

Henry George Newsletter

High School Edition



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Old Forest, Deep-Rooted Problems

In the Northeast, an old forest has sustained families economically for generations. Sherry Belknap, a fifth generation logger, is now worried that over-use of the forest, which comprises some 26 million acres, threatens that livelihood. Logging companies have cut vast areas of the forest, in a process called clear-cutting, and private developers are building vacation homes, mostly for people who have no traditional ties to the land. As a consequence, pollution, in the form of acid rain, is further eroding the forest by depriving trees of the nutrients they need.

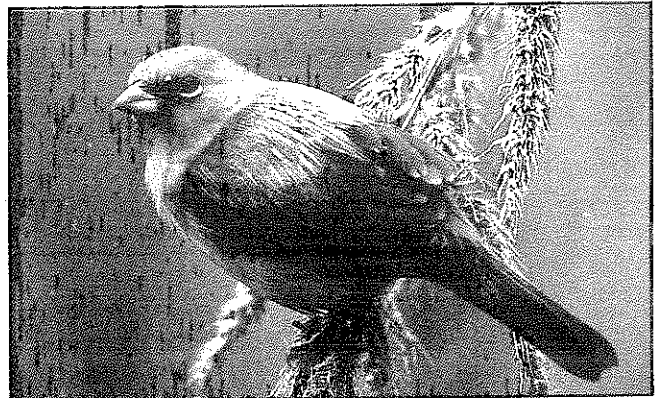
Meanwhile, an unusual alliance of private owners and publicly concerned individuals has come together for the common cause of protecting the forest. They believe they can both protect the land and keep it economically viable. They seek to strike a balance between private ownership and public responsibility in stewarding the land that will last for generations to come.

This story can be used with the Land & Freedom series in American History #1, *Indian Land Ownership* and # 20, *Land: Our National Heritage*.

Trespassing Across England

In another story illustrating the conflicts that can arise between private ownership and public use of land, a dispute has arisen in the Cornwall section of southern England. The issue involves the public's right-of-way versus an aristocrat's right of ownership.

Sir Ferrers Vyvyan's family has owned their estate, in Magwan, for over 900 years. In fact, their thousand acre estate, named Trelowarren, was mentioned in the Domesday Book. However, a path that cuts through the estate has traditionally been used by the public. Sir Ferrers wants to close the path to the public for six months of the year. But, according to an old English law, any path that has been used as a public way for twenty years or more is considered a public path, even if it cuts across someone's private property. Some members of the public see this as a further



manifestation of conflicts centering around public and private use of land that go back to the 18th-century.

This story can be used with World History lesson # 3, *The Feudal Land System* and # 4, *The Domesday Book*.

Cartoons

Often during economic boom times, speculation comes to play an ever increasing role in the functional dynamics of the economy, most notably in the real estate and stock markets. In many ways, real estate speculation can have a destructive impact, perhaps most apparent in this country in the late 80s and early 90s when the occupancy rates for new offices lagged far behind the creation of new office buildings and many buildings stood empty. Today, we are seeing something similar happening in Southeast Asia, as those countries' economies take a nose dive. This first cartoon can be used with Economic Studies #2, *Factors of Production*, # 14, *Business Cycles* as well as # 16, *The Single Tax*.

The second cartoon illustrates an anxiety many people have about the new "global economy." With ever increasing ease, companies are moving their production facilities to foreign, often third world, countries where workers will work for next to nothing. This can be used with Economics Studies # 5, *Class Struggle* and # 10, *Wages of Labor*.



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Old Forest , Deep - Rooted Problems

by Alexandra Marks

Bloomfield, Vermont - Sherry Belknap's logging roots are deeply dug in Vermont's rich, rocky forest-land. A fifth generation timberman, his grandfather herded one of the largest log drives ever down the Connecticut River. His grandfather also built the white clapboard house here where Mr. Belknap was born, raised and still lives along the winding Nulhegan River in northern Vermont.

A logger at heart, Mr. Belknap now finds himself "all torn up."

