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THE ILLEGAL FUR TRADE OUT OF NEW FRANCE, 1713-60

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The illegal fur trade out of New France may be defined as the export of furs to any destination other than France. In addition, beaver, the most valuable of all, had not merely to be shipped to France, but could be legally exported from Canada only by the French company holding the beaver monopoly.

The contraband trade centred upon Montreal, whence the furs were carried down the Richelieu to Albany.¹ The chief intermediaries between the French merchants at one end, and the English and Dutch at the other, were the converted Iroquois of the Jesuit mission at Caughnawaga, and, to a lesser extent, the Indians of the Saint Sulpice mission which, in 1721, was transferred from Sault-au-Recollet to the Lake of Two Mountains.²

Although the Montreal merchants were the chief offenders, the fur which was smuggled out did not always actually pass through the town, for voyageurs coming down from the up country were sometimes ordered to leave outside the walls a number of packs intended for illegal export. This fur was hidden by being buried, or was concealed in houses on the outskirts of the town, or in the Indian village at Caughnawaga.³ Moreover, savages arriving with furs from their own hunting might be met outside Montreal and relieved of their cargoes, which were sent straight off to the English.⁴ Furs actually in the town were smuggled out to Caughnawaga in the baskets of the squaws,⁵ and, no doubt, by many other means suggested by daring and ingenuity. Probably a good deal of this forbidden trade passed through the hands of the Demoiselles Desautiers, three sisters who, from 1727 to 1752, kept a shop at Caughnawaga, and not only carried on a thriving contraband business of their own, but were said also to have assisted in the smuggling activities of the leading merchants of Montreal, to many of whom they were related.⁶

¹Public Archives of Canada, *Série B³*, vol. 326, ff. 72-72v, Le Peletier (Contrôleur Général des Finances) à Maurepas (Ministre de Marine), Versailles, May 31, 1728; *ibid.*, *Série B*, Ordres et Dépêches du Roi, vol. 66, p. 101, Ministre à Beauharnois et Hocquart, Versailles, April 23, 1738. The "Ministre" is the Ministre de Marine unless otherwise stated.

²E.g., J. R. Brodhead and E. B. O'Callaghan (eds.), *Documents relative to the colonial history of the state of New York* (Albany, 1855), V, 732, Memorial, Colden to Burnet. Nov. 10, 1724 (henceforth *N.Y. Col. Docs.*); Olivier Maurault, "Les vicissitudes d'une mission sauvage" (*Revue trimestrielle canadienne*, XVI, juin, 1930, 3, 7, 26); Public Archives of Canada, *Dépôt des Fortifications*, carton 5, pièce 289, p. 194, Vaudreuil au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 12, 1717; *ibid.*, *Série C^{11A}*, vol. 48, p. 67, Beauharnois et Dupuy au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 20, 1726; vol. 67, p. 187, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct., 1737; vol. 76, pp. 178-9, 183, Mémoire sur le commerce de Canada (1741). The "Conseil" is the Conseil de Marine unless otherwise stated.

³*Série C^{11A}*, vol. 44, pp. 218-19, De Ramezay au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 15, 1722; *Série B³*, vol. 348, ff. 90-3, Mémoire (by the Compagnie des Indes, 1731); Public Archives of Canada, *Ordonnances des Intendants*, XIV, 433, Quebec, Aug. 12, 1738.

⁴*Série C^{11A}*, vol. 77, pp. 118-20, Beauharnois au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 26, 1742; vol. 79, pp. 189-90, Beauharnois au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 13, 1743.

⁵*N.Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 1071, Beauharnois to Minister, Quebec, Sept. 12, 1741.

⁶R. G. Thwaites (ed.), *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison, 1908), XVIII, 71-2, La Jonquière to Minister, Quebec, Sept. 29, 1750; *infra*, pp. 129-31.

A particularly interesting source of information, in regard to this illegal trade, is a letter-book kept by Robert Sanders, merchant and sometime mayor of Albany. This letter-book includes copies of letters written by Sanders, in execrable French, to a number of Canadian merchants between the years 1752 and 1755. The letters almost all acknowledge receipt of packs of fur, advise of merchandise sent in return, and state the prices, usually in terms of beaver, at which Sanders offers goods for the Indian trade. Most, if not all, of Sanders's French customers were Montrealers, and some, at least, of the Indian porters were from Caughnawaga.⁷ Two regular and faithful carriers were Indian women, one called Agnese, the other a cross-eyed squaw named Marie Magdelaine.⁸ Their names suggest that they too belonged to one of the French missions.

Perhaps the most illuminating fact which emerges from the letter-book is that the Canadians took most of the risk, for the trade, in this instance at least, seems usually to have been initiated by them, and thus they had to trust both the Indian and the recipient in Albany, against neither of whom was it possible to obtain redress. Furthermore, when Sanders sent merchandise back the risk of loss in transit was again run by the Canadians. It seems curious that large packs of valuable furs and goods should have been entrusted to anyone as notoriously untrustworthy as the Indian, but there was little else that the merchant could do. Moreover, in the legitimate trade very considerable credit was regularly extended by traders to the savages with no really adequate guarantee of repayment. The same Indian names recur constantly in the Sanders correspondence, so, no doubt, the merchants kept employing those savages who had been found to be reasonably faithful, that is to say, those who stole only a percentage of the furs instead of disappearing with the whole lot. Comparatively small losses were fairly constant. According to Sanders, the savages nearly always took out a beaver skin and made up the weight by wetting the furs, or by adding sand to the pack.⁹ To judge from the correspondence itself, the Indians usually arrived with the bulk of the shipment intact, but with five or ten pounds of fur missing, and sometimes the loss was more serious.¹⁰ Moreover, the best-intentioned savage in the world might come to grief, for he might be waylaid by English traders who made him drunk, took his furs, and destroyed the letter which he was carrying from his French employer.¹¹ The practice is clearly analogous to hijacking. The Intendant Hocquart estimated the risk and loss to the Canadian at 10 per cent, in

⁷Public Archives of Canada, *Sanders letter-book*, p. 26, Robert Sanders to Monier, Albany, Oct. 19, 1752; p. 52, R. S. to A., Albany, May 16, 1753; p. 63, R. S. to Meriers, Albany, July 21, 1753; p. 71, R. S. to B., Albany, Aug. 30, 1753; p. 93, R. S. to C., Albany, Nov. 7, 1754; p. 110, R. S. to François De Couagne, Albany, May 22, 1755. The letters A, B, etc., stand for the various signs which Sanders's Canadian correspondents used instead of their names.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 31, R. S. to B., Albany, Oct. 17, 1752; p. 26, R. S. to Monier, Albany, Oct. 19, 1752; p. 51, R. S. to B., Albany, May 16, 1753; p. 62, R. S. to D., Albany, July 6, 1753; p. 62, R. S. to B., Albany, July 12, 1753; p. 82, R. S. to B., Albany (Aug.), 1754.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 64, R. S. to G., Albany, July 24, 1753.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 19, R. S. to D. (Aug. 5, 1752); p. 23, R. S. to B., Albany, Aug. 11, 1752; p. 26, R. S. to Monier, Albany, Oct. 19, 1752; p. 43, R. S. to E., Albany, Jan. 31, 1753; p. 76, R. S. to Madame F., Albany, Sept. 11, 1753.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 44, R. S. to D., Albany, Jan. 31, 1753.

