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# Irresponsibility, Obligation, and the “Manly Modern” Tensions in Working-class Masculinities in Postwar Saint John, New Brunswick

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## ARTICLE

# Irresponsibility, Obligation, and the “Manly Modern”: Tensions in Working-class Masculinities in Postwar Saint John, New Brunswick

**Bonnie Huskins and Michael Boudreau**

ALLAN ROBERT MARTIN, A LONGSHOREMAN and odd jobber in postwar Saint John, New Brunswick, was a central figure in the diaries of his wife Ida Louise Martin (nee Friars). Sometimes Ida would report on the labour unrest that occurred at Allan Robert’s (or AR’s) workplace. On 12 February 1970, AR and his companions walked off the job because they were “MAD ABOUT THE WAY OF BEING PAID.” At other times she described the accidents that befell him at the port, as in 1970 when a “sling of lumber hit him a glancing blow.” Although Ida was not overly introspective in her diaries, sometimes she used them to complain about her husband: for example, in 1952, during a storm, she noted that AR and his friends “left [home] at noon and returned at 6am. I walked the floor all night.” And one can discern a hint of sarcasm in Ida’s 1945 depiction of AR waiting for his dump truck to be repaired: “got dump welded and [AR’s] eyes were sore from watching.”<sup>1</sup>

Ida Martin’s diary entries about AR are significant in three respects: i) they reflect the parameters of working-class life in postwar Saint John; ii) they were written by a working-class woman; and iii) they provide a lens into the ways in which working-class women viewed working-class masculinity. In *Labour/Le Travail* in 2008, Jim Barrett and Diane P. Koenker argued that the “next

1. Ida Martin’s diaries, 12 February 1970 (emphasis in the original); 26 March 1970; 18 February 1952; 12–13 September 1945. The diaries are in the authors’ possession.

frontier” of labour history would be the study of the “subjective dimensions of working-class life,” embodied in such sources as memoirs, diaries, and other forms of working-class autobiography.<sup>2</sup> There is a genre of working-class autobiography penned primarily by labour activists and socialist revolutionaries, but memoirs and diaries of “common people” like Ida Martin have received “insignificant attention.”<sup>3</sup> One reason for this may be a concern voiced by some working-class historians about the “problem of representativeness.”<sup>4</sup> How can individualized accounts capture the collective nature of class identity and experience? This concern is magnified for diaries, which are often understood as the most private of historical sources, embodying the author’s most intimate and personal feelings.

Feminist scholars assure us that studying sources generated by individuals like Ida “does not entail a retreat into methodological individualism or a return to great-man history.” Rather, the “construction of individuality” to which diaries and other autobiographical works contribute, is an “eminently social process,” and the analysis of such narratives must be grounded in socio-historical context.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the process of diary-writing itself is a social act: the making of memory and the construction of meaning is “highly contextual and inter-subjective.”<sup>6</sup> This is certainly the case with Ida, who “would sit at the back of her kitchen table writing away, and sometimes she would let two or three days get ahead of her and she would be asking [others] to help fill in where she was and what she had done to catch up.”<sup>7</sup> Women’s diaries have historically been “semi-public” documents: “mothers left their journals out for the family to read; sisters co-wrote diaries; fathers jotted notes in their daughters’ diaries; female friends exchanged diaries.”<sup>8</sup> It was only in the late Victorian period that middle-class women’s diaries became more personal and

2. Jim Barrett & Diane P. Koenker, “The Saga of History 492: The Transformation of Working-Class History in One Classroom,” *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 183.

3. Diane P. Koenker, “Scripting the Revolutionary Worker Autobiography: Archetypes, Models, Inventions, and Markets,” *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004): 371. Book-length treatments include Mary Jo Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road: Life Course in French and German Workers’ Autobiographies in the Era of Industrialization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiography* (London & New York: Methuen, 1981).

