

Rivers of sawdust:
the battle over
industrial pollution in
canada, 1865-
1903 assign...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A major dilemma occurred in Eastern Canada from 1865 to 1903 that involved the conservationists, lumbermen, and the government. A decision had to be reached with regards to what will be done about the sawdust that was dumped into rivers and lakes, particularly the Ottawa River. (85) Gillis focuses on the three controversial issues that were raised due to the pollution; health, navigation, and recreation, the conservationists displayed social views and the lumbermen demonstrated business interest, while the government had to implement a strategy that will appeal to both.

From a social view point, the conservationists cared about the general public and the environment. The dumping of sawdust meant that health hazards are created for the public, such as bacteria. (95) The fish living in the polluted water are affected since they cannot survive such conditions.

Navigation becomes dangerous because the boats would hit heavy waste, damaging the boat and the people onboard. Lastly, the sawdust is simply destroying the natural beauty of the environment, what once was a spectacular scene now looks and smells bad.

The conservationists need to get the general public to pressure the government into acting and stopping these events from happening. (87) On the other hand, the lumbermen had a business approach to the situation. They argued that systems that would be needed to install to fix the situation are very expensive, doubling the cost of producing lumber and lowering their profit. (88) The only issue that lumbermen wanted to fix was navigation since it is an essential part of their company; they need to deliver their lumber. 89) They argued that saw dust only plays a small part as a cause to the issues.

They threatened the government that they would shut down; hence many

<https://assignbuster.com/rivers-of-sawdust-the-battle-over-industrial-pollution-in-canada-1865-1903assignment-assignment/>

men would be unemployed causing problems to the economy. (92) They did not want to switch to steam mills as they were more expensive to operate meaning that prices would go up, and they would lose their competitive price advantage in trade. Due to high public pressure, the government had to act quickly. They tried implementing various laws and regulation to fix the situation. They passed two "Fishing Acts" to persevere atural life. 87) Many politicians such as Alexander Campbell, Horace Merrill, John A. Macdonald, were involved in investigation and studying the issues and coming up with solutions and alternative methods to get rid of sawdust. Ultimately, the conservationists won the debate and there was no more sawdust pollution. (100) In the article, Gillis delivered the events that happened during the debate in a chronological order, allowing the readers to easily understand. He explained the role each group had in the situation, thus giving the readers several perspectives.

Also, it was notable that Gillis kept on repeating the issues caused by the sawdust (health, navigation, and recreation) all throughout the article, which effectively emphasized the problem. The only downside of the article is that there are no visual representations. Graphs could have been included to show the amount of pollution year by year to visually aid readers in understanding the severity of the problem. This article has definitely taught me about the history of the industrial pollution in Canada over the years.