

Historical Fence Building: A Critique of the Historiography of Newfoundland

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KEITH MATTHEWS (1938 - 1984)

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE LATE KEITH MATTHEWS was a popular professor in Memorial's Department of History and Chair of its Maritime History Group, when he died at the age of 45, in 1984. The MHG eventually gave rise to Memorial's invaluable Maritime History Archive, on the one hand, and to the still-evolving Maritime Studies Research Unit, on the other. Much of Matthews' work was similarly fruitful, including the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, which he organized with the late Professors David Alexander and Gerald Panting, in 1976. Matthews, who was born in Devon, came to Memorial in 1967, as he was completing his Oxford D.Phil dissertation on the history of the West of England-Newfoundland fishery. Although this thesis was never published, it has had a significant influence on the those of us who work on early modern Newfoundland. His posthumously-published *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland 1500-1830*, based on a school broadcast series for CBC radio, is probably his best-known work. Page for page, however, his most influential is surely the essay on Newfoundland historiography, "Historical Fence Building", presented originally to the Canadian Historical Association, at the Congress of Learned Societies, held in St John's in 1971. This was eventually published in *The Newfoundland Quarterly* 9 (3) (1978), 21-30. The editors and readers of *Newfoundland Studies* are indebted to the editors of the *Quarterly* and to Kay Matthews for permission to reprint the essay.

The published version of the essay was, unfortunately, not closely edited, so that readers ever since have been faced with a number of misprints and textual confusions. (The editor's favourite is "West Germany ships" for "West Country ships".) This revision treats the earlier version as a submission for publication. That

is to say, the editor has corrected errors and inconsistencies in style, giving Matthews' paper the same attention that any essay in a scholarly journal deserves. For example, he used quotation marks heavily but capriciously throughout the essay, sometimes to distance himself from terminology and sometimes, apparently, for emphasis. This confusing usage has been restricted. In a similar vein, the editor has regularized the use of connector words like "however"; modified the text slightly in the interest of elegant variation; standardized spelling, punctuation and capitalization; and amended the occasional misplaced antecedent. Unfashionable but grammatical usage is untouched, *e.g.* the pronoun "her" referring to London. The references have been rechecked and where there were slips in the original they have been silently corrected. With this exception and the removal of one comment to the main text, the content of the original notations can be found here in the numerical end notes, otherwise edited only to conform with the reference style of this volume. The editor has refrained from amending notes to clarify ambiguities or to incorporate the findings of recent scholarship. For a critique of some of Matthews' own preconceptions and a celebration of his achievement, please see the general introduction to this volume. Most of the changes made here are the sort that an editor might impose without necessarily consulting the author. There are, however, further editorial emendations made in the interests of clarity, of the kind that one would prefer to run by the writer, if only that were possible. In such cases, an alphabetical end note indicates insertions or gives the original reading.

This is, in other words, an edited version of the text the late Keith Matthews left us. This may sound like impertinence but the editor believes that it is in fact a compliment, preferring to risk the inevitable opprobrium of some, in the interest of making one of the fundamental texts on Newfoundland historiography more accessible to others. In the editor's experience, students often take "Historical Fence Building" to be saying almost the opposite of what it actually sets out to argue. The essay has this effect because Matthews does such a good job of summarizing the conventional wisdom clearly. With a view to helping readers recognize the intent of the essay, the editor has introduced section headings, given in small caps. Although these are based on the actual wording used in the essay itself, they are editorial insertions.

P.E.P.

TRADITIONAL MYTHOLOGIES OF RETARDED COLONIZATION

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECTS of Newfoundland history is the question of what has been termed its "retarded colonization".¹ The first part of the New World to be exploited by England, Newfoundland's development as a settlement and a colony lagged far behind that of other parts of the empire, many of which were founded at later dates. What were the causes of this peculiar development? Until recently historians have sought to explain it as due primarily to a conflict between groups involved in the fishery. The basis of their theory may be stated as follows: Development in Newfoundland depended primarily upon the policies of the English government which until the nineteenth century viewed Newfoundland from a strictly mercantilist view of the Island's value to the mother country. That value lay not in the Island, but in the fisheries surrounding it which employed large numbers of British residents, consumed considerable quantities of British provisions and manufactures and employed hundreds of vessels. The produce of the fishery marketed in southern Europe returned specie and foreign commodities directly to Britain and above all, the fishery was a "nursery of seamen" training thousands of men who resided in England for the ever-present needs of the Royal Navy. These benefits accrued only if the fishery was carried on by men, merchants and ships commuting annually from Europe, hence successive governments promoted a migratory fishery in preference to and at the expense of settlement in Newfoundland — which was, according to this theory, deliberately discouraged and prevented by punitive legislation.² This policy was, supposedly, supported and to some degree influenced by the "Western Adventurers" of England who carried on the migratory fishery in opposition to that practiced by the settlers.³

From this basis, historians have developed theories of "retardation" based upon group conflict. In its fullest development this argues that the settlers, supported by sack ship merchants of London and Bristol who supplied them with goods and bought their fish, were engaged for over two hundred years in an unrelenting struggle with their rivals, the migratory fishermen of the West of England, supported by the English government.⁴ "Retardation" of settlement in Newfoundland was, according to this theory, due to the resistance of the latter.⁵

Modern historians did not create the idea of conflict between migratory fishermen and settlers, for it is buried deeply in the historical mythology of Newfoundland. The first published identification of the West Country merchants with villainy was that of John Reeves, a Board of Trade barrister, appointed the first Chief Justice of Newfoundland in the 1790s. Reflecting contemporary official attitudes, he blamed the merchants for every evil, real or imagined, which existed upon the Island.⁶ The book he wrote has been read and broadly accepted by every recent historian. The development of this ideology was continued and made more explicit by William Carson, a radical reformer of the early nineteenth century, who laid great stress on the way in which development had been retarded by the self-interest of

non-resident merchants. With his collaborator Patrick Morris, who was active in Irish reform politics, he viewed the migratory fishing merchants as akin to the Irish absentee landlords. It was Carson who introduced the argument that the West Country merchants were always supported by the English government, which was at that time lukewarm about granting representative government to Newfoundland. Reeves would have violently disagreed with this view.

