ibid.*, pp. 354-5, and 21 March 1794, SPG, *Journal of Proceedings*, vol. 26, p. 232.

27 Arnold to Way, 12 October 1803, NEC, MS. 7956.

average, as well as benefiting from their free labour. Even Coffin, the other principal, financially-interested official in the enterprise, tried to dissociate himself from Arnold's conduct which appeared "rapacious in the extreme". Arnold behaved more like "a mad dog — after his prey than a Clergyman in the habit of praying for things requisite and necessary".<sup>28</sup>

Dissatisfied with Arnold and every other aspect of the undertaking, the Company decided in 1816 to suspend its operations, except for the engagements already contracted by the local superintendent in New Brunswick.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the treatment accorded the apprentices, the Company was also concerned about the fate of the trained Indians whose indentures had expired. Their fortunes appeared too closely tied to the selfish designs of their former masters; the Indians' settlement in the same vicinity and employment as laborers by the whites implied an unfortunate degree of social and economic bondage.<sup>30</sup> This continuing relationship militated against the development of independence and enterprise amongst the Company's Indians.

For the next ten years the Company lent financial support on an *ad hoc* basis to a variety of colonial projects which represented alternative fields of endeavour should the New Brunswick venture collapse. Money was earmarked for Indians in the Hudson's Bay Company territories, Nova Scotia, and the Canadas, and for blacks in Nova Scotia and the West Indies.<sup>31</sup> The Company did not finally decide to discontinue its activities in New Brunswick (except for the support of the remaining apprentices) until 1826. Criticisms of the Sussex Vale venture had meanwhile been received from a number of quarters, including Sir Howard Douglas, appointed lieutenant-governor in 1824.<sup>32</sup> But above all, the Company based its decision on the findings of two successive one-man commissions of inquiry it sent to review the situation in Sussex Vale.<sup>33</sup> The reports submitted by Captain Walter Bromley, a tireless humanitarian and sincere exponent of Indian amelioration in Nova Scotia, and the Reverend John West, an active evangelical Anglican who drew on his experience as the

28 Coffin to Chipman, January 1809, Sussex Indian Academy Papers, No. 20, Chipman Papers.

29 Minutes of the Indian Committee, 27 December 1816, NEC, MS. 7920/2, pp. 6, 11; Company to Chipman and Coffin, 4 March 1817, NEC, MS. 7956.

30 See Minutes of the New Brunswick Commissioners, 17-21 October 1808, NEC, MS. 7954.

31 Minutes of the General Court of the New England Company, 25 November 1815, NEC, MS. 7920/1, p. 254, and 19 October 1820, NEC, MS. 7920/2, p. 47; Minutes of the Indian Committee, 27 December 1816, 8 August 1817, 31 August and 26 October 1820, NEC, MS. 7920/2, pp. 6, 14, 43, 48-49; Minutes of Special Committee, 6 November 1823 and 23 June 1825, *ibid.*, pp. 152, 212.

32 K. F. C. MacNaughton, *The Development of the Theory and Practice of Education in New Brunswick 1784-1900* (Fredericton, 1947), p. 49.

33 Sub-Committee Minutes, 2 December 1826, NEC, MS. 7920/2, p. 245. At first an investigation by George Spratt, Congregational minister of the London Missionary Society in Quebec, soon to become an Anglican clergyman, was proposed, but he resigned the commission before undertaking the task. Minutes of the Indian Committee, 3 September 1819, 23 and 28 March 1820, and 30 October 1821, *ibid.*, pp. 36-38, 62.

Church Missionary Society's first missionary to the Indians in the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, were critical assessments made by men well qualified to investigate the "deficiency and disorder" at Sussex Vale.<sup>34</sup>

Bromley in 1822 and West in 1825 (appointed after Bromley had suggested an additional inquiry) both emphasized the evil character and rapacity of the whites to whom the Indians were entrusted on the recommendation of Superintendent Coffin.<sup>35</sup> Those people who held the indentures appeared to be motivated by nothing but pecuniary gain, treating their charges as menial servants and failing to send them regularly to the school maintained by the Company at Sussex Vale exclusively for Indian education. Even the school was Indian only in name, since its resources were monopolized to the extent of fifty per cent by segregated white children, even though the Company had clearly stated its opposition to such a policy as early as 1801.<sup>36</sup> As a clergyman, West was particularly critical of the moral example provided by the whites, who seemed to treat the Indian youth not only as a fund of cheap labour, but also as an exploitable means of indulging their sexual cravings. As an educator, Bromley was most disappointed to find that the Indians could neither read or understand the scriptures. While West emphasized the moral degradation of the Indians as a result of alcohol after their release from bondage, Bromley exposed the essential core of the problem when he explained that the youths emerged from their course of civilization as neither Indians nor whites. The latter rejected them: they rejected the former. A half-breed mentality fitted them for little else than occasional farm labour in an insecure social environment. Indians who had forgotten their native language and acquired skills, and who had meanwhile been led to develop new habits and tastes, which they could not satisfy as free agents, were placed in a worse condition than the nomadic Indians who had not been contaminated by the loyalists' experimentations.