4. Mary Jo Maynes, “Autobiography and Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Methodological Considerations,” *Social Science History* 16, 3 (Autumn 1992): 520.

5. Maynes, “Autobiography and Class Formation,” 534–535.

6. Susan Engel, as discussed in Jeanne Perreault & Marlene Kadar, “Introduction: Tracing the Autobiographical: Unlikely Documents, Unexpected Places,” in Marlene Kadar, ed., *Tracing the Autobiographical* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2005), 6.

7. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 17 January 2004.

8. Kathryn Carter, “The Cultural Work of Diaries in Mid-Victorian Britain,” *Victorian Review* 23, 2 (Winter 1997): 251–267.

private in nature, written by respectable women from within the confines of the private sphere.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, it can be concluded that working-class diaries like Ida's are rich sources which reveal how class is formed and experienced in the "various venues of everyday life."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Ida herself is significant as a working-class female diarist. As Bettina Bradbury has noted, "few working-class women ... appear to have kept diaries, and few letters or other writing by such women have been preserved."<sup>11</sup> This dearth of diaries penned by working-class women may be a product of class and gender expectations. Most of the working-class autobiographies studied by scholars such as Mary Jo Maynes and Diane Koenker were written by male labour organizers. Perhaps many female members of the working class lacked access to male organizational culture, and thus did not have the resources or "self-confidence" to pen their own autobiographies.<sup>12</sup> If they did record their lives, most would have done so in unpublished informal diaries rather than more formal and published autobiographies. In other words, women could write as long as they had "no ambitions to make the contents public."<sup>13</sup> It has been suggested that women therefore adopted personal diaries "to validate themselves within a culture that trivialized their lives and their writing."<sup>14</sup>

Working-class diarists like Ida primarily kept what Marilyn Ferris Motz has called a "rural folk diary," which combined the conventions of the account book, the daybook, the almanac and the commercial diary. Such diaries were generally terse accounts of the daily rhythms of work, family, and community. Gender and class assumptions prepared female working-class and rural

9. Bonnie Huskins and Michael Boudreau, "'Daily Allowances': Literary Conventions and Daily Life in the Diaries of Ida Louise Martin (nee Friars), Saint John, New Brunswick, 1945–1992," *Acadiensis* xxxiv, 2 (Spring 2005): 89.

10. Barrett & Koenker, 188; Royden Loewen, "Introduction," *From the Inside Out: The Rural Worlds of Mennonite Diarists, 1863 to 1929* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 20.

11. For quote, see Bettina Bradbury, "The Home as Workplace," in Paul Craven, ed., *Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 413–414. Also see Huskins and Boudreau, "'Daily Allowances,'" 92. For another example of a working-class woman's diary, see Catherine Gidney, "The Dredger's Daughter: Courtship and Marriage in the Baptist Community of Welland, Ontario, 1934–1944," *Labour/Le Travail* 54 (2004): 121–149.

12. Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom*, 8; Maynes, "Autobiography and Class Formation," 25.

13. Avra Kouffman, "'Why feignest thou Thyselfe to be another woman?': Constraints on the Construction of Subjectivity in Mary Rich's Diary," in Linda S. Coleman, ed., *Women's Life-Writing: Finding Voice, Building Community* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1997), 11.

14. Joanne Ritchie, "'Cartographies of Silence': An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Diaries and Reminiscences of New Brunswick Women, 1783–1980," *CRIAW Papers* 3 (1997): 14–16.

diarists to be “family historian[s] rather than to write subjectively of the self.”<sup>15</sup> Like many other wives and mothers of her generation, Ida was the gatekeeper of family tradition. Her diaries reflect the dailiness and seasonality of “women’s time” and “family time,” embodied in such activities as domestic labour, and the commemoration of family anniversaries and community events.<sup>16</sup> Ida’s experience of “family time” also encompassed the recording of AR’s workplace activities and social behaviours. This is partly a reflection of AR’s role in the family economy. As the household and financial manager, Ida kept track of the workaday world of her husband, who was the family’s primary breadwinner. Yet there is more in Ida’s candid reactions to AR’s world: we interpret her entries as evidence of a working-class woman’s views on working-class masculinity.