The forest lands his family has thrived on for generations are threatened. Logging companies have cut out vast expanses. Developers are buying up land, stripping it, and putting up summer homes. The polluted water wafting up from Southern and Midwestern states continues to shower acid rains, robbing some of the trees of their nutrients and the strength they need to sustain themselves in the harsh, cold winters.

"There's such an economic strain on the forests, we just need to be a little more gentle," says Mr. Belknap. "We can't just keep knocking them down to the point that the quality of timber just isn't what it used to be."

From western New York to the tip of Maine, 26 million acres of timberland make up the Northern Forest - the largest continuous forest east of the Mississippi. More than 35 conservation groups have banded together since 1990 to protect the most wild and vulnerable areas in the region as well as foster sustainable logging practices and economic development.

"We have to face up to the reality of change in the area," says Andrew Stander of the Northern Forest Alliance of Vermont.

The groups hope to accomplish their goals cooperatively. Nonetheless, their efforts have generated resentment, touching off a sharp debate about where the line is drawn between individual property rights and the public's land stewardship responsibilities. Eighty-five percent of the 26 million-acre forest is privately owned.

"There's no denying a real struggle's underway for control of the Northern Forest as we go into the next century," says William Vail, executive director of the Maine Forest Products Council, a group that representing log-

ging companies and private timberland owners. "My position is that private ownership has provided good stewardship in the past, and it will continue to do so in the future."

The alliance recognizes that working with private owners is central to its success. It has begun to hold town meetings with the people who live and work in each of the five states the forest encom-

"The forest is critical to everyone both economically and ecologically."

passes. It has also proposed legislation that bans the aerial spraying of herbicides, limits the number of acres that can be clear-cut, and protects up to 4 million acres from development. The alliance has also appealed to the federal government and this fall Congress is again considering the Northern Forests Stewardship Act.

Introduced in 1995, the bill is designed to strike a balance between individual property rights and public conservation efforts. As a result it has strong bipartisan support from New England's congressional delegation.

The bill would establish a "voluntary partnership" between the state and federal governments for protecting vulnerable areas of the forest. It also directs federal funds be used to help "diversify and strengthen" local, forest-dependent economies. Supporters believe the chances are good it will win approval this fall.

But many of the alliance's battles have been more controversial. When Vermont began to consider banning logging companies from the aerial spraying of herbicides, Mr. Belknap, to his surprise, found himself leading the charge against the logging companies.

"People I've known and worked with for years would look at me and say 'We thought you were one of us, we thought you were a logger,'" he says, raising his hand. "I am, but I also cherish this forest."

At the same time, the Vermont legislature considered limiting clear-cuts to 40 acres unless approval is given by the

state. That raised so much anger, loggers circled the state capital with their trucks to protest. They pointed out that the Northern Forest is bigger now than it was at the turn of the century, when much of the land was cleared for farming.

Nonetheless, both measures passed this year. That legislation has left some lingering bitterness in Vermont and some wariness across the river in New Hampshire, where similar proposals have been talked about.

In Maine, a referendum to limit clear-cuts won enough support to be voted on a second time this November. The proposal would drastically reduce the amount of acreage yearly from 250 to 75 acres. While the bill is opposed by hardliners on both sides, it has the support of the large timber companies and conservation groups in the state.

"That shows the recognition that the forest is critical to everyone both economically and ecologically," says Catherine Johnson, Northwoods Project Director of the Natural Resources Council of Maine. But there is still significant disagreement about the best way to preserve them - from what constitutes proper logging practices to how much development to permit."

That disagreement extends to the best way to promote economic development. In Vermont, the forest used to be harvested primarily for the high quality hardwoods. Now much of the focus has shifted to producing cheap timber for paper mills in Canada. That cuts down on the number of jobs available in the state, since much wood is exported and processed elsewhere.

"So much damage has already been done," says Mr. Belknap. "There's going to be that 50 to 80 year time-frame when they have to be very prudent in the way they treat the forest if it's going to rebound the way it should."