addition to the 10 or 12 per cent paid as wages to the Indian carrier.¹² Moreover, the risk of punishment was run chiefly by the French, for, except for a short time, from 1720 to 1726, this trade was not deemed illegal in the province of New York. To protect themselves, Sanders's Canadian correspondents usually substituted some kind of monogram, or initial, or sign, for their own names. One merchant expresses himself as a smoking pipe, another seems rather like a ladder, and a third appears in the guise of a slightly peevish rooster. Still another carried secrecy to the point where not even Sanders knew his correspondent's real name for at least the best part of a year.¹³

The furs exported to Albany comprised deerskins, some muskrat, and, above all, beaver. During the first half of the period this was chiefly *castor sec*, for the English did not distinguish between different grades, while up to 1738 the French paid sometimes twice as much for *castor gras* as they did for *castor sec*.¹⁴ The returns included all manner of luxury articles obviously destined for the use of the French themselves, such as silver coffee spoons, silver forks, table knives, penknives, pipes, gold buttons, buckles, London-made boots, lace, gloves, mittens, calico, muslin, chintz, fine woollens, chocolate, white sugar, and oysters. More important, however, were goods for the Indian trade, such as wampum, copper kettles, and, especially, strouds, a coarse West of England cloth.¹⁵

There are, of course, certain exceptions to the generalization that the illegal fur trade was carried on between Montreal and Albany, via the Richelieu, by means of the Christian Indians. First, the domiciled Indians occasionally brought English goods on their own initiative, to sell in the colony.¹⁶ Moreover, these savages were not always used as intermediaries, for the French themselves sometimes went to Albany,¹⁷ and merchants from Albany, and even New York, came frequently to Montreal, on pretext of carrying letters, or collecting debts, or looking for runaway slaves, but actually, so the Canadian authorities believed, to exchange English goods

¹²*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 67, pp. 191-2, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct., 1737.

¹³*Sanders letter-book*, p. 23, R. S. to B., Albany, Aug. 11, 1752; p. 51, R. S. to B., Albany, May 16, 1753; p. 55, R. S. to B., Albany, June 23, 1753. P.S.; p. 63, R. S. to Meriers, Albany, July 21, 1753; *passim*.

¹⁴*Ordonnances des Intendants*, V, 395-8, Quebec, March 21, 1720; VIII, 207-10, Quebec, July 31, 1724; VIII, 212-5, Quebec, Aug. 14, 1724; VIII, 250-3, Quebec, Oct. 27, 1724; VIII, 369-72, Quebec, July 2, 1725; X, 333-4, Montreal, July 20, 1730. *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 51, pp. 366-7, Réponse de la Compagnie des Indes . . . , Feb. 6, 1729; vol. 67, pp. 88-9, Réponse au mémoire du Roy (1737); vol. 67, pp. 191-3, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct., 1737; vol. 97, p. 271, Mémoire sur le commerce des castors de Canada (1748).

¹⁵*Sanders letter-book*, *passim*, *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, p. 8, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 15, 1713; vol. 35, p. 54, De Ramezay et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 95, p. 133, La Jonquière au Ministre, Quebec, July 25, 1750; Public Archives of Canada, *Série F³*, Collection Moreau St. Mery, vol. IX (2), p. 493, Ordonnance de Bégon, Quebec, April 2, 1716; *Ordonnances des Intendants*, VI, 133-5, Quebec, Oct. 12, 1720; VIII, 207-10, Quebec, July 31, 1724.

¹⁶*Série B*, vol. 35 (3), p. 328, Mémoire du Roy à Vaudreuil et Bégon, June 25, 1713; vol. 59 (1), p. 92, Ministre à Hocquart, Versailles, March 24, 1733.

¹⁷E.g., *Ordonnances des Intendants*, V, 307-8, 308-10; VII, 55-6, 63, 131-5, 135-47, 181-91, 317-8, 341-2; *Série F³*, vol. IX (2), pp. 493-5, Ordonnance de Bégon, Quebec, April 2, 1716; *infra*, p. 128.

for French beaver.¹⁸ In 1728, the Intendant Dupuy declared that the English came by dozens to Montreal and Quebec to set up stores and to establish connections for contraband.¹⁹ Some of them even took up residence in Canada,²⁰ and a few set up in Montreal as hatmakers, as a cover for their smuggling activities.²¹ Occasionally, furs were sent from Montreal to Oswego,²² probably because the route to Lake Ontario was less carefully watched than that to Albany, and, of course, some never reached Montreal at all, but were sent, or taken, directly to Oswego by voyageurs in the up country. A good many furs from Detroit, for instance, found their way to this English post.²³

In addition, there was, no doubt, some inland smuggling between Quebec and Albany,²⁴ but the really extensive illegal export from the capital was by sea, occasionally perhaps to Boston,²⁵ and regularly across the Atlantic, sometimes to France, but chiefly to Holland, where beaver fetched higher prices. The fur was carried not only on merchantmen, but also on the King's ship itself, and was generally trans-shipped in the French ports, although in one instance a shipment was unloaded in Spain, to be taken eventually to the Netherlands.²⁶ The French fishing fleet also car-

¹⁸*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, pp. 435-6, De Ramezay au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 23, 1714; vol. 35, pp. 156-7, De Ramezay au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 28, 1715; vol. 35, pp. 235-6, Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 44, pp. 219-20, De Ramezay au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 15, 1722; vol. 47, p. 55, Longueuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 31, 1725; vol. 50, p. 12, Beauharnois et D'Aigremont au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 1, 1728; vol. 55, pp. 144-9, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 15, 1731; vol. 59 (1), pp. 159-60, Beauharnois et Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 14, 1733; vol. 71, p. 46, Beauharnois au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 4, 1739; vol. 72, p. 39, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Nov. 1, 1739; *Série B*, vol. 53 (3), pp. 440-1, Ministre à Beauharnois et Hocquart, Compiègne, May 2, 1729; *Ordonnances des Intendants*, VII, 161-72, Quebec, July 10, 1722; *N.Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 957, King to Beauharnois, Versailles, May 7, 1726; IX, 1029-30, Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, Quebec, Oct. 1, 1731; *Collections of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society* (Lansing, 1905), XXXIV, 101, Beauharnois and Hocquart to Maurepas, Quebec, Oct. 1, 1732.

¹⁹*Série B³*, vol. 326, ff. 81-81v, Dupuy à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, May 15, 1728.

²⁰*Journal of the General Assembly of New York* (New York, 1764), I, 473, Address to Governor Burnet, June 14, 1722; *Série B*, vol. 52 (1), p. 79, Ministre à Dupuy, Versailles, May 14, 1728.

²¹*Série B*, vol. 49 (2), pp. 413-14, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois et Dupuy, Versailles, May 14, 1726; vol. 52 (1), p. 122, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois et Dupuy, Versailles, May 14, 1728; transcript from the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Archives Bastille, carton 11374, pp. 8-9, Mémoire de la Dame de Thiersant au Cardinal de Fleury, June, 1737.

²²*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 55, p. 181, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 18, 1731; vol. 64, p. 72, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct. 25, 1735; vol. 95, p. 133, La Jonquière au Ministre, Quebec, July 25, 1750; *Série B*, vol. 65 (3), p. 701, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois et Hocquart, Versailles, May 10, 1737.

²³*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 73, pp. 128-9, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Nov. 3, 1740; vol. 93, p. 171, La Jonquière au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 22, 1749; *Série F³*, XIV (supplément), 6, Ordonnance de la Jonquière, Montreal, May 29, 1750.

²⁴*Sanders letter-book*, p. 44, R. S. to D., Albany, Jan. 31, 1753.

