

## Impact of the Fur Trade on the People of New France

Its great plenty was the beginning of its ruin. By means of accumulating beaver skins, which has always been the principal object of this commerce, so great a quantity were heaped up in the warehouses that no vent could be found for them, whence it happened, that the merchants declining to buy any more, our adventurers, called here *Coureurs de Bois*, or hunters, took the resolution of carrying them to the English, and many of them settled in the province of New-York. Several attempts were made to put a stop to the progress of these desertions, but to little effect; on the contrary, those who had been led by motives of interest, to take refuge among their neighbours, were kept there by the fear of punishment; and the vagabonds, who had acquired a taste for a wandering and independent life, remained amongst the savages or Indians, from whom they were no longer distinguishable by their vices. They frequently had recourse to amnesties to recall those fugitives, which were at first of little consequence; but in the end being managed with prudence, they produced part of the effect promised from them.

Another method was made use of which was still more efficacious; but those people who were zealous for good order and the advancement of religion, found the remedy worse than the disease. This was to grant permission to those in whom they thought they could repose confidence to trade in the Indian countries, and to prohibit all others from going out of the colony. The number of these licences was limited, and they were distributed amongst poor widows and orphans, who might sell them to the *Traders* for more or less, according as the trade was good or bad, or according to the nature of the places to which the licences granted the liberty of trading; for they used the precaution to specify those places, to prevent too great a number from going the same way.

Besides those licences, the number of which was regulated by the court, and the distribution of which belonged to the governor-general, there were others for the commandants of forts, and for extraordinary occasions, which the governor still grants under the name of simple *Permissions*. Thus one part of our youth is continually rambling and roving about; and though those disorders, which formerly so much disgraced this profession, are no longer committed, at least not so openly, yet it infects them with a habit of libertinism, of which they never entirely get rid; at least, it gives them a distaste for labour, it exhausts their strength, they become incapable of the least constraint, and when they are no longer able to undergo the fatigues of travelling, which soon happens, for these fatigues are excessive, they remain without the least resource, and are no longer good for any thing. Hence it comes to pass, that arts have been a long time neglected, a great quantity of good land remains still uncultivated, and the country is but very indifferently peopled.