After the creation of representative government in 1832, economic and social circumstances combined to spread this political ideology throughout Newfoundland. Economic disparity, together with religious and racial conflict between the largely Irish labouring classes and a predominantly English mercantile class in the St. John's area, predisposed many to believe anything about England or about merchants, so long as it was unfavourable. The emergence of a Newfoundland nationalism during the 1820s and 1830s made parts of the theory acceptable even to literate and mercantile groups in St. John's.⁴ The outport regions of Newfoundland may not have completely shared the ideology but St. John's was then, as it long continued, the social and cultural capital of the Island and, willy nilly, its ideology became that of Newfoundland. Indeed, most of the "history of Newfoundland", as written, is little more than a history of St. John's and of the official and literate classes who lived there.

By the time Judge Prowse wrote the first modern history of Newfoundland in the 1890s this ideology had become an implicit part of Newfoundland culture, perfidious Albion and heartless West Country merchants being blamed for every difficulty in which the struggling colony had ever found itself.⁴ Prowse himself shows the successful grip which the ideology had upon Newfoundlanders. Protestant, of Devonshire mercantile stock and an ardent imperialist, he was forced to half praise, half damn his own origins. He celebrated the "mute inglorious Nelsons amongst those Devonian skippers" when they fought Frenchmen, pirates or corsairs; but set forth "the dire effects of West Country influence upon the progress of the colony", characterizing those same skippers as "baneful...ignorant tyrants", turning "barbarities into law".⁵ Prowse's theory of Newfoundland history was no more than the application of his implanted cultural ideology to a wider range of public documents than had hitherto been used. His application of the ideology was stark and simple: the proprietary colonies of Guy and his successors failed because of unrelenting West Country opposition and this opposition to settlement "for two centuries fell like a blight upon the unfortunate colony, paralyzing progress and the development of the great resources of the Island".⁶ Thus a local political dogma was transformed into a surprisingly widely known and accepted historical theory of causation, based upon interest group conflict among West Country merchants and their government allies, proprietary colonists allied to no one and, finally, "hard working humble settlers from the West of England".⁷

Later historians have radically transformed the theory, rejecting his rather simplistic approach, but as we shall see, they became firmly attached to the basic con-

cept of a permanent conflict and opposition between settlers and migratory elements in the fishery and to the assumption that this was the basic reason for "retardation" in Newfoundland. In 1911, J. D. Rogers published a judicious *Historical Geography* of Newfoundland, but its judiciousness lay not in the wisdom of his broad generalizations so much as in a disinclination to make any and he did not directly attack the idea that Newfoundland's slow development was basically due to the conflict of interest groups. Although his book is still useful and certainly well written, it occupies a slight place in the thematic historiography of Newfoundland.⁸

TWENTIETH-CENTURY TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MYTHOLOGY

The expansion of professional history between the two world wars and professional emphasis on graduate study impelled a few students into the realm of Newfoundland history. They were not Newfoundlanders and the patriotic instincts which had impelled Prowse were replaced by the need to make an original contribution to knowledge. It is surprising, therefore, that none of them challenged the basic assumption that Newfoundland's development was explicable mainly in terms of group conflict. On the contrary they often seem apologetic about the acceptance of another study of Newfoundland, accepting that the basic framework was accurate and well known and offering, mainly, to increase our knowledge of detail and to refine the complexities of the group conflicts, which they agreed formed the basis for explaining Newfoundland history.⁹ Prowse was shown to be *simplest*; authors disagreed about points of emphasis; and each added new detail and argument, until the concept of group conflict had been refined into an intricate and sometimes contradictory theory which is now difficult to unravel. Our knowledge of it rests upon the publications of Newton, Lounsbury, McClintock, Judah and Innis, but much of their writing was based upon an unpublished Master's dissertation written by Agnes M. Field in 1924.¹⁰

Field rejected Prowse's theory of simple conflict between migratory fishermen and settlers, replacing it by a much more complex theory of her own. She introduced the idea — accepted by most of her successors — that at heart the struggle was not between settler and commuter but between two English commercial groups: the "fishing merchants" of the West of England and the "sack ship merchants" of London:

No work on Newfoundland dwells on the importance in the struggle in the fishing industry of two factions, the fishing captains and the sack ship men, it being popularly though incorrectly believed that the history of the Island hinges on a conflict between fishermen and colonists....

With the establishment of a colony the sack ship merchants became independent of the fishing captains and began to rival them in the European markets...they were furiously opposed by those who preferred the old organization of the fishery [the Western Adventurers]...To this end they encouraged the establishment of a colony...while the fishing captains opposed such a scheme, since the presence of a permanent colony...would overthrow [them].¹¹

The sack ship merchants were joined by a fresh group, the bye boat keepers who became prominent in the fishery after 1660 — so that sack ship men, bye boat men and planters opposed the fishing captains who were backed by the government.¹² For Field, it became increasingly clear that after 1678 “the defeat of the fishing captains by the sack ship merchants is very real and that the glory of the Western Adventurers had departed”.¹³ By 1713, “The victory went to the sack ship men ... [T]rading merchants...were replacing the fishing merchants”.¹⁴ The colonists “had been spared only to serve the London merchants” and “thus the colony and the Western Adventurers declined while the London merchants and the New Englanders became more prosperous and important at their expense”.¹⁵ In the end, Field concluded, “Every great principle demands sacrifices. The offering England laid upon the altar of mercantilism was the colony of Newfoundland”.^{16f}

Prowse’s theory was radically transformed by Miss Field: the Western Adventurers had lost but so had the settlers and bye boat keepers. Victory had gone to the London sack merchants. The conflict was between the West Country and the government, on one side, against London and Bristol, planters, bye boat keepers and New England interests, on the other. Field’s thesis was never published but it was widely used by others. In the *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, A.P. Newton relied heavily upon it for his chapter on Newfoundland and both Lounsbury and Judah borrowed heavily from her.¹⁷ At first glance, one might feel that Judah arrived independently at the same conclusions as Field. Although her thesis was mentioned in his bibliography, he did not attribute to her the sack versus fishing merchant theory, which he so clearly accepted. Thus Lounsbury who seems to have had access to the work of Judah but not Field, thought that Judah had formulated it. This has created an unfortunate impression of independent examination and confirmation when, in fact, only Field had formulated the thesis.