-reprinted from the Christian Science Monitor

Questions

1. Why is Mr. Belknap so upset?
2. He says there is an economic strain on the forests. Explain.
3. Describe the views of both sides of the issue.
4. Why is Mr. Belknap considered a traitor by some people?
5. Why do the bill mentioned in the article have bipartisan support?

Forgive Our Trespasses? Not in England!

by Sarah Lyall

Mawgan, England - Sir Ferrers Vyvyan's family has lived in this wild and lovely corner of Cornwall for more than 900 years - its estate, Trelowarren, was mentioned in the Domesday Book - so he thinks he should know by now what is his property and what isn't.

And one thing that does belong to him, Sir Ferrers says, is a 30-yard path down by the Helford River.

He's sorry that local hikers, particularly one local hiker named Jed Trewin, like to use the path, but that, Sir Ferrers says, is not the point.

"As far as we're concerned," he declared recently, "Mr. Trewin has no right to moor his boat there or to walk across our land."

But this is Britain, where local traditions, even more than boundaries on a map, can determine who gets to use the land. Mr. Trewin, whose family has lived for a more-than-respectable 600 years here on the Lizard Peninsula, says he has as much right to stroll along the footpath at Trelowarren as he does to breathe the bracing Cornwall air.

"It's my birthright to walk there," said Mr. Trewin, 44, who is unemployed and lost a leg in a motorcycle accident. "I'm totally against someone walking across someone else's land, but blocking a footpath that has been used for generations is another matter."

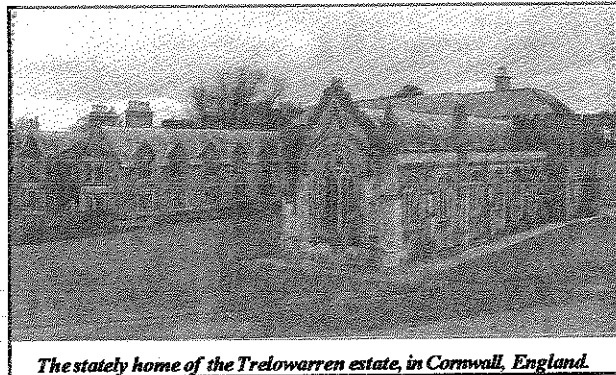
The dispute between Sir Ferrers and Mr. Trewin has its roots in medieval times, when tracts of land were set aside for common use, and land owner and landless lived in harmony, at least in theory. But in the 18th century, when Parliament passed a series of laws decreeing that land could be enclosed, all that changed.

In the 20th century the old country tensions manifest themselves over the right to farm and to keep livestock, but in something Britons take just as seriously: the right to hike.

Rambling, as hiking is called here, is one of Britain's favorite pastimes, but because there's so little public land ramblers depend on the huge network of public footpaths that crisscross public property.

Footpath-related tensions flare up

regularly, with the sometimes militant ramblers marching across disputed areas and campaigning for "the right to roam," and farmers and landowners deliberately letting the paths get overgrown,



The stately home of the Trelowarren estate, in Cornwall, England.

or emerging to hurl abuse and threats at members of the public.

"These footpaths are a part of our heritage," said Maureen Donovan, the rights-of-way officer for the Ramblers' Association in the Lizard Peninsula. "Where else are you supposed to walk?"

According to British law, if a path has been continually used by the public for 20 years, it is considered as public as a major highway - even if someone owns the land. Mr. Trewin, who is seeking to have Sir Ferrer's path added to Britain's definitive rights-of-way map, says he has been using it for years, and so do other residents.

But Sir Ferrers, 37, argues that he has always closed the path for six months each year, as he does throughout the 1,000-acre estate (he opens it during the summer) - thus countering Mr. Trewin's continuity argument.

"The tourist season is for six months of the year, and we want our privacy for the rest of the year," He said.

Mr. Trewin and his wife, Marlene, say the dispute is a clear-cut case of medieval-style aristocratic bullying.

"I think they thought money would intimidate us, that we were little peasants that should be moved on," said Mrs. Trewin.