Disillusioned by the local opposition to a separate project at Meductic initiated in 1824, and by the apparently unshakeable Catholicism of the Indians in

34 Minutes of the General Court of the New England Company, 20 March 1823, *ibid.*, pp. 123-4. See forthcoming article by the author in *Canadian Historical Review* entitled "English Humanitarianism and the Colonial Mind: Walter Bromley in Nova Scotia, 1813-1825"; J. E. Foster, "Program for the Red River Mission: the Anglican Clergy 1820-1826", *Social History*, IV (1969), pp. 49-74.

35 The views of Bromley and West can be found throughout their unpaginated MS. reports. Bromley's Report, 22 September 1822, NEC, MS. 7970; West's Report, 1825, enclosed in West to Company, 20 September 1826, *ibid.* See also J. West, *The Substance of a Journal during a Residence at the Red River Colony British North America: and Frequent Excursions among the North West American Indians, in the years 1820, 1821, 1822, 1823. Second Edition, Enlarged with a Journal of a Mission to the Indians of New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, and the Mohawks, on the Ouse or Grand River, Upper Canada 1825, 1826* (London, 1827), pp. 209-63 *passim*.

36 Minutes of the General Court of the New Egnland Company, 3 June 1801, NEC, MS. 7920/1, p. 154. For Commissioner Winslow's comments on this decision, see notes by Edward Winslow respecting the Indians and Acadians (1804), Winslow Papers, vol. 9.

New Brunswick, emphasized by both Bromley and West, the New England Company abandoned that colony for the more congenial pastures of Upper Canada where the Indians were either Protestant or heathen.<sup>37</sup> With the abandonment of New Brunswick, the Company also discarded both the practice of working through a local board of commissioners and its previous faith in the efficacy of civilizing the natives through apprenticeship.<sup>38</sup> This marked change in policy and outlook underlines the reason why the Sussex Vale experiment miscarried. Contemporaries had little justification for thinking that acculturation would succeed in the light of the Company's unrewarding experience during 120 years with the Algonkian peoples in New England.<sup>39</sup> But the early nineteenth-century enterprise was frustrated more particularly by the local executors of the Company's bounty who put their own financial gain before a careful supervision of the project. One commentator of the day described the venture as "a source of secularized emolument, and a monument of wasteful expenditure",<sup>40</sup> and an early twentieth-century historian of New Brunswick admitted that about a third of the staggering expenditure of approximately \$140,000 by the Company in New Brunswick over four decades was received by officials who had little or nothing to do with the Indians.<sup>41</sup> After 1807, most of the influence, both over the local board of commissioners and over the distant Indian Committee of the New England Company, was exerted by Superintendent Coffin, who was paid £125 a year for his trouble, and who did not hesitate to regard the Company's funds as another source of English compensation for the deprivations of the loyalists.<sup>42</sup> It was therefore rather late in the day for him to plead in 1822, in answer to the Company's interrogation, that Sussex Vale was a poor location for the project, being too far from the main areas of Indian concentration and offering little inducement to the wandering Micmacs to settle there. He also blamed the Indians themselves for their failure to respond fulsomely to the bribes and annual subsistence offered them to sell their children into bondage, an explanation that revealed how completely the relations between commissioners and Indians depended

37 Sir Howard Douglas objected to the locations proposed by the Reverend Richard Scott, a Baptist minister. Scott moved to Upper Canada as a missionary of the Company. Sub-Committee Minutes, 2 December 1826, NEC, MS. 7920/2, p. 245.

38 Information on the Company's subsequent activities can be found in H. M. Busk, *A Sketch of the Origin and the Recent History of the New England Company* (London, 1884), pp. 20-54.

39 Kellaway, *The New England Company 1649-1776*, pp. 230, 276.

40 Brunswickus, "A Plan for civilizing the Aborigines of New Brunswick", *New Brunswick Courier*, 1 October 1825.

41 W. O. Raymond, "The New England Company", *Saint John Telegraph*, 26 June 1920. For details of the Company's expenditure in New Brunswick, see Chipman's accounts as treasurer, commencing in 1806, Chipman Papers, vol. 13, Lawrence Collection.

42 Coffin to Winslow, 14 July 1806, Winslow Papers, vol. 10.

on material inducements rather than on mutual trust.<sup>43</sup> A similar interpretation was given prominence in the earliest historical account of the venture, written in 1892, in which the author concluded, probably on the basis of the well known tendency of Indians to barter gifts from the Company for liquor, that the “causes of the failure . . . must be sought largely in the peculiarities of the Indian character”.<sup>44</sup>