²⁵*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, pp. 547-8, Précis de . . . mémoire présenté à . . . Pontchartrain . . . par Dauteuil, procureur général du Roi au Conseil Supérieur . . .; vol. 47, pp. 72-7, Vaudreuil au Ministre, Montreal, April 16, 1725.

²⁶Public Archives of Canada, transcript from Archives Rochefort, IE, vol. 85, ff. 665-6, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, Dec. 5, 1714; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 36, p. 407, Neret et Gayot au Conseil (June 8, 1716); vol. 37, p. 481, Mémoire; vol. 44, p. 140, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 7, 1722; vol. 48, p. 234, Dupuy au Ministre, Oct. 14, 1726; vol. 48, p. 68, Beauharnois et Dupuy au Ministre, Quebec,

ried contraband beaver, bought from Canadian fishermen who had smuggled it out of the colony.²⁷

It is impossible to calculate exactly the extent of the illegal trade. In the early years of the period, some estimates placed the annual illegal export at roughly a half or two-thirds of the total quantity of beaver produced in Canada each year,²⁸ but later the records are silent. There can be no doubt, however, that an extensive contraband trade continued to exist. The most conspicuous reason for its existence was the fact that England produced better and cheaper woollen cloth than France did. The Indian preferred English strouds to French scarlets from all standpoints, quality, colour, style, and price. The Iroquois of Caughnawaga once stated flatly that they would rather be dead than deprived of English goods.²⁹ Throughout the period with which we are concerned, it was asserted again and again that, owing to the Indian preference, English strouds, or their equivalent, were absolutely essential in the fur trade.³⁰ The truth of the assertion is borne out by the periodic, although completely futile, attempts of French manufacturers to imitate English cloth.³¹ Failing to produce an equivalent in

Oct. 20, 1726; vol. 58, p. 69, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 25, 1732; *Série B*, vol. 49 (2), p. 336, Ministre à Dupuy, Versailles, May 7, 1726; *Série B*³, vol. 326, ff. 67-67v, Le Peletier à Maurepas, Versailles, May 16, 1728.

²⁷*Ordonnances des Intendants*, XIII, 156-8, Quebec, May 6, 1735.

²⁸*Série C*¹¹*A*, vol. 39, pp. 61-2, Traité, May 10, 1706; vol. 34, p. 292, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 20, 1714; vol. 35, p. 461, Mémoire, Bégon, Nov. 3, 1715; vol. 39, p. 54, Neret et Gayot au Roy et à Nosseigneurs de son Conseil (1717); vol. 123 (not paged), Sur le mémoire présenté par Sieur Riverin . . . Marginal note, Minute of the Conseil de Marine, April 28, 1716.

²⁹*Série C*¹¹*A*, vol. 97, p. 139, La Jonquière au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 19, 1751.

³⁰*Ibid.*, vol. 34, pp. 7-8, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 15, 1713; vol. 35, p. 462, Mémoire, Bégon, Quebec, Nov. 3, 1715; vol. 125 (1), pp. 439-40, S. de Lanouillier, Sept. 14, 1715, Conseil, May 12, 1716 (this ellipsis indicates the proceedings of the Conseil on Lanouillier's letter of Sept. 14); vol. 36, pp. 144-5, Réponses aux propositions du député du commerce de Languedoc sur les écarlatines, Bégon, Quebec, Oct. 9, 1716; vol. 38, pp. 119-23, Vaudreuil à Monseigneur, Quebec, Oct. 30, 1717; vol. 43, pp. 256-7, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Conseil, Oct. 8, 1721, Conseil, Dec. 19, 1721; vol. 55, p. 144, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 15, 1731; vol. 55, p. 182, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 18, 1731; vol. 67, pp. 188-90, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct., 1737; vol. 90-1, pp. 47-8, La Galissonnière et Bigot au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 20, 1748; vol. 103 (2), p. 542, Mémoire, La Compagnie des Indes au Ministre (1758); transcript from Dépôt des Fortifications, Carton 5, pièce 289, p. 194, Vaudreuil, Quebec, Oct. 12, 1717, Conseil, Jan. 5, 1718; Public Archives of Canada, *Série B*¹, vol. 29, p. 169, Charlot, Feb. 19, 1718, Conseil, March 9, 1718; Archives Nationales (Paris), *Série Marine B*³, vol. 532, ff. 71-71v, Mémoire sur les envois de la Compagnie des Indes dans le Canada (1756); *N.Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 687, Of the trade of New York, Colden (enclosed in, Burnet to the Lords of Trade, June 25, 1723); V, 741, Report of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs, Albany, Nov. 12, 1724; I. Boislielle (ed.), *Correspondance des contrôleurs généraux*, III, 522, Pontchartrain au Contrôleur Général, Jan. 28, 1714.

³¹Boislielle, *Correspondance des contrôleurs généraux*; *Série C*¹¹*A*, vol. 125 (1), pp. 439-40, Lanouillier, Sept. 24, 1715, Conseil, May 12, 1716; vol. 35, p. 52, De Ramezay et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 36, p. 144, Réponses . . . Bégon, Quebec, Oct. 9, 1716; *Série B*, vol. 39 (4), p. 948, Conseil à Bégon, Paris, July 7, 1717; *Série B*¹, vol. 29, pp. 23-6, Bégon, Quebec, Nov. 6, 1717, Conseil, Jan. 5, 1718; vol. 29, pp. 200-4, Conseil, March 16, 1718; *Série B*, vol. 89, p. 140, Ministre à La Jonquière et Bigot, Versailles, April 30, 1749; *Série C*¹¹*A*, vol. 93, pp. 3-4, La Jonquière et Bigot au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 1, 1749; vol. 98, pp. 368-9, Martin au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 5, 1752; vol. 103 (2), p. 543, Mémoire, La Compagnie des Indes au Ministre (1758); *Série Marine B*³, vol. 532, ff. 71-71v, Mémoire sur les envois de la Compagnie des Indes dans le Canada (1756).

any of the desired respects, the French adopted the plan of buying strouds in England for export, via France, to Canada.³² But although by the end of the period the Compagnie des Indes was making large shipments of English cloth, the expedient failed to check smuggling, for, owing presumably to a difference in transportation, and probably in other, costs, strouds brought via Albany could be bought in Montreal more cheaply than strouds sent via France.³³

The belief of the French that strouds were indispensable was shared by many of the colonial authorities in New York.³⁴ For example, the whole policy of Governor Burnet, in regard to Indian trade, was based upon this assumption. Burnet was convinced that, if the supply of strouds sent from Albany to Montreal were cut off, the French trade with the Indians must collapse, and the savages would therefore turn to the English. He anticipated from this policy not only economic gain to the colony of New York, but, more important still, also the political and military advantage of Indian allegiance, which was practically identical with Indian trade. From 1720 to 1726, Burnet did contrive to have the trade in Indian goods to the French prohibited, but the law could not be enforced, and finally, owing chiefly to the machinations of the Albany merchants, the ban was lifted.