Whether he completely accepted or independently arrived at the same conclusions as Field, Judah added nothing of value to the theory.⁸ In his version, hostility between settlers and migratory men was eternal because they competed for vital fishing rooms and the rivalry of West Country migratory fishermen with the London and Bristol-settler alliance was bitter, ending only with the victory of the latter, early in the eighteenth century.^{18h} Lounsbury concurred about the nature of seventeenth-century group conflicts and agreed that the main struggle lay not between the migratory and sedentary fishermen but between “London and the Outports” in England.¹⁹ He also agreed that by the eighteenth century the West of England had

been defeated economically and politically.²⁰ His study extended to the year 1763, however, and this led him to modify some aspects of the thesis. He argued that the English government was not merely a passive agent for West Country pressures but possessed an independent ideology of its own, which did not always coincide with that of the fishing merchants. In his view, although the West Country merchants were “defeated”, they managed to adapt by changing from fishing to trade.²¹ He also argued that the “victors” in the struggle were not so much London and Bristol merchants as a new class of entrepreneur who resided permanently in Newfoundland.²² By 1730, “Feudal control of Newfoundland, like West Country dominance in the fishery was finally a thing of the past” and Newfoundland was controlled by its own residents.²³

Lounsbury’s predecessors had argued that the London merchants won the struggle, leaving the residents no better off.¹ He argued that the residents won control and said nothing at all about the fate of the London and Bristol sack ship interests during the eighteenth century.¹ This is surprising, since in his treatment of the seventeenth century he, like the others, had seen London and Bristol as his principal interest group. Field and Judah saw the struggle between interests as a fight to the death but Lounsbury saw the result as a compromise in which the settlers won but the West Country retained some share in the fishery.^k Lounsbury’s thesis contained internal problems of its own. Why was there no competition between the defeated West Countrymen and the new class of resident merchants who had mysteriously arisen from nowhere? How had the West Countrymen managed to make the transition from fishing to trade — presumably against the fierce competition of the London merchants and residents? What was the relationship of the new resident merchants to the old interest groups from the West Country and London? He argued that, by 1730, the West Country had declined both politically and economically — but offered no evidence, statistical or otherwise, to prove that this was so. Although in basic agreement with the main approach of his predecessors, Lounsbury differed on some important issues but failed to see the implications of his own arguments. Furthermore, he did not clearly state that he was disagreeing with them — indeed he claimed to accept most of their theory. He did not try to reconcile his acceptance of the survival of West Country interest in the fishery with his argument that the settlers won. Neither did he explicitly state the contradiction between his theory, that the settlers won, and that of Field and Judah, that the London merchants won. Agreeing with them that the West Country had lost political power, he failed to say what group replaced them in politics. This created problems for a new group of historians who accepted the concept of group conflict and applied it to events in the period between 1763 and 1832.

CONFLICT THEORY APPLIED TO LATER ISSUES

The problem was this: if West Country political and economic influence declined after 1713, who was responsible for a new wave of apparent group conflicts which occurred after 1763?¹ Historians interested only in the period before 1763 had ignored a revival in the debate as to whether Newfoundland should be a colony or a fishery, which convulsed the trade for thirty years, beginning with events connected with the Treaty of Paris of 1763 and the appointment of Hugh Palliser as Governor of Newfoundland in 1765. In 1775 and 1786, anti-settler legislation was passed by the government and, between 1789 and 1793, another storm raged over the establishment of permanent law courts on the Island. This situation called out for an application of the group conflict theory of development and several historians attempted this.

The old theory could not, however, be revived completely — for even if historians ignored the argument that West Country power had vanished by 1730, they could no longer see the struggle as one between London and West of England mercantile groups. By 1763, London had virtually withdrawn from direct participation in the fishery, thus contemporary documents failed to mention her (although earlier studies had not brought this out). To make matters worse, there was abundant evidence to show that the West of England, far from being in decline, still more or less monopolized the Newfoundland trade. If only historians writing about the late eighteenth century had made this point more explicitly! But none of them directly challenged the conclusion that the West had declined by 1730. Instead, they tacitly ignored the presumed decline and concentrated on the role of the West Country merchants, in the period after 1763. Historians now had four alternatives: to continue with the thesis that the struggle was between sack and fishing merchants, but to transfer that struggle to groups of merchants within the West of England; to find a new group of non-West Country merchants who might be in conflict with them; to revert to Prowse's theme of a simple conflict between settlers and visitors; or to see the conflict as between the British government and cohesive West-of-England-dominated economic interests, whether oriented to the sedentary or the migratory fishery.^m

Every possibility was explored, except the last, for the theory of a natural opposition between the West of England and settlement seems to have been so completely accepted as to be unchallengeable. For example, the possibility that the nineteenth-century struggle to obtain representative government was a struggle against the lethargy and indifference of groups within Newfoundland, rather than against English vested-interest groups, was never even considered. Every freedom fight — especially a colonial freedom fight — must confront a reactionary imperialist villain, assisted by resident quislings, before its triumph is believable.

McClintock decided to ignore (but not to directly challenge) the whole theory of sack versus fishing merchants and reverted to the Prowsian thesis of simple con-

flict between colonials and the merchants and government of the mother country. On the one hand he saw an oppressed, impoverished and "illegal" colony; on the other a mercantilist government and a harsh, bigoted and selfish, absentee merchant group. He talked of England's "persistent efforts to destroy a flourishing settlement"; of the governors' "extreme harshness towards the hapless inhabitants who defied the legislation of Great Britain by remaining there"; of the "bitter and unrelenting opposition towards any project for colonisation" by West Country merchants; and how King William's Act of 1699 furthered "a policy which was to retard the natural development of the island for over a century".²⁴ Governor Palliser "was the first of a long line of naval governors who were determined to crush settlement at all costs".²⁵ The Statute of 1775, which bore his name, was a bitter disappointment to those who had hoped for a more liberal policy:

It revealed the intention of the British Government to foster the overseas fishery at all costs, even if by do so it meant the virtual extinction of a struggling community.... With justice the unfortunate settlers could claim that Palliser's Act was calculated "to controvert the policy of nature, to keep the island...a barren waste, to exterminate the inhabitants, to annihilate property and to make sailors by preventing population..."²⁶

According to McClintock, the merchants "true to their bigoted and selfish policy...marshalled all the arguments available in one united attack on the colony" while the inhabitants were "stowaways whose unwarranted intrusion rendered them liable to the most drastic and uncompromising treatment against which they could utter no word of legal protest".²⁷ For McClintock too, "England laid upon the altar of mercantilism the colony of Newfoundland".²⁸

McClintock solves the problems inherent in sack versus fishing merchant or London versus West of England conflict by ignoring it and reverting to a simple imperial-colonial struggle. His approach, however, raises more problems than it evades. If London and Bristol were no longer heavily involved in the fishery, who then supplied the colonists and purchased their fish? McClintock does not note the emergence of any residential merchant group before 1800; hence some English mercantile group must have supported settlement, for it most certainly could not support itself; but McClintock identifies only one mercantile group, the merchants of the West of England, who he defines as fanatically hostile to settlement. Why then did they support the settlers? He does not say. If one wishes to make West Country hostility to settlement a historical constant, one must revive the sack merchant versus fishing merchant theory, in some form or other. The alternative is to abandon the theory — but McClintock did neither.