Indian resistance to ‘civilization’ does not explain, however, the failure of the Indian masters to promote the humane and constructive measures envisaged by the Company. This failure must be attributed to the nature of colonial interest in the Indian or the “peculiarities” of the attitudes of the whites. Their outlook was more political and economic than humanitarian in character. The Indians were still regarded as potential trouble-makers basically hostile to the English as their conquerors. Certainly the Indians of Sussex Vale retained vestiges of their French cultural heritage and were at least able to repay their masters for the bad treatment they suffered under indenture by openly professing adherence to Catholicism on their release.<sup>45</sup> It was therefore natural that the loyalists should want to anglicize and protestantize the Indians in order to transform them into loyal citizens and trustworthy traders. Suitably enough, the funds of the New England Company could be manipulated to achieve the political, as well as the cultural, aims under the convenient label of ‘civilizing’. The distortion of the ‘civilizing’ plan also for economic ends was illustrated by the whites’ eager exploitation of indentured Indian labour during the period of the Napoleonic Wars when labour in general was scarce and expensive. A minimum of attention was meanwhile devoted to the spiritual instruction of the Indians, as well as to the all-important training in agricultural techniques and practical trades, and this neglect demonstrates in a striking fashion the colonists’ preoccupation with exploitation and pacification rather than with promoting amelioration and teaching self-reliance.

These factors expose the question that has yet to be answered: why were the colonists not humanitarian in outlook? Despite the prevalent attitude that the Indians were naturally inferior, theories of cultural superiority do nothing to help explain the lack of benevolence and concern displayed particularly by the commissioners in New Brunswick. These men — relatively well-to-do, influential, educated, judicious, and outwardly religious — represented a class which, on the basis of its attempts to lead and mould the new colony, might have been expected to take an interest in the welfare of society, including the Indians. Ward Chipman Jr. claimed, however, that the commissioners

43 Minutes of Special Committee, 19 July 1822, NEC, MS. 7920/2, pp. 89-90, and 12 September 1822, p. 94. Coffin was dismissed as superintendent in 1823. Committee Minutes, 8 May 1823, *ibid.*, p. 135.

44 L. Allison, *The Rev. Oliver Arnold, First Rector of Sussex, N. B., with some Account of his Life, his Parish, and his Successors, and the Old Indian College* (Saint John, 1892), p. 25.

45 Bromley’s Report, 22 September 1822, NEC, MS. 7970.

were so inactive that they met irregularly and simply endorsed the reports of Coffin and Arnold, who in turn ignored the misdeeds of the Indian masters.<sup>46</sup> For this neglect the loyalist leaders had no excuse because they understood the vital necessity of stewardship in such programmes of Indian amelioration. Winslow, a great, great grandson of the pilgrim father Edward Winslow, who had been one of the original founders and members of the Company in 1649, had admitted years earlier that "in almost every instance where public or private charity has been extended to indians they have been considered as a kind of free plunder and this like other immemorial usages seems . . . to be almost sanctified and legalized".<sup>47</sup> Perhaps it was the board's composition of prominent, rapacious American loyalists which determined both their indifference to the aims of the New England Company and their superabundance of interest in its funds. To a group of colonial officials, £800 a year was a welcome injection of investment in the underdeveloped economy of the province when local revenues in the early 1800's amounted to only £2000 a year.<sup>48</sup>

Walter Bromley tried to explain the sterility of the local board on the basis of his English experience. He thought these leading officials resembled the English nobility, who readily served as patrons and donors but seldom had either the time or selflessness for active humanitarianism. The actual management of such organizations had to devolve on the middle class, whose moral integrity, he felt, outclassed that of the rich. In the colonies, however, Bromley could find little evidence of a vigorous, leisured middle class. This embryonic class was confined entirely to the merchants, ambitious individuals aspiring to commercial predominance through colonial exploitation. They least of all had the time or the piety for voluntary benevolent pursuits; nor had they yet the vested interest in social improvement for mercantile ends. While Bromley was correct in suggesting that the lack of a responsible middle class provided a noticeable contrast to the prevailing charitable and humanitarian impulses in contemporary England, he was equally perceptive in his explanation of the effect of English charity on the colonial mind. There existed a general tendency in colonial society for British financial aid to religious and benevolent organizations to stifle local initiative. Contemporaries often argued, for example, that S.P.G. support for the Church of England in British North America had a debilitating effect on the independent enterprise of colonial congregations. The same enervation is apparent in the local response to the British sponsorship of Indian amelioration in New Brunswick, though Bromley stressed that the lack of initiative in this particular instance could be attributed to shrewd calculation. "The New England Company", he explained, "has furnished the colonists with a pretext for withholding their aid to amelioration

46 Minutes of the Indian Committee, 14 November 1822, NEC, MS. 7920/2, pp. 99-101.

47 Winslow to Lutwyche, 30 August 1806, Winslow Papers, vol. 10.

48 W. S. MacNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces: the Emergence of Colonial Society 1712-1857* (Toronto, 1965), p. 127.

## 42 *Acadiensis*

plans” — not only local financial assistance, but also genuine interest and concern.<sup>49</sup> In the final analysis, it must be admitted that English benevolence came to the colonies as unconditional aid and the temptation to accept it, and use it selfishly, proved irresistible to acquisitive, individualistic colonists.

49 Bromley's Report, 22 September 1822, NEC, MS. 7970.