The advantage to Albany of trading with Montreal arose, of course, from the fact that the French had most of the furs. While Canadians penetrated far into the interior, New Yorkers never got past Lake Ontario; while missionary influence and comparatively humane treatment helped to attach the Indians to the French, abusive traders and encroachment on their land tended to estrange them from the English. The wholesale trade in strouds to Montreal appealed to the leading merchants of Albany as being easier and safer than trying to tap the fur supply at its source, where the French had already established control. The political wisdom of men like Burnet was lost upon the Albany trader, who was not prepared to interrupt his flow of profits from an established business for the sake of an imperial vision which, he felt, might easily be a mirage. The cautious Dutch merchant was no British Empire builder. He refused, therefore, to gamble immediate gain against the possibly greater, but much less certain, benefits to be derived from an attempt to establish direct relations with the western Indians. He simply turned a deaf Dutch ear and tightened his grasp on

³²*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, p. 322, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 20, 1714; vol. 38, p. 119, Vaudreuil à Monseigneur, Quebec, Oct. 30, 1717; *Série B¹*, vol. 29, p. 169, M. Charlot, La Rochelle, Feb. 19, 1718, Conseil, March 9, 1718; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 44, p. 140, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 17, 1722; vol. 45, p. 25, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 14, 1723; vol. 50, p. 224, Requête des marchands (1728); vol. 70, pp. 8-9, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct. 8, 1738; vol. 98, pp. 368-9, Martin au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 5, 1752; vol. 103 (2), p. 543, Mémoire, La Compagnie des Indes au Ministre (1758).

³³*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 35, p. 51, De Ramezay et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 44, p. 140, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 17, 1722; vol. 54, pp. 109-10, Beauharnois et Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 12, 1731; *N.Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 728-30, Memorial, Colden to Burnet, Nov. 10, 1724.

³⁴*N.Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 687. Of the trade of New York, by Colden (enclosed with, Burnet to the Lords of Trade, New York, June 25, 1723); VI, 1010, William Johnson to the Lords of Trade, Lake George, Sept. 24, 1755; VII, 16-7, Peter Wraxall, Some thoughts upon the British Indian interest . . . (enclosed with, Wraxall to Johnson, Jan. 9, 1756).

the bird in his hand, when Burnet, and his like, urged the profits, both political and economic, to be found in the bush.³⁵

While Albany had what it believed to be adequate reasons for trading with Montreal, Montreal had even more compelling motives to trade with Albany. It was profitable to the Canadian merchant not only to buy his cloth, but also to sell his beaver, in Albany. Throughout the period, the English offered higher prices, particularly for *castor sec*, than did the French beaver companies.³⁶ There were, of course, certain charges on the smuggling trade from which the legitimate trade was free, but only once or twice were French and English beaver prices such that these charges loomed so comparatively large as to make the illegal export of beaver unattractive, and even then, the desire to obtain strouds remained.³⁷ Normally, the Canadian got more and better goods for his beaver in Albany than he did anywhere else, he avoided the charge of 5 per cent for good measure collected by the Company, he might avoid payment of certain taxes,³⁸ and, finally, he found in the Albany trade the inestimable advantage of prompt payment. The company holding the beaver monopoly from 1706 to 1717 more than once came very close to defaulting on the payment of its bills of exchange, with consequent alarm and discredit in the colony. At best, its bills were payable, at face value, only after two years, and meanwhile the rate of discount might be as high as 10 per cent.³⁹ When the Compagnie des Indes took over the monopoly it met its drafts promptly, in the spring after the beaver reached France.⁴⁰ This still meant, however, that the Canadian, who had received his beaver in the spring, or early summer, and sold it to the Company in return for bills of exchange, could not expect returns from France at least until the following summer, whereas if

³⁵C. H. McIlwain, Introduction to *An abridgement of the Indian affairs*, by Peter Wraxall (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), pp. lxxv-lxxxix; A. H. Buffinton, "The policy of Albany and English westward expansion" (*Mississippi Valley historical review*, VIII, March, 1922, 327-366, 332-3, 358-63).

³⁶*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, p. 292, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 20, 1714; *N.Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 733, Memorial, Colden to Burnet, Nov. 10, 1724; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 49 (1), p. 44, Merchants of New France to Governor and Intendant (1727); vol. 61, p. 92, Beauharnois et Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 7, 1734; vol. 67, pp. 88-9, Réponses au mémoire du Roy (1737); vol. 97, p. 271, Mémoire sur le commerce des castors de Canada (1748); vol. 93, pp. 8-10, Observations (1749); *Wisconsin historical collections*, XVIII, 72, 73, La Jonquière to Minister, Quebec, Sept. 29, 1750; *N.Y. Col. Docs.*, VII, 6, Governor Hardy to the Lords of Trade, New York, Jan. 16, 1756.

³⁷*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 44, pp. 202-3, Mémoire, Bégon, Quebec, Oct. 26, 1722; *Sanders letter-book*, p. 31, R. S. to B., Albany, Oct. 17, 1752.

³⁸*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 35, pp. 236-7, Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 97, p. 271, Mémoire (1748).

³⁹*Ibid.*, vol. 39, p. 73, Traité, May 10, 1706; vol. 35, pp. 454-9, Mémoire, Bégon, Quebec, Nov. 3, 1715; vol. 36, pp. 342-50, Protestation du Sieur Lanouillier . . . Oct. 3, 1716; vol. 36, pp. 293-309, Mémoire, Colony of New France to Bégon, Quebec, Oct. 9, 1716; vol. 39, p. 81, Réponses au mémoire des Sieurs Neret et Gayot . . . Quebec, Nov. 6, 1718; transcript from Dépôt des Fortifications, carton 5, pièce 289, p. 194, Vaudreuil, Quebec, Oct. 12, 1717, Conseil, Jan. 5, 1718.

⁴⁰*Edits et Ordonnances*, I, 396, Arrêt, July 11, 1718; I, 505, Arrêt, Versailles, March 30, 1726; *Série B*, vol. 48 (2), p. 56, Ministre à Vaudreuil et (Bégon). Versailles, May 29, 1725; *Série B³*, vol. 312, ff. 154-156v, Dodun, Contrôleur Général des Finances, Versailles, March 23, 1726; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 51, pp. 355-6, Réponse de la Compagnie des Indes, Feb. 6, 1729; vol. 93, pp. 17-18, Observations . . . (1749).

he sent his fur off to Albany, he had merchandise back within six weeks.⁴¹ The advantage was obvious.

Moreover, the Albany trade had charms not alone for the profit-seeking fur merchant, but also for the general public. English manufactured goods were much in demand in the colony, especially the finer varieties of cloth which, all legislation to the contrary, Canadians used extensively to ornament both their houses and their persons. Possibly, the appeal lay in a very natural reaction to the coarse woollen cloth, manufactured in Bordeaux, which they usually wore. The export of such goods from Albany was never forbidden by the English, for the ban which they imposed briefly applied only to goods for the Indian trade. Governor Burnet pointed out that all other articles were in the nature of luxuries, and would, therefore, he implies, probably do the French more harm than good.⁴² The fondness of the French for English cloth is illustrated by the case of the tinsmith's wife. The tinsmith's wife owned a short cloak made from printed calico of foreign manufacture, and to this gay garment, with its pattern of red flowers, she was evidently much attached. Wearing it through the streets of Quebec, she was observed one day by two guards employed by the Compagnie des Indes. In reply to the expostulations of the men, she said that she was not aware that the use of such goods was forbidden, that she wanted to wear the cloak, and that they had no right to stop her. Her stubborn refusal to obey any of the guards' commands resulted in a summons to appear before the Intendant. Her protest that her innocence was proved by the fact that she had thrown the cloak into the fire failed to convince Hocquart, but she did plead ignorance and poverty so effectively that he fined her only 100 *livres*, instead of the 500 *livres* required by law.⁴³

Whatever its attractions for Canadians, however, the English trade had no appeal for the authorities in France. Official opinion held it to be harmful to the interests of French manufacturers both of hats and of textiles, and, of course, it interfered with the profits of the beaver company.⁴⁴ It was pointed out that while France bore the cost of maintaining the colony, the English enjoyed the benefits.⁴⁵ Trade with Holland affected the disposal, by the Company, of its surplus beaver which could not be used by the French hatmakers.⁴⁶ Finally, the trade with Albany, in addition to its economic drawbacks, accustomed the domiciled Indians to going

⁴¹*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 35, pp. 54-5, De Ramezay et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 51, pp. 355-6, Réponse de la Compagnie des Indes, Feb. 6, 1729.