His theory must rest upon the following demonstrable bases: continuous government hostility towards settlement, continuous West of England hostility towards settlement and the proven existence of a pro-settler pressure group which fought against the government-mercantile alliance. McClintock was able to show

that the government became increasingly hostile towards an expansion of settlement (if not to its actual existence) but he failed to prove the other two propositions. He sought to prove West Country hostility towards settlement by showing the pro-migratory fishery policy of the government rather than by documenting West Country attitudes. He assumed that the West Country merchants were involved only in the migratory fishery and that hence they must automatically favour any policy to curtail settlement. Thus Palliser's Act of 1775 was hostile to settlement and aimed at reviving the migratory fishery; ergo, for McClintock, the merchants must have approved of and even instigated the legislation. In discussing the "Amending Act" of 1786, which reinforced the hostile legislation of 1775, he argued that it was due to West Country pressure.²⁹ Yet, as evidence, he could present only one petition sent to London six months after the Act was passed, which did not even refer to this legislation but to the problem of American food supplies for Newfoundland. He did not point out that West Country merchants were united in hostility to Palliser's Act and three times petitioned for its repeal. Nor did he admit that, far from being the result of West Country pressure, the Act of 1786 was a rejection of a West Country private member's bill to have Palliser's Act replaced by one much more favourable towards settlement. In fact, the Act denied the merchants almost everything they demanded and reflected the influence not of the trade but of Palliser.³⁰

McClintock was unable to show the actual existence of a settler group distinct from and hostile to the migratory fishermen. This is not surprising. With the exception of a short-lived controversy over the establishment of magistrates in 1729, there is no documentary evidence that the settlers ever existed as a separate and organized entity, even less that they made any comment about government legislation until the nineteenth century. Significantly, in postulating settler (as distinct from a broad trade) hostility to Palliser's Act, all McClintock could argue was that "with justice the unfortunate settlers could claim that Palliser's Act was calculated to...keep the Island...a barren waste, to exterminate property, and to make sailors by preventing population".³¹ Yet this statement was not made by any settler of 1775 but by the reformer William Carson, writing in 1832. McClintock never defined or described the settler group which he assumed to exist and was unable to present any evidence of its independent political role. As with his treatment of the West Country merchants, his theory was based not upon evidence but assumption. It is surprising that he did not take into account Lounsbury's conclusion that the West Country merchants had modified their approach by turning from direct involvement to trade. Like his predecessors, McClintock used earlier work as a mine from which an acceptable theme could be taken, while the inconvenient was not so much challenged as ignored (except where the Aunt Sally was poor Judge Prowse).

W.L. Morton, a Canadian scholar, laid the finishing touches to the complicated and often self-contradictory theory of group conflict as the prime reason for retarded colonization in Newfoundland.³² He ignored (but did not criticize)

Lounsbury's reversion to the simple imperial-colonial conflict theme and reverted himself to the ideas formulated by Field. For Morton, competition "between the centre and the outports [i.e. between London and the West Country] lay at the bottom of the hostility of the West Country merchants to the sack ships".³³ He went on to introduce an even more complex picture, by distinguishing between sack and fishing interests within the West Country itself, who were sometimes hostile to each other, while also talking of another group of sack merchants or "partial venturers" who came from neither London nor the West of England.³⁴ He also identified a group of merchants who resided permanently in Newfoundland. Unfortunately his categories were not clearly defined and his treatment of political attitudes towards settlement was unclear. He talked of the basic competition between "London and the Outports" — but the only London merchants specifically identified were those trading to Quebec, who he considered as allies of the fishing merchants. In contrast to Field or Judah, Morton concluded that only the West Country merchants had any political power since "The sack ship merchants were too scattered to be organised and were probably in most cases casual rather than permanent traders to Newfoundland".³⁵ Even if there were English groups in opposition to West Country interests they could not have provided any useful political leadership. Morton, unlike Lounsbury, did not dwell upon the existence of any possible settler group.

Morton made the mercantile structure much more complex but did not define the role played by sack or fishing merchants or others in the political debates of the day, except in connection with the problem of American intercourse with Newfoundland, after 1783.³⁶ This is not surprising, for contemporary documents hardly distinguish between them in connection with the crucial debates which raged around Palliser's Act, the Amending Act of 1786 or the political and judicial questions of the 1790s. Morton clearly identified only the West Country fishing merchants and was unable to provide substantial evidence for the existence of a separate West Country sack interest group, let alone demonstrate any hostility between it and the fishing group. Indeed, he noted that in the debates of the 1790s "the sack ship interest was conspicuously absent".³⁷ Even if this had not been so, Morton clearly did not see the sack group as allied to the settlers, for "the merchants became more exacting in collecting debts due them and the already grinding lot of the planters and fishermen was aggravated".³⁸ Which mercantile group was he talking of? West Country sack merchants, partial venturers, resident natives or all three? Presumably he did not mean the fishing merchants, who by his definition were hostile to settlement.⁹ If the West Country traders were, as he stated, the dominant element in the fishery, then they must have been the oppressors. Yet, if they were dependent upon the colonists for their trade, how could they have been hostile to settlement? Were the West Country "traders" weak and unimportant politically, unable to prevail against the pressures of the "fishing merchants"? This would require supporting evidence, which Morton did not provide. In fact, the reverse is true: the merchants he named as playing a leading role in politics were West Country mer-

chants like Peter Ougier who combined both fishing and trading functions. Morton did identify two important factors: by 1775, the West Country mercantile bloc included traders as well as fishermen and, by 1790, the interests of government and merchants had become widely divergent.³⁹

THE TRIUMPH OF DOGMA

With Morton and McClintock the development of the theme of retarded colonization reached its apogee and it remained only for succeeding historians to further entrench the concept in the minds of those who studied Newfoundland history. In two theses, G.O. Rothney expanded upon certain points and introduced a little more complexity.⁴⁰ He accepted the existence of antagonistic sack and fishing blocs, the theory that the West Country was hostile to settlement and that "retardation" was basically due to attitudes of the mother country.⁴¹ There were certain ambiguities in his approach. He argued that "by 1764...the economic and political centres of the fishery had definitely...shifted from the West Country to the Island itself" but also that the "influential merchants of Western England [used] all their power" to secure the removal of "all the disgruntled and untrustworthy inhabitants".⁴² Rothney thought that "the industry had come under the control of [West Country] merchant capitalists who were not interested solely in the fishery but...were also engaged in general commerce" — which hardly suggests a shift of power from England to Newfoundland.⁴³

