

colonial supply of naval materials.¹ The measure met opposition from the group in whose interest it was ostensibly being advanced. The Navy Board showed a consistent antipathy to the colonial supply. "If stores cannot be imported from the Plantations not only as good, but also as cheap [as] from other countrys, premiums, etc., included, it will be a burthen to the Navy, and not a service," they wrote to the Lords of Trade.² They wanted an adequate supply of New England masts, but there their interest ceased.³

Compared to the Baltic, America was at a disadvantage in several respects. The American ports were three thousand miles from England, nearly three times the distance to Riga and five times as far as Norway. Therefore, the average rate for a ton of freight at this time was six to eight pounds from the colonies against 40s to 50s from the Baltic. Colonial labor was some six times as high as in many parts of Europe. The highly organized timber trade of Dantzig or Riga, moreover, could not be matched in the colonies at the time. John Taylor, who imported masts from both regions and favored America only as a reserve in case of necessity, wrote:

'Tis not in New England as in Sweden and Denmark, where masts are brought to market to supply Europe in general, whereas in New England non are provided but what are bespoke, & those for the King's service in particular, which makes the hazard in this trade incomparably greater than any other, for if any accident by the Indians or otherwise should obstruct the lading . . . the ship must certainly come back dead freight.⁴

Moreover, the naval authorities conceived a dislike for the colonial timber traders at an early period, judging by Hollond's remarks:

I would also encourage . . . the transporting of knees or knee timber from New England, they being scarce commodities here and very useful for the State's service; only I could wish that men of religion that bring them hither

¹ *Cal. S. P., A. & W. I.*, 1696-97, p. 542.

² *Ibid.*, 1706-08, p. 331; see also *Ibid.*, 1702-03, pp. 290, 693; 1710-11, p. 340.

³ *Ibid.*, 1700, p. 178; 1702-03, pp. 499, 586; *Cal. Treas. Papers*, 1702-07, pp. 483, 524; *Hist. MSS Com., House of Lords MSS*, 1702-04, pp. 329, 330; 1704-06, 93-95.

⁴ R. O., N. B. In *Letters*, 562, *Taylor to N. B.*, Sept. 20, 1702; see Gee, *Trade and Navigation of England Considered*, p. 156; *Cal. S. P., A. & W. I.*, 1702, p. 2.

would not (when brought) cull or garble them by selling the best to private men, and when the refuse will not off, then to sell the remainder as a great service to the State at an excessive rate.¹

Yet in spite of the apathy, if not antipathy, of the naval authorities, England began to apply a twofold policy of encouragement and of restriction in the matter of these naval necessities. The encouragement took the form of "imperial" propaganda and the more tangible argument of bounties. The restrictions aimed at the preservation of the mast pines from wanton waste by commissioning surveyors to cut the "Broad Arrow" — the old sign of naval property, shaped like a crow's track and made with three blows of a marking hatchet — on the trees to be reserved by law for the Navy. After several preliminary acts, these two features were incorporated in the Act of 1729. The "Broad Arrow" enforcement is the chief source of interest thereafter; but before that final enactment, it is essential to describe the events in the colonies which led to its passage.

To men who had been stimulated to recklessness by the apparently inexhaustible capacity of the virgin forests, the idea of restrictions on cutting seemed almost incongruous. Yet this attempt to preserve the great pines for masting the King's ships was justified from the standpoint of maintaining the Navy's supply. The chief value of the American masts lay in their great size, and they had reached this size because they had had centuries in which to grow, unmolested by axemen. While the forests seemed limitless in extent, pines suitable for great masts were few and far between. The difficulties of land carriage limited the choice to those near the rivers, and the largest trees were marked victims from the outset. In a region where lumbering was the chief and almost sole occupation, masts were not the only end which trees could serve, in the eyes of the colonial woodsmen. Capable of furnishing fine smooth boards a yard wide, many potential mast pines were cut to pieces in the frontier sawmills. Consequently it was not groundless alarm which prompted the complaints of "great spoyles" in the woods of New Hampshire and Maine — complaints which increased in frequency and ur-

¹ N. R. S., *Hollond's Discourses of the Navy*, p. 227.