⁴²*Ibid.*, vol. 37, p. 66, Délibération du Conseil sur les écarlatines, Jan., 1717; vol. 48, pp. 70-1, Beauharnois et Dupuy au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 20, 1726; *Wisconsin historical collection*, XVIII, 72, La Jonquière to Minister, Quebec, Sept. 29, 1750; *N.Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 582, Burnet to the Lords of Trade, Dec. 14, 1720.

⁴³*Ordonnances des Intendants*, XIII, 380-4, Quebec, May 19, 1736.

⁴⁴*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 35, p. 55, De Ramezay et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 76, pp. 178-9, Mémoire sur le commerce de Canada (1741); vol. 67, pp. 193-4, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct., 1737; *Série B*, vol. 54 (2), p. 351, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois et Hocquart, Versailles, April 11, 1730; vol. 59 (1), pp. 316-17, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois et Hocquart, Versailles, May 12, 1733; vol. 49 (2), pp. 318-20, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois, Versailles, May 7, 1726.

⁴⁵*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 40, p. 232, Conseil, May 23, 1719.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 36, pp. 407-8, Requête présentée au Conseil par Neret et Gayot, June 8, 1716; *Série B*, vol. 89, pp. 142-3, Ministre à La Jonquière et Bigot, Versailles, April 30, 1749.

to the English and attracted the English to Montreal, results which might have dangerous political and military consequences.⁴⁷

The French, therefore, made apparently strenuous efforts to stop the trade. Their periodic endeavours to remove the causes were unsuccessful. This we have already seen in connection with the supplying of cloth, and, similarly, attempts to correct the disparity between the beaver prices failed.⁴⁸ Unable to destroy the trade at its source, the authorities tried to raise barriers against it. Efforts were made to safeguard the passage of the beaver down from the up country to Montreal, by having the cargoes of the canoes checked at each post *en route*,⁴⁹ and voyageurs were ordered to follow a northerly course through Lake Ontario, sedulously avoiding the south shore, lest they hear and hearken to the siren voice of Oswego.⁵⁰ Once the beaver reached the towns the merchants were required to bring it within forty-eight hours to the receiving offices maintained by the Company, and ordinances were issued to prevent its passage from one town to another.⁵¹ The route to Albany was guarded by Fort Chambly and by soldiers on Lake Champlain, whither a detachment was sent each summer from 1717, or earlier, until 1731, when the French fort at Crown Point was built and garrisoned.⁵² Canadians were not only forbidden to take beaver to the English colonies, they might not even go themselves, unless with the Governor's permission visé by the Intendant.⁵³ To this end, all bark canoes were ordered to be registered, and severe penalties attached to using, selling, or lending them for illegal journeys.⁵⁴ Besides keeping the French in the colony, the English had also to be kept out, but no real efforts were made in this direction until 1725, when it was ruled that Englishmen might remain in Montreal only two days. Letters Patent issued in 1727 for all the colonies, forbade foreigners, even if naturalized, to follow any pursuit

⁴⁷*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, pp. 8-9, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 15, 1713; *Série B*, vol. 49 (2), pp. 318-20, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois, Versailles, May 7, 1726.

⁴⁸*Edits et Ordonnances*, I, 441-2, Arrêt, Paris, Jan. 28, 1722; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 64, pp. 67-9, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct. 25, 1735; vol. 67, pp. 191-3, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct., 1737; vol. 81 (1), pp. 52-8, Beauharnois et Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 15, 1744; vol. 93, pp. 8-10, Observations . . . (1749); *Série F³*, XII, 297-8, Ordonnance, Hocquart, Quebec, Dec. 20, 1735; XII, 215-17, Ordonnance, Hocquart, Quebec, July 11, 1738; XIII, 287-91, Ordonnance, Beauharnois et Hocquart, Quebec, June 6, 1746.

⁴⁹Public Archives of Canada, *Série A¹*, Liasse LXIX, pièce 25. Arrêt, Fontainebleau, July 10, 1731; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 75, p. 257, Beauharnois au Ministre, Sept. 22, 1741; *Série F³*, vol. XIV (supplément), p. 6, Ordonnance, La Jonquière, Montreal, May 29, 1750; *Edits et Ordonnances*, II, 375, Ordonnance, Hocquart, Quebec, April 25, 1738.

⁵⁰*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 51, pp. 289-90, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Oct. 12 and 20, 1729.

⁵¹*Ordonnances des Intendants*, IV, 440-1, Quebec, Nov. 14, 1714; V, 32-4, Quebec, May 29, 1715; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 51, pp. 290-1, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Oct. 12 and 20, 1729; *Edits et Ordonnances*, I, 401-3, Arrêt, Paris, June 4, 1719; P. G. Roy (ed.), *Inventaire des Ordonnances des Intendants* (Beauceville, 1919), III, 131, June 16, 1749.

⁵²*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 35, p. 157, De Ramezay au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 28, 1715; vol. 40, p. 238, Conseil, May 23, 1719; *Série B*, vol. 38 (2), p. 378, Conseil à Vaudreuil, Paris, June 15, 1716; vol. 52 (1), p. 92, Ministre à Beauharnois, Versailles, May 14, 1728; vol. 57 (1), pp. 57-8, Ministre à Beauharnois, Versailles, April 1, 1732.

⁵³*Série F³*, IX (2), 493-5, Ordonnance, Bégon, Quebec, April 2, 1716; *Edits et Ordonnances*, I, 489-90, Déclaration du Roi, Versailles, May 22, 1724.

⁵⁴*Ordonnances des Intendants*, VIII, 275-7, Quebec, Dec. 23, 1724.

but farming, but it was not until 1738 that Englishmen were refused admission to the colony on any pretext whatsoever.⁵⁵ Finally, a whole series of ordinances were issued to prevent the import and use of English goods, each new law designed to close some loophole previously overlooked.⁵⁶

Thus the French tried to check the smuggling trade from the moment that the furs were gathered in the wilderness to the time when the returns from Albany were in use in the colony. This "geographical" description of the French efforts is, of course, artificial, for the growth of their policy was purely organic; new regulations were made when and where they occurred to the authorities to be necessary. But while their exertions must have acted as a deterrent, it is certain that smuggling was never suppressed. Occasionally, Canadian officials reported that, as a result of their efforts, the contraband trade had been checked, but usually they had scarcely time to receive congratulations from France before they were forced to admit that smuggling was worse than ever.⁵⁷

It was vain to expect to stop the illegal trade by legislation, for the law either was not, or could not be, enforced. For example, Canadian officials did not insist upon the prompt delivery of beaver to the Company's offices, because they feared to damage business in the colony, where beaver circulated like currency.⁵⁸ Likewise, there are even some tacit admissions that the authorities condoned the import of strouds from Albany, when emergency required.⁵⁹

Moreover, officials in Canada were not always to be trusted. The first Governor Vaudreuil was said to have traded extensively with the English colonies and that in time of war.⁶⁰ Beauharnois apparently saw no reason why Canadians should not be allowed to pay debts to their English neighbours in deerskins. The fact that he wrote the Minister so suggests that the Governor was stupid rather than dishonest.⁶¹ He also believed that English visitors should be freely admitted, and it was solely Hocquart's

⁵⁵*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 47, p. 55, Longueuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 31, 1725; *Edits et Ordonnances*, I, 519, Oct., 1727; II, 374-6, Ordonnance, Hocquart, Quebec, April 25, 1738.