If Rothney's conclusion that the most important West Country merchants had turned from fishing to trading is true, then by 1775 the vast majority of merchants must have at least tolerated settlement — for they depended upon it, no matter whether they were West Country sack merchants, native Newfoundland merchants, non-West Country merchants or London capitalists. Yet in discussing political issues Rothney talks mainly of the "fishing merchants". Were the supposedly influential merchants of western England who opposed settlement members of this fishing group? If so, why did not the large capitalists exert a counter influence? Did the "fishing interest" wield more influence in London than the "trading interest"? If so, how had the centre of power shifted? And how could this be so, if the West of England had shifted largely from fishing to trading? Like Morton, Rothney assumed that distinguishable trading and fishing blocs could be found within the West Country and he assumed that they were economic and political antagonists. Like Morton, he was unable to demonstrate that this was so. This could have been done only by identifying the individuals in each group and showing that "traders" were not involved in the migratory fishery and that "fishing merchants" had no trade with the settlers. Even if this were done, it would not prove that they were antagonistic nor that the fishing merchants were actually hostile to settlement. Only actual documentary proof would suffice.

Unable to find any evidence for political division in the fishery after 1730, historians had to assume that it must have existed. It would have been more logical to conclude that no such division existed and that anti-settlement legislation under George III was not due to interest group conflict but was, for example, a result of the dogmas of politicians and naval officers — a clash between economic groups in the fishery and the aims of national policy.⁴³ But this would have demanded a dismissal of the theory of group conflict, at least for the eighteenth century, and no one was prepared to do this. By 1940, every historian who had studied Newfoundland history had examined and accepted the doctrine that the “retardation” of Newfoundland’s development was the result of hostility by English interest groups. It remained only for a historian of international stature to give the theory wide circulation, and this was accomplished by Harold Innis.⁴⁴

Innis’ monumental work on the cod fisheries was concerned with the overall development of the fishery in the northwest Atlantic and even with the effects upon society of that development. It is, accordingly, not surprising that he used almost no primary sources. This inevitably left him dependent upon the researches of others and his general theory of metropolitan-outport conflicts certainly predisposed him to accept their conclusions regarding Newfoundland.⁴⁵ Whatever the reasons for his conclusions, his fame ensured that the dogmatic explanation for Newfoundland development was accepted by a wide range of scholars and others who themselves knew and cared little about the internal history of the Island. Thus an interpretation of history which had commenced as mere local mythology, finished as part of the holy writ of scholarship. Not until the publication of Gillian Cell’s work on *Early English Enterprise*, in 1969, did the unity of the approach even begin to break. The main value of her research, in connection with “retarded colonization” lies in the stress she places upon non-political factors in the collapse of the early proprietary colonies after 1610. Dealing as it does only with the period before 1660, Cell’s work does not, however, inevitably lead to a revision of the entire theory of Newfoundland development.⁴⁶

A CRITIQUE OF CONFLICT THEORY

A first criticism of the approach used by historians lies not in what they said but what they failed to say. It will be noted that on several issues the writers discussed have differed quite widely from one another, although all have accepted the basic group conflict theory. With the exception of Prowse, who has been treated by all as an Aunt Sally, they refrained from stating clearly where and how and why they differed. If this had been done, the confusion which eventually occurred would have been at least partially avoided. If the writers of the 1930s had studied the contradictions as well as the similarities among their theories of group conflict, they may well have been led to revise their approach altogether.

The basic problem is that the whole interpretation of retarded development as being due to group conflict rested upon a set of assumptions which have never been tested. The theory gives primary attention to politics and legislation as factors in colonial development, having assumed but not proved a material conflict of interest centred on the fishery. Newfoundland's development was, supposedly, retarded as a result of legislation passed either at the behest of an interest group or by a dogmatic government.¹ To show that the government enacted legislation inimical to the growth of population, culture or government does not measure its effect upon that growth, for the legislation must be shown to have been effective. The historians mentioned above did not prove the effectiveness of legislation and, in fact, the evidence indicates massive evasion of the law.⁴⁷ If these laws were ineffective, then the economic and demographic development of Newfoundland must have been "retarded" (if indeed such a comparative term should be used) by other factors—such as geography, climate and dependence upon a fluctuating staple trade.

A further criticism is that historians treated Newfoundland's history as timeless. Although groups changed in characteristics and importance, historians nevertheless perceived eternal and unchanging conflict raging for more than 200 years, while interest groups themselves supposedly remained clearly distinguishable from each other.⁵ From this standpoint, sack ship merchants were always in conflict with fishery merchants, London and Bristol were always important in the fishery and were always in conflict with the West Countrymen, while sedentary fishermen were always and necessarily in conflict with migratory fishermen.⁶ No one attempted to find out from copious (but not immediately noticeable) sources whether the organization of the fishery was as unchanging and as rigidly divided as they assumed. Nowhere will be found a discussion of the various groups, an identification of the various members of the groups and a descriptive proof of their eternal separateness; nowhere is there an attempt to analyze (as distinct from to assume) the relative importance of the various groups over time; nowhere can be found any analysis to prove that these groups were in conflict for over 200 years. For the period after 1730, nowhere even in the documentary sources can you find any evi-

dence of real conflict between settlers and migratory fishermen, London and the West Country, or sack and fishing merchants.

What evidence, for example, is presented for the existence of conflict between London or Bristol and the West of England? It may be summarized as follows:

1. The London and Bristol Company of 1610 attempted to establish a colony in a place which was dominated by a previously established migratory fishery. After 1617, at least, there was definitely hostility between the company and West of England interests.
2. Sir David Kirke's colony of *ca.* 1639-1651 also aroused the hostility of the migratory men.
3. During the same era there was conflict between London and the outports, including Bristol, over the general control of overseas trade and shipping.
4. In the 1670, two London merchants argued that settlement and government in Newfoundland were essential if the island were to be secured from French competition and expansion.

There is no further evidence! Indeed, after 1680, no trace of conflict between these two groups can be found. With London's gradual withdrawal from direct participation in the fishery after 1713, such a conflict would be irrelevant, even if it existed. For its part, Bristol acted in the eighteenth century in the same manner as all the other Western ports in the trade.⁴⁸

The following points may be made even in regard to the seventeenth-century evidence:

1. There is no evidence to show that London merchants were connected with four other proprietary projects during the years 1610-1660.
2. Against the two London merchants who favoured colonization in the 1670s should be placed many others, including such prominent figures as Sir John Frederick, and Sir Nathaniel Herne who almost certainly supported the Western ports — both were in the Newfoundland trade and both were members of Parliament for the then fiercely anti-settlement town of Dartmouth.
3. Massive evidence which shows that by the 1690s a close partnership existed between merchants in London and the West Country.⁴⁹

Thus evidence of unchanging and eternal rivalry seems to rest upon a struggle which was dying by the time Charles II ascended the throne.