Sir Ferrers, one of whose ancestors was given a baronetcy in 1644 for running royalist mints in southwest England during the country's civil war, hardly seems to be a "Birdeshead Revisited"-style aristocrat. For one thing, he lives only in a small section of Trelowarren, a fairly large stately home.

"They assume I'm as rich as Croesus, but I do everything on overdraft like anybody else," he said, opening the door to a house strewn with the detritus of four young children and two slobbering dogs.

Tall and lanky, with a bushy black beard, he refused to be photographed, saying, "I don't want to be recognized in the neighborhood."

When Sir Ferrers took over the estate in 1983, at 23, it was falling apart. He has gradually worked to restore it, bringing in money by running a camping site and opening up a restaurant and a shop. For six months each year, people can walk across his

property, tour the manor, and visit a nature center and gallery he has set up, all free of charge.

Though they considered him a remote and even arrogant figure, the local residents have always co-existed in peace with Sir Ferrers; indeed, about 40,000 people visit the estate each year.

But trouble arose two years ago, when Sir Ferrers newly widowed mother moved to a house near the disputed footpath. Lady Vyvyan, it emerged, wanted her privacy.

Most of the residents reluctantly stopped going there. But Mr. Trewin, who kept his boat moored at the end of the path, felt strongly enough to make it an issue.

"We had several steaming rows with Mr. Trewin, and he intimated my mother," Sir Ferrers said. "I don't think he knew or cared who owned the land."

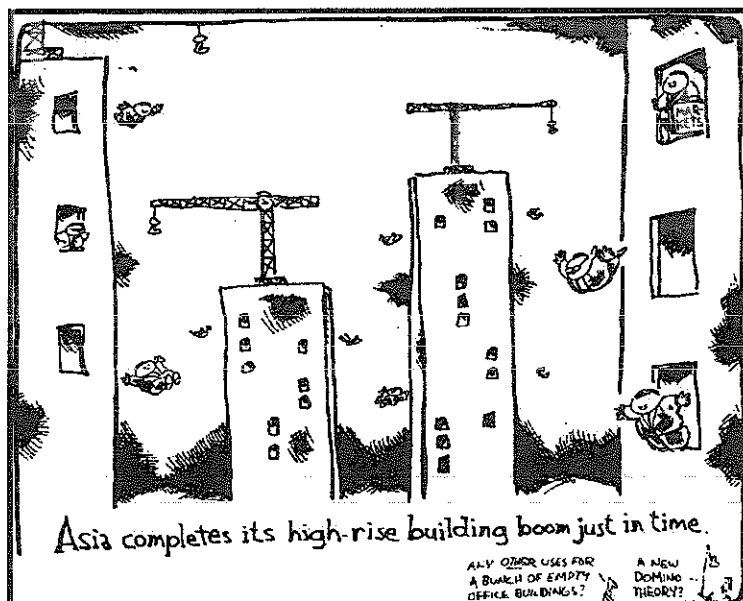
Sir Ferrers then sued Mr. Trewin for trespassing. Mr. Trewin, who says that if anything, Sir Ferrers mother intimated him, went to the County Council, which is to hold a hearing this December.

"We're losing our heritage," Mr. Trewin said. "Every where you look now it's private, private, private."

- reprinted from the NY Times

Questions

1. Describe both sides of the "trespassing" issue?
2. What are some of the historical reasons the hikers say are in their favor.
3. Like the previous story, the issue seems to be between private and public land use. Discuss.



Questions

1. What would be a good title for this cartoon?
2. What do the people jumping out of windows represent?
3. What might be the relationship between buildings and the economy?
4. What has been the effect of abandoned buildings in your home town? Of empty lots?
5. Discuss possible remedies for such problems.

Questions

1. What would be a good title for this cartoon?
2. Who might the two men in this cartoon be?
3. What might be the effect in this country of the over production of consumer goods.
4. If prices for consumer goods fall too much, what might be the effect on wages?
5. If the rate of profit for owners of companies falls, what might be the effect on workers?



Happy

Holidays!

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