⁵⁶*Edits et Ordonnances*, I, 320-1, Arrêt, July 6, 1709; I, 401-3, Arrêt, Paris, June 4, 1719; *Wisconsin historical collections*, XVII, 214-5, Ordonnance, Beauharnois et Hocquart, Quebec, Aug. 23, 1735; *Série B*, vol. 38 (2), pp. 480-1, Ordonnance du Roy, Paris, May 19, 1716; vol. 49 (2), pp. 492-3, Ordonnance du Roy, Versailles, May 14, 1726; *Ordonnances des Intendants*, X, 259-60, Montreal, July 11, 1730; *Série F³*, XIII, 11-7, Ordonnance, Beauharnois et Hocquart, Quebec, May 12, 1741; XIII, 34-7, Ordonnance, Beauharnois et Hocquart, Quebec, June 16, 1741; XIII, 91-3, Ordonnance, Beauharnois et Hocquart, Quebec, April 24, 1742.

⁵⁷E.g. *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 48, p. 294, Dupuy au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 30, 1726; vol. 49 (1), pp. 139-40, Beauharnois au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 25, 1727; *Série B*, vol. 52 (1), p. 120, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois et Dupuy, Versailles, May 14, 1728; *Série B³*, vol. 326, ff. 81-81^v, Dupuy à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, May 15, 1728.

⁵⁸*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 48, pp. 64-6, Beauharnois et Dupuy au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 20, 1726.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, vol. 35, p. 55, De Ramezay et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 68, pp. 28-9, Hocquart au Contrôleur Général, Quebec, Oct. 14, 1737; *Série B¹*, vol. 8 (2), pp. 572-3, Observation, Conseil, May 12, 1716.

⁶⁰*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, pp. 547-8, Précis de . . . mémoire présenté à . . . Pontchartrain . . . par Dauteuil.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, vol. 50, pp. 13-14, Beauharnois et D'Aigremont au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 1, 1728.

doing that they were ever excluded.⁶² Prosecutions for smuggling had early to be transferred from the jurisdiction of the Conseil Supérieur to that of the Intendant, because members of the Conseil themselves engaged in business, and their sympathy and interest were so much with the culprits that convictions could not be obtained for the most barefaced contraventions of the law.⁶³ An incident in 1714 illustrates the impunity of the smugglers. An officer of the beaver company discovered, at Cap St. Ignace, thirteen hundred pounds of beaver, evidently part of a much larger collection and obviously destined for illegal export. When the officer reached Quebec with the confiscated beaver, he was met by the owner, sword in hand, and engaged in combat, while the merchant's friends and relatives, who had accompanied him, made off with the fur. The merchant had not troubled to conceal his identity, yet he went unpunished.⁶⁴ Complicity or negligence continued on down the line. The Lieutenant-Governor in Montreal, in his task of checking contraband, received no assistance from the King's Attorney of the Jurisdiction, because that worthy had a business in Quebec and lived there, visiting Montreal seldom and briefly.⁶⁵ The officers of the Montreal garrison were suspected of carrying on, or favouring, foreign trade,⁶⁶ and in 1735 Hocquart had to admit that a law passed four years earlier, to ensure the beaver reaching Montreal, had fallen into disuse, owing to the failure of the commandants of the up country posts to enforce it.⁶⁷ Finally, the illegal trade of the Demoiselles Desaumiers was carried on at least with the connivance, and more probably with the full co-operation, of the missionary at Caughnawaga.

Even given conscientious officials, the chances of evading the law were still enormous. A few men, although armed with the right to search any building, could not possibly cope with a community interested almost without exception in the smuggling trade.⁶⁸ So unanimously was the law opposed by public opinion that an attempt to enforce it by offering increasingly attractive rewards to informers was an almost total failure.⁶⁹ Moreover, transgressors, even when caught, still had some hope of avoiding the full impact of the law by pleading ignorance or poverty or both,⁷⁰ and all save the most solidly established citizens might escape punishment by disappearing into the limitless bush, which, throughout the French period, offered friendly sanctuary to the native-born habitant.⁷¹

⁶²*Ibid.*, vol. 70, pp. 6-7, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 8, 1738.

⁶³*Ibid.*, vol. 125 (1), pp. 438-9, Lanouillier, Quebec, Sept. 24, 1715, Conseil, May 12, 1716; vol. 35, pp. 399-401, Neret et Gayot à Pontchartrain, Paris, Feb. 20, 1715; vol. 125 (1), pp. 428-9, Requête de Neret et Gayot, Conseil, May 5, 1716; *Edits et Ordonnances*, I, 347-8, Arrêt, Marly, May 6, 1715; I, 401-3, Arrêt, Paris, June 4, 1719.

⁶⁴*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, pp. 518-25, Procès verbal de Jean Baptiste Le Boeuf, Sieur de Ste. Marie . . . June 4, 5, 6, 1714.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 53, pp. 15-16, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 14, 1730.

⁶⁶*Série B*, vol. 52 (1), p. 195, Ministre à Dupuy, Versailles, May 24, 1728.

⁶⁷*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 64, p. 73, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Québec, Oct. 25, 1735.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, vol. 35, p. 237, Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 49 (2), p. 353, Dupuy au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 20, 1727.

⁶⁹*Edits et Ordonnances*, I, 395-9, July 11, 1718; I, 401-3, Paris, June 4, 1719; I, 404-5, Paris, June 2, 1720; I, 463-4, Paris, May 15, 1722; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 51, p. 288, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Oct. 12 and 20, 1729.

⁷⁰*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 59 (2), p. 472, Mémoire, Hocquart, Quebec, Sept. 1, 1733; e.g. *supra*, p. 124.

⁷¹E.g. *Ordonnances des Intendants*, XII, 283-6, Quebec, April 22, 1734.

Although it was not infrequently pointed out, with a good deal of truth, that smuggling could never be checked in a country the geographical nature of which lent itself so admirably to that pursuit,⁷² the least ineffective of all the measures taken was probably the patrolling of the route to Albany. By about 1740, the Canadian authorities seem to have been satisfied that neither French nor English participated any longer directly in the trade,⁷³ and, if such were the case, the success can be attributed only to the barrier formed by the forts at Chambly and Crown Point.

This simply implied, however, the increased use of the savages as intermediaries, and here emerges probably the greatest single reason for the failure of the French to stop the illegal trade, namely, the fear of offending the domiciled Indians. This fear meant that no really effective methods of coercion could ever be applied to the savages, and beyond a doubt, both the savages and the Canadians knew it.⁷⁴ Attempts were made, of course, to control the mission Indians, but the authorities never dared go so far as absolutely to forbid the savages, as they forbade the French, to trade at Albany. Given so much, any regulation designed to prevent the use of Indian carriers by the French could always be circumvented.