What of the argument that "sack merchants" and "fishing merchants" were in perpetual conflict with one another? None of the historians presented any evidence of this, nor did they attempt to describe the separateness and the exact method of operation of the groups they supposed were in conflict. The argument seems to be based upon two assumptions:

1. London, because of her geographic position had to confine her participation in the fishery to the sack ship. (Even this is not completely true.)
2. Settlement could only grow if the colonists could find someone to trade with. Thus sack ships were vital to settlement.

The argument has been stood on its head by saying that settlement was vital to sack ships and hence, in turn, to London interests. No evidence has been presented to demonstrate the truth of any of this and no one has even shown that sack merchants and fishing merchants were *per se* antagonistic towards one another. Indeed, no one has even demonstrated that "sack merchants" operated only sack ships and that "fishing merchants" operated only fishing ships. Even more surprisingly, no contemporary document even mentions any conflict between sack and fishing merchants." The whole thing seems to have been fabricated by Miss Field, upon the most utterly inadequate evidence. That does not absolve her successors, who found the theory convenient.

What can be said of the argument that the West of England merchants always opposed settlement because they operated migratory fishing vessels which competed with the colonists? Up to a point the evidence for this is stronger and may be presented thus:

1. West Country opposition to the proprietary colonies before 1660.^v
2. The real and fierce West Country opposition to settlement in the decade 1670-1680.
3. The West of England certainly operated fishing ships and, at least until about 1650, this was almost the only form of organization used by them.⁵⁰

Concerning point one, it may be noted that West Country opposition to proprietary schemes was aimed, almost exclusively, against the London and Bristol Company, after 1617, and against Sir David Kirke, in the 1640s. There is no contemporary evidence to indicate active hostility towards Falkland, Baltimore or the Bristol's Hope settlement. There is, on the other hand, evidence that during this period the West Country opposed proprietary colonizing schemes, rather than settlement as such — in which they themselves took part.⁵¹ Hostility was directed towards the organizers of the colonies and, even then, was not directed towards all of them. Point two, regarding West Country opposition to settlement in the 1670s, is undoubtedly correct. Regarding point three, the fact that before 1660 the West Country specialized in a ship fishery did not necessarily mean that it continued to do so into the eighteenth century (something historians of the eighteenth century noted but did not see the significance of).^w Finally there is remarkably little evidence that the West of England opposed settlement throughout the eighteenth century, although the West would occasionally agree with the Government that too much settlement might be undesirable.⁵² After 1720, no West Country petition even complained about the existence of settlement, let alone asked for its removal. The argument of opposition in that era seems based upon a set of fundamental misconceptions. Writers saw that

after 1763 the British Government enacted legislation designed to restore the migratory fishery and restrict that of the colonists. They assumed that the West Country merchants were mainly involved only in the ship fishery and hence assumed the legislation must have the support of those merchants. No historian presented any documentary proof of this. All except Morton ignored the considerable data which indicated mercantile opposition to this legislation.

SETTLEMENT AND GOVERNMENT AS DISTINCT ISSUES

Historians have also confused two factors which were in fact separate. They assumed that settlement and government were synonymous, and thus that everyone who opposed government must have opposed settlement and *vice versa*. A very good case can be made for almost continuous mercantile opposition to the growth of any government which they could not be sure of controlling. Naturally conservative, merchants instinctively feared innovation and, involved in a very speculative trade, they feared "interference". Even so, resistance to innovation which was forced through was soon accepted and indeed incorporated into a myth of the good old days and used to resist fresh innovation. Yesterday's innovation became the defense against today's change. Merchants resisted and disliked government but historians should not have assumed that they therefore disliked settlement. The two were not synonymous.

Let us examine the assumption that the West Countrymen were fishing ship operators, unconnected with and hostile towards settlement. As we have seen, some historians did note that in the eighteenth century, at least, some West Country merchants turned to trade. This did not, however, affect the historical assumption that the West of England basically opposed settlement. Few historians seem to have fully realized that between 1660 and 1720 almost all the West of England merchants adapted from pure fishing to at least a combination of fishing and trading with inhabitants.⁵³ In theory, a distinction can be made between "migratory" and "sedentary" fishermen but in practice the two groups were interchangeable and above all both were controlled by the "migratory merchants" who traded with them, the descendants of the fishing captains of the seventeenth century. As a London merchant observed of West Country merchants, in 1675, "they will become the first planters".⁵⁴ A cursory glance shows that by 1785 the sedentary fishery was controlled not by "sack merchants" from outside the West Country, let alone by a class of powerful resident merchants, but by large West Country capitalists.⁵⁵ Dependent upon the settlers, they had no conceivable reason for hostility.

After 1680 there is little evidence of widespread tension between migratory fishermen and settlers. Indeed, most of the planters who were not Irish came themselves from the West of England. There was much interchange between the "commuters" and the residents — the bye boat keeper who became a planter, the

planter's son who became a West Country ship captain or even a merchant, or the planter who in old age retired to his home in Devonshire or Dorset. Some historians talk of the rise of "resident merchants" distinct from and opposed to the "migratory merchants" but in the main these "natives" were migratory men in origin. Some had decided to settle in Newfoundland, many others were merely the agents and younger relatives of the senior partners who remained in Britain, and indeed many were not really resident at all — commuting more or less annually between Britain and Newfoundland. It is not surprising therefore that eighteenth-century evidence of conflict between the settler and the visiting fishermen cannot be found.

CONCLUSION: HISTORICAL FENCE BUILDING

If my comments are valid, historians have erected a towering theory upon foundations that are not only untested but untrue. Why then did the theory of retardation based upon group conflict win so wide an acceptance? Part of the problem seems to lie in the reason why historians studied Newfoundland. With the exception of Prowse, none was a native and none was primarily interested in Newfoundland as such, being concerned rather with the Island as an aspect of something else. Miss Field was interested in Newfoundland as an illustration of British imperial expansion and as what she perceived as a struggle between competing English mercantile groups. Lounsbury, Judah, Morton and McClintock dealt with Newfoundland as an aspect of British colonial development; Rothney used the fishery as an example of European power struggles; while Innis seems to have been mainly concerned to trace a connection between fisheries and colonial development in North America. Thus Newfoundland was worthy of study only insofar as it threw light upon something else. Innis and Lounsbury alone filled their work with statistical and other information on the fishery; but even they did not seriously attempt to relate that information to their arguments as to why Newfoundland development was "retarded". Evidence was used rather than analyzed. The group conflict approach disregarded non-human factors and yet the theory can only be tested by an analysis of the organization and evolution of trade and settlement and of the actual, as distinct from the assumed, relationship among the groups involved.