At the beginning of the period, Canadian officials held the defeatist view that no method could be employed with these savages save the practically useless one of suggestion,⁷⁵ and although beaver and foreign goods were sometimes taken from the Indians, these commodities, or their value, seem always to have been returned to them.⁷⁶ After 1719, however, slightly more vigorous action was taken, for Governor Vaudreuil seems to have persuaded the savages to agree to take only their own furs to Albany, and to fetch goods solely for their own use, furthermore to submit to inspection by the commandant at Chambly, and by the officer of the Lake Champlain detachment.⁷⁷ These inspections were probably made, during the first few years, with at least some degree of regularity,⁷⁸ and a few confiscations are recorded,⁷⁹ but the plan seems soon to have fallen into disuse, or at least to

⁷²*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 34, p. 8, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 15, 1713; vol. 51, p. 288, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Oct. 12 and 20, 1729; vol. 73, pp. 129-30, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Nov. 3, 1740; vol. 93, p. 171, La Jonquière au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 22, 1749.

⁷³*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 67, p. 85, Réponse au Mémoire du Roy (1737); vol. 74, p. 29, Beauharnois au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 6, 1740; vol. 76, pp. 178-9, Mémoire sur le commerce de Canada (1741).

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, vol. 53, pp. 148-9, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 10, 1730.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 35, pp. 55-6, De Ramezay et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1715; vol. 36, pp. 87-8, Vaudreuil au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 14, 1716.

⁷⁶*Série B*, vol. 37 (3), p. 708, Mémoire du Roy à De Ramezay et Bégon, Marly, July 10, 1715; *Série B¹*, vol. 8 (2), pp. 500-1, Conseil, April 28, 1716.

⁷⁷*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 40, p. 27, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 26, 1719; vol. 42, pp. 21-3, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 26, 1720, Conseil, Dec. 24, 1720.

⁷⁸*N.Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 908-9, King to Vaudreuil and Bégon, June 8, 1722; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 45, p. 24, Vaudreuil et Bégon au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 14, 1723; *Série B*, vol. 49 (2), p. 407, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois et Dupuy, Versailles, May 14, 1726.

⁷⁹*Ordonnances des Intendants*, V, 395-8, Quebec, March 21, 1720; VII, 249-54, Quebec, Sept. 5, 1722; VIII, 26-7, Quebec, Aug. 16, 1723.

have been enforced seldom and briefly.⁸⁰ Moreover, not only does it appear that no really sustained effort was made to control the domiciled Indians, it is equally evident that the savages were quite capable of coping with such efforts as were made. Sometimes they outwitted the Commandant at Crown Point by passing repeatedly with small quantities at a time,⁸¹ or by sending empty canoes past the fort while the furs were portaged around behind it.⁸² Or, impatient of guile, they might employ force. On one occasion, sixty Indians, meeting the detachment on Lake Champlain, simply grasped their tomahawks and informed the Frenchmen that they were going to Albany and were coming back the same way. There was nothing that the French could do about it.⁸³ Similarly, two hundred domiciled Iroquois with a valuable cargo of beaver, once forestalled interference at Crown Point by first extorting passports from the Governor, under threat of going to settle among their heathen brethren of the Five Nations.⁸⁴

Moreover, the authorities in France to the contrary,⁸⁵ it was quite impossible to discover the French who were using the Indians, for the savages, according to Hocquart, were of a discretion "à toute épreuve" concerning their employers.⁸⁶ Finally, exhortations to the Iroquois at Caughnawaga, especially through their missionary, must have been peculiarly futile during the régime of the Demoiselles Desautniers.

The Demoiselles Desautniers, respectively Marie Magdelaine, Marie Anne, and Marguerite, daughters of a Montreal merchant, set up a store at Caughnawaga in 1727, for the purpose of trading drygoods and provisions to the savages. There they thrived undisturbed until, in 1739, it occurred to the agents of the Compagnie des Indes to wonder why the Demoiselles, who must have received beaver in their trade with the Indians, had never brought any to the Company's office in Montreal. Hocquart admitted that the circumstances were suspicious, but both he and Governor Beauharnois feared lest the suppression of the store, or even an investigation, should antagonize the Indians, and for that reason felt that it would be wiser to tolerate the abuse, if it really existed.⁸⁷ This attitude was approved by the Minister of Marine, who ordered, nevertheless, that the Superior of the Jesuits in Canada be informed that the King's orders must be executed in the mission, and warned that any further complaints

⁸⁰*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 67, pp. 85-7, Réponse au Mémoire du Roy (1737); vol. 67, p. 188, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Quebec, Oct., 1737; vol. 69, pp. 75-7, Beauharnois et Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 14, 1738; vol. 97, pp. 139-40, La Jonquière au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 19, 1751.

⁸¹*Série B*, vol. 66, p. 105, Ministre à Beauharnois et Hocquart, Versailles, April 23, 1738; *Série C¹¹A*, vol. 69, pp. 75-7, Beauharnois et Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 14, 1738.

⁸²*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 125 (2), p. 802, Journal, May-Aug., 1731 (en marge: avec la lettre de M. Daine. 17 octobre, 1731); p. 814, Daine—? Crown Point, Aug. 20, 1731.

⁸³*Ibid.*, vol. 44, p. 221, De Ramezay au Conseil, Quebec, Oct. 15, 1722.

⁸⁴*N.Y. Col. Docs.*, VI, 714, Clinton to the Lords of Trade, New York, July 17, 1751.

⁸⁵*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 69, pp. 27-8, Mémoire du Roy à Beauharnois et Hocquart, May 15, 1738.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 70, pp. 7-8, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 8, 1738; *Wisconsin historical collections*, XVIII, 73, La Jonquière to Minister, Quebec, Sept. 29, 1750.

⁸⁷*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 72, p. 128, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Nov. 1, 1739; vol. 73, p. 129, Hocquart à la Compagnie des Indes, Nov. 3, 1740; vol. 77, pp. 403-5, Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 29, 1740; vol. 97, p. 277, Demoiselles Desautniers au Ministre, 1751.

would mean the suppression of the store.⁸⁸ When Hocquart carried out these commands, both the Superior at Quebec and the Père Tournois, missionary at Caughnawaga, protested that his insinuations were sheer calumny.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, Beauharnois had returned to the charge with further evidence, with the result that in 1742 the store was ordered closed.⁹⁰ To these orders the Demoiselles, protesting their innocence, apparently acquiesced, but in spite of the fact that they had a fine house in Montreal, where they would have been quite free to carry on a legitimate business, they preferred to go on living, without visible means of support, in an Indian village. At the same time, the savages continued to carry beaver to the English.⁹¹ Two and two make four even without proof, and if the Governor lacked the courage of his convictions, the Minister in France was not so craven. Accordingly, in 1745, the Demoiselles were ordered removed from the mission. But, meanwhile, war had broken out, and the Indians were doing such excellent work against the English that Beauharnois and Hocquart, fearing to discourage their efforts, suspended the execution of the order. The situation was explained to the new Governor coming out in 1747, with instructions to use his own judgment,⁹² but evidently the sisters continued in that state of life to which, no doubt, their sound business instinct had first called them. They could scarcely have been better placed for smuggling, conveniently close to Montreal, the centre of the fur trade, yet sufficiently remote to escape daily observation, and having at hand 250 Indians, not counting the women and children, all of them ready to turn a dishonest penny.⁹³

At last in 1750, Governor La Jonquière was convinced that the Demoiselles were carrying on an extensive contraband trade, with the complicity of the missionary, and probably with the connivance of the Jesuit Superior. Therefore, in May, 1750, he ordered both the sisters and the Père Tournois to Quebec, an order which was executed probably chiefly because he had taken the precaution of sending an officer and eight soldiers to deliver it.⁹⁴ In the autumn of the same year, the Demoiselles, accompanied by the missionary, sailed for France, where both to the Minister of Marine and to the Director of the Compagnie des Indes, they presented petitions, supported by numerous testimonials, which, if anything, suggest the number of their accomplices.⁹⁵ In 1751 the Demoiselles returned alone to Canada and promptly repaired to Montreal, where they occupied themselves inventing reasons for returning to Caughnawaga and being steadily checkmated by La Jonquière, notwithstanding their boasted, if unproducible, permission from the King to re-establish their store.⁹⁶ Then in March, 1752, La Jonquière died, whereupon the sisters prevailed

⁸⁸*Série B*, vol. 72, pp. 79-80, Ministre à Hocquart, Versailles, March 27, 1741.

⁸⁹*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 76, p. 26, Hocquart au Ministre, Oct. 28, 1741.

⁹⁰*N.Y. Col. Docs.*, IX, 1071, Beauharnois to Maurepas, Quebec, Sept. 21, 1741; *Série B*, vol. 74 (2), p. 445, Ministre à Beauharnois et Hocquart, Fontainebleau, April 30, 1742.

⁹¹*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 77, p. 13, Beauharnois et Hocquart au Ministre, Quebec, Sept. 13, 1742; vol. 79, pp. 189-91, Beauharnois au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 13, 1743; vol. 81 (1), pp. 224-7, Beauharnois au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 11, 1744.

⁹²*Série C¹¹E*, vol. 16, pp. 486-7, Beauharnois au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 15, 1746; *Série B*, vol. 85, pp. 43-4, Ministre à (La Galissonnière), Versailles, March 6, 1747.

⁹³*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 58, p. 145, Abstract, Hocquart au Ministre, Oct. 10, 1732; De Lotbinière Correspondence, *Journal* . . . 1749, Aug. 10.

⁹⁴*Série C¹¹A*, vol. 95, pp. 133-44, La Jonquière au Ministre, Quebec, July 25, 1750.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 97, pp. 277-91.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 191-6, La Jonquière au Ministre, Quebec, Nov. 1, 1751.

upon Longueuil, Governor *pro. tem.*, to allow them to return to the mission for twenty-four hours, to wind up their affairs. Finally, in October, 1752, Duquesne, the new Governor, writes that they so abused this privilege that they would still have been at Caughnawaga had not authority been used to remove them.⁹⁷ Thus, at last, the Demoiselles Desautniers were dislodged, after having conducted a flourishing contraband trade for twenty-five years, during at least half of which time the authorities had been fully cognizant of their activities. One must admit that their behaviour is a sad example of feminine obstinacy, but more pertinently, it is also an excellent illustration, both of the position of Caughnawaga in the contraband trade, and of the protection afforded smugglers by the official fear of offending the savages.

Finally, to what conclusion can one come concerning the effects of the illegal fur trade? It is true that smuggling always encourages contempt for law, but the social consequences of the contraband trade were probably negligible in a colony which was already permeated with the lawlessness of all frontier communities. Again, beaver was, admittedly, the only really valuable return from Canada, and the greater the trade with the English, the less profitable the burdensome colony became to France. The less lucrative to France, the less assistance Canada could expect from the mother country, and without aid the colony must suffer severely, if indeed it could survive. It might even be suggested that the colony's persistence in trading illegally with the English explains its neglect by France during the Seven Years' War. Nevertheless, even before smuggling became extensive, Canada had not been an economic asset. Its value was chiefly political, inasmuch as it contributed to the prestige of France, and provided a base for attack upon the English, and a means to thwart English ambition. The failure to send adequate help in the final struggle is more readily explained by English control of the Atlantic and French entanglement in a continental war, than by any real indifference to the fate of the colony.

Contraband trade was probably harmful to the immediate interests of the Compagnie des Indes which held the beaver monopoly after 1717, for this company seems generally to have been able to find markets for the surplus beaver produced in Canada, and thus to have been free from the problem of overproduction which had bedeviled, and even bankrupted, previous companies. Nevertheless, had the Company received all the beaver exported from Canada, it is by no means certain that the results would have been altogether happy. It could not, probably, have increased its markets extensively, and a reduction of beaver prices in Canada, or a restriction of the quantity of beaver accepted by the Company, would have discouraged both the fur trade and penetration into the interior, with consequent loss of control over the Indians. It is unlikely that the French company could have disposed of its beaver in England, for the English colonies would have turned to the western country for a supply of fur, again with unfortunate results to the French.

The fact that the Compagnie des Indes did have a surplus to be disposed of in Holland, indicates that the illegal export of beaver from Canada did not prevent an adequate supply reaching the French hatmakers, and hence did not damage that industry. Furthermore, while the French luxury trade may have been affected, no harm came to the manufacturers of heavy textiles, who, in any case, were unable to produce suitable cloth for the

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, vol. 98, p. 36, Duquesne au Ministre, Quebec, Oct. 28, 1752.

Indian trade. The import of strouds from Albany lessened, not the import of cloth from France, but merely that from England, via France.

With the exception of gunpowder, all English goods for the Indian trade were superior to those of the French.⁹⁸ Had the French used only their own inferior and comparatively expensive merchandise, the Canadian fur trade would have been seriously damaged, notwithstanding the hold of the French over the Indians and over the fur country, a hold which they maintained partly by reason of the very fact that they did use English goods. Moreover, it cannot be asserted that the western Indians would never have known English goods had the French not introduced them among those tribes, for, in any case, strouds and other articles reached the west from Albany through Iroquois middlemen, or were carried thither by English traders, especially those from Pennsylvania, who had made their way into the hinterland.

The plan of having the indispensable English strouds supplied by the *Compagnie des Indes* appealed to the authorities because it meant that, although French manufacturers did not sell their textiles, France at least received the beaver. It was perhaps argued that the difference in price between these strouds and the strouds imported illegally from Albany could be absorbed by the margin of profit between the sale price of beaver in Canada to the French company and the cost price from the Indian, or offset by the superior position of the French in relation to the fur supply. But the economic advantage to France of this arrangement would have been more than offset by the disastrous political consequences to Canada had the Albany trade been completely cut off, consequences infinitely more serious than the results feared by the authorities of accustoming a comparatively few domiciled Indians to going to the English. The interest of Albany in the traffic with Montreal accounts probably more than anything else for the reluctance of the colonists of New York to attack the French, a policy of neutrality which was observed also by Canadians for similar reasons. It was the frontier of New England, not that of New York, that suffered the raids of French Indians in time of war. Thus the contraband trade was at least in part responsible for closing the Richelieu and Lake Champlain to military operations during Queen Anne's War and King George's War, and this probably worked more to the advantage of Canada than to that of New York, although, admittedly, the point is debatable.

There remains, however, one final consideration which far outweighs any disadvantages that smuggling may have had for the French. Had the trade with Montreal been cut off, Albany must have tried much earlier and much more vigorously than it did to establish direct relations with the Indians in the west.⁹⁹ Eventually, it was just such competition in the Ohio Valley between the French and the English, especially those from Virginia and Pennsylvania, that precipitated the war in which Canada was lost to France. By providing the Albany merchants with a supply of beaver and a market for their goods, contraband trade, although by no means the sole reason, was indisputably a factor of enormous influence in hindering the expansion of New York westward into the fur country, and thus, perhaps, helped to postpone the final conflict and the political extinction of New France.

⁹⁸*N.Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 729, Memorial, Colden to Burnet, Nov. 10, 1724.

⁹⁹See in this connection, Buffinton, "The policy of Albany and English westward expansion."