It may be that all of these writers were constitutional historians, interested not so much in examining the truth or fallacy of the group conflict theory, which demand a socio-economic approach, as in assuming conflict and explaining why groups acted as they did and what consequences followed.⁸ Thus Lounsbury was possibly of that school of American revisionists who sought to change American attitudes towards their own colonial period, not by arguing that older historians had distorted the facts but by showing that they had failed to understand the necessities which forced Britain to act as she did. McClintock, a New Zealander, was also basically interested in British attitudes towards her colonies rather than in Newfound-

land as such. Newfoundland simply offered a lurid example.¹ Thus Newfoundland seemed an outstanding example of British *Realpolitik*, offering a challenge both to Lounsbury, who wished to say that even if that policy was selfish it was nevertheless rational, and to McClintock, who wished to remind us that even if the policy was rational it was still very immoral and selfish. These historians were not interested in challenging the concept of group conflict but in interpreting it. Their interest in Newfoundland only as aspect of something else did not dispose them to examine the internal development of fishery and settlement and the inter-relationships between these.

By training and inclination, these historians relied heavily upon constitutional documents — those which concentrate mainly upon political issues and which are written, in the main, by politicians and civil servants. Interested mainly in examining the evolution of Newfoundland from a fishing station into a colony, they used as basis for comparison the evolution of other parts of the Empire. In this light, Newfoundland was viewed as a deviation from some norm. It was “normal” for colonies to become self contained and independent, therefore Newfoundland was “deviant”.² Thus the historians began with two basic assumptions: that Newfoundland’s colonial development is best measured by reference to colonial development elsewhere; and that Newfoundland’s different development (its “retardation”!) was due to political and human factors. This alone can explain the lack of interest in the multitude of other factors — climatic, geographic, cultural and economic — which may also have shaped Newfoundland’s “retardation”.

Thus before research had commenced, writers had concluded that Newfoundland was not only retarded but unnatural and that this was due to a conflict between progressive and reactionary groups. The historian’s task was merely to trace the development and outcome of that conflict. It may even be said that only the development of the conflict was worth examining, because the supposedly inevitable outcome — the attainment of self-government — was already known. Writers commenced with an absence of settlement in 1610 and ended with self-government in 1832.^{3a} They looked for evidence of political debate, conflict and change; extracted this from its contemporary context in Newfoundland; and arranged the evidence in strict chronological sequence. Anything which was not immediately relevant to the political was ignored and the intervening periods between the high points of political debate were examined only insofar as it was necessary to trace the evolution of the struggle from one political event to the next. Historians were not interested in any particular period of Newfoundland’s development as such: they looked only for those events and problems which could be fitted into an already predetermined “chain of evolution” between 1610 and 1832. A fact was important only if it could be woven into this chain.

This technique may be described as “fence building”. We define the external framework — “retarded colonization”; find a predetermined beginning and end to the problem; and erect historical “fence posts” in a straight line between the begin-

ning and the end. Periods of time between the political events are covered only by a strand of wire which connects the posts. Concentrating upon sparse and disjointed political events, we ignore any change in conditions between those events and, as a result, Newfoundland becomes a kind of Rip van Winkle's land, which slumbered for centuries, waking sporadically for exciting and theoretically-important political problems. Every aspect of Newfoundland history seems to be in a state of suspended animation, with the sole and unfortunate exception of her evolution "from an island into a province". Historians, concentrating upon constitutional development, confused outwardly unchanging forms in the fishery and settlement with constantly changing realities. What changed in Newfoundland was much more than the purely political and no greater change occurred than in the relationships among the groups and institutions involved.^{bb} Because these changes occurred silently and over generations, even contemporaries sometimes failed to notice them. If historians had concentrated upon the open spaces between their chosen fence posts, they would have become uneasy about an interpretation of Newfoundland based on unchanging group conflict.

We talk of the seamless web of history and rend it to shreds by approaching our research with preconceived ideas as to what is or is not within the area we seek to study. Newfoundland history has been treated as if only the political is important and as if only the political evolved. An assumption has been made about the past that would not (or should not) be made about contemporary affairs, namely that whole generations were personally and collectively consumed with passion about political and constitutional matters. Periods of political calm are explained by reference to the "victory" of some group or the "exhaustion" of the combatants. We often create an impression of surprise or even disgust at the lack of apparent convulsion in society. Where no greater political event can be discerned, we speed to the next era, to the next political eruption, connecting the new crisis to the last without noting that it may be more connected with the specific realities of its own period than with previous events. Concentrating upon political development, we give far too little attention to the non-political changes which create political crises and developments and ensure that every new political crisis is much more than merely a continuation of an old conflict. Historians of Newfoundland have created an impression that the only life in its history consists of words scrawled on fading documents by long-dead polemicists. Only the abstract political evolution comes to life; the societies which underwent that evolution appear as inanimate abstractions — the backdrop to a cast of our contemporary ideas and theories.

Author's Notes

¹A.H. McClintock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland 1783-1832* (London, 1941), 6.

²Sack ships did not engage directly in the fishery but brought out supplies and took the fish to market.

³John Reeves, *History of the Government of Newfoundland* (London, 1793).

⁴D.W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland* (London, 1895).

⁵Prowse, *History*, 174, 145, 93, 136.

⁶Prowse, *History*, 145.

⁷Prowse, *History*, 113.

⁸J.D. Rogers, *The British Colonies*, vol. 5, part 4, *Newfoundland* (Oxford 1911).

⁹See A.M. Field "The Development of Government in Newfoundland 1638-1713", (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1924), 1 or G.O. Rothney, "The History of Newfoundland and Labrador 1754-1783" (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1934), Introduction, 1-2.

¹⁰A.P. Newton, "Newfoundland to 1783", in John Holland Rose, Arthur P. Newton and Ernest A. Benians, eds., *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. 6 (Cambridge, 1930), 121-145; R.G. Lounsbury, *The British Fisheries at Newfoundland 1634-1763* (New Haven CT, 1934); McClintock, *Constitutional Government*; C.B. Judah Jr. *The North American Fisheries and British Policy till 1713* (Urbana IL, 1933); Harold A. Innis, *The Cod Fisheries, the History of an International Economy* (2nd ed., Toronto, 1954); Field, "Development of Government".

¹¹Field, "Development of Government", 6, 18-19.

¹²"Bye boat keepers" fished from shore in open boats as did the settlers (from whom they are often difficult to distinguish). However, they and their servants migrated annually from England.

¹³Field, "Development of Government", 18-19.

¹⁴Field, "Development of Government", 20.

¹⁵Field, "Development of Government", 164, 174.

¹⁶Field, "Development of Government", 329.

¹⁷See Newton, "Newfoundland to 1783", 125, 126, 133, 137, 139, 140 for examples of his agreement with Field.

¹⁸Judah, *North American Fisheries*, 175-177.

¹⁹Lounsbury, *British Fisheries*, 41, 108, 110, 111.

²⁰Judah, *North American Fisheries*, 254.

²¹Lounsbury, *British Fisheries*, 271.

²²Lounsbury, *British Fisheries*, 254.

²³Lounsbury, *British Fisheries*, 332.

²⁴McClintock, *Constitutional Government*, 10, 11, 4, 6. "King William's Act" is Statutes 10 and 11, William III, cap. 25.

²⁵McClintock, *Constitutional Government*, 9-10.

²⁶McClintock, *Constitutional Government*, 12. "Palliser's Act" is Statute 15, George III, cap. 21.

²⁷McClintock, *Constitutional Government*, 12, 21.

²⁸McClintock, *Constitutional Government*, 8. Note the wording, which is almost identical to that used by Miss Field, quoted above.

²⁹Statute 26, George III, cap. 26.

³⁰Keith Matthews, "History of the West of England-Newfoundland Fishery" (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1968), 448-454.

³¹McClintock, *Constitutional Government*, 12 and see above.

³²W.L. Morton, "Newfoundland as an Aspect of Colonial Policy 1775-1793" (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1936).

³³Morton, "Newfoundland, 1775-1793", 109.

³⁴"Partial venturers" was a term first used immediately after the American Revolutionary War and referred to ship owners who were not continuously involved in the fishery but sent vessels with, or for, cargoes "on speculation".

³⁵Morton, "Newfoundland, 1775-1793", 109.

³⁶Morton, "Newfoundland, 1775-1793", 101, 161.

³⁷Morton, "Newfoundland, 1775-1793", 211.

³⁸Morton, "Newfoundland, 1775-1793", 180.

³⁹Morton, "Newfoundland, 1775-1793", 211.

⁴⁰Rothney, "Newfoundland and Labrador, 1754-1783" and "Britain's Policy in the North American Codfisheries, with Special Reference to Foreign Competition 1775-1819" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1939).

⁴¹Rothney, "Newfoundland and Labrador, 1754-1783", 12, 70, 97; "Britain's Policy in the Codfisheries, 1775-1819", 11.

⁴²Rothney, "Britain's Policy in the Codfisheries, 1775-1819", 16; "Newfoundland and Labrador, 1754-1783", 97.

⁴³Rothney, "Britain's Policy in the Codfisheries, 1775-1819", 36.

⁴⁴Innis, *Cod Fisheries*.

⁴⁵For examples of his use of the theory see Innis, *Cod Fisheries*, preface and 50, 51, 54, 66, 68, 98, 135, 146, 208.

⁴⁶Gillian Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland 1577-1660* (Toronto, 1969).

⁴⁷E.g. Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery", 254-264, 451-454.

⁴⁸For example in opposition to the Justices of the Peace (1730) or towards Government legislation between 1775-1793. See Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery", 358-364, 445-454.

⁴⁹Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery", 268-273.

⁵⁰Even before that date, however, individual West Country merchants had links with West Country settlers.

⁵¹Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery".

⁵²E.g. Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery", 550.

⁵³Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery", 307-317. The nature of merchant fishing had changed from operating large-crewed "fishing ships" to owning "banking" vessels or directly employing boats crews who fished inshore, along with the crews the planters employed.

⁵⁴Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery", 211.

⁵⁵Matthews, "West of England-Newfoundland Fishery".

Editor's Notes

- ^a "according to this theory" inserted.
- ^b "supposedly" inserted.
- ^c "according to this theory" inserted.
- ^d ...acceptable even to the literate and often merchantile group in St. John's.
- ^e ...origins, praising the "mute inglorious Nelsons amongst those Devon skippers" when they fought Frenchmen, pirates or courtiers but "fully set(ing) forth the dire effects..."
- ^f "In the end, Field concluded" inserted.
- ^g Whether because he completely...
- ^h "In his version" inserted.
- ⁱ Lounsbury's predecessors argued...no better off than before.
- ^j ...London and Bristol "sack" ship group...
- ^k ...struggle between the groups...
- ^l ...if the assumption that West Country political and economic influence declined after 1713 was correct...
- ^m ...the *British* government and the *cohesive and West of England dominated economic* interests whether "sedentary" or "migratory".
- ⁿ It is significant that in postulating settler (as distinct from a broad trade) hostility to "Palliser's Act" McClintock could present only the following evidence:- "With justice the unfortunate settlers could claim..."
- ^o As for the other merchant groups (in contrast to Field or Judah), he concluded...
- ^p Presumably it could not be the fishing merchants who by definition were hostile to settlement.
- ^q It would have been logical to assume that no such division existed and that the anti-settlement legislation under George III was due, not to interest group conflict, but, for example, the dogmas of politicians and naval officers — a clash between the aims of national policy and those of the economic groups in the fishery.
- ^r "supposedly" inserted.
- ^s "historians", "perceived" and "supposedly" are inserted.
- ^t "From this standpoint" inserted.
- ^u Even more surprisingly, I know of no contemporary document which mentions...
- ^v All writers stress West Country opposition...
- ^w Point two is undoubtedly correct but in Point three it should be observed that (as historians of the eighteenth century noted but did not see the significance) the fact that the West Country operated a more or less completely "ship" fishery before 1660 did not necessarily mean that they continued to do so into the eighteenth century.
- ^x ...as in accepting it and explaining why the groups acted...
- ^y McClintock, a New Zealander was also basically interested in British Attitudes towards her colonies of which Newfoundland seemed to offer a lurid example — rather than in Newfoundland as such.
- ^z ...therefore Newfoundland was a "deviant" from that norm.
- ^{aa} Writers commenced with a state of "no settlement" in 1610...
- ^{bb} However, much more changed in Newfoundland than the purely political...