What do Ida’s diaries reveal about working-class masculinity in the postwar period? Christopher Dummit argues that workers and employers in post-1945 Canada supported the “ideology of manly modernism,” which reflected a turn toward “instrumental reason,” “stoical control,” and expert knowledge as key middle-class ideals of this period.<sup>17</sup> Ida’s diaries, however, reveal the persistence of older forms of 19th- and early 20th-century working-class masculinities, such as the primacy of the male as the main breadwinner; the precariousness of seasonal work; the deleterious impact of manual labour on the worker’s body; the prevalence of a homosocial recreational culture; and the tendency for working-class males to revel in boyish horseplay and various forms of risk-taking behaviour. Although scholars have identified a plurality of working-class masculinities in this time period, AR and his cohort embodied the “rugged masculinity” and “radical manliness” of longshoremen and miners who engaged in feats of “masculine strength” and partook in direct action, reminiscent of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>18</sup>

15. Margo Culley quoted in Gwendolyn Davies, “Gendered Responses: The Seccombe Diaries,” in Margaret Conrad, ed., *Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759–1800* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1995), 134.

16. John Gillis, “Making Time for the Family: The Invention of Family Time(s) and the Reinvention of Family History,” *Journal of Family History* 21, 1 (January 1996), 4–21; Margaret Conrad, “Sundays always make me think of home’: Time and Place in Canadian Women’s History,” in Veronica Strong-Boag & Anita Clair Fellman, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991), 97–112.

17. Christopher Dummit, *The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

18. For the “masculine strength” of miners, see Nancy M. Forestell, “‘And I Feel Like I’m Dying from Mining for Gold’: Disability, Gender, and the Mining Community, 1920–1950,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 3, 3 (2006): 77–93. For a discussion of male breadwinners, see Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montréal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993). There is now a substantial literature on male recreational culture: Craig Heron, *Lunch-Bucket Lives: Remaking the Workers’ City* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015); Mark Rosenfeld, “‘It Was a Hard Life’: Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920–1950,” in Chad Gaffield, ed., *Constructing Modern Canada: Readings in Post-Confederation History*

The first section of this paper examines how AR and Ida contributed to the working-class family economy in postwar Saint John. This is followed by an exploration of how Ida, as a working-class wife and mother, viewed and experienced working-class masculinity. Despite AR's hard labour as a longshoreman, trucker, member of a construction crew, and general odd jobber, Ida chastised him for his irresponsibility in not working hard enough; for spending too much time with his friends; and for engaging in dangerous behaviour. Then we consider the labour unrest recorded in Ida's diaries, and the impact of longshoring and other forms of manual labour on the bodies of working-class men like AR. In so doing, this study underscores how home and work remained intertwined in the postwar period.<sup>19</sup>

### Sewing, Longshoring, and Odd-Jobbing in Postwar Saint John

IN 1940, AR, IDA, AND THEIR four-year-old daughter, Barbara, migrated from Westfield to Saint John, precipitated by the wartime demand for labour in the construction industry and in the shipyards. The dangers posed by German submarines in the St. Lawrence forced much of Canada's "summer traffic"

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(Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), 329–369. For studies of the masculine culture of drinking, see Craig Heron, "The Boys and their Booze: Masculinities and Public Drinking in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890–1946," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 86 (September 2005): 411–452; Craig Heron, "Boys Will Be Boys: Working-Class Masculinities in the Age of Mass Production," *International Labor & Working-Class History*, 69 (Spring 2006): 6–34; Paul Michel Taillon, "'What We Want is Good, Sober Men': Masculinity, Respectability, and Temperance in the Railroad Brotherhoods, c. 1870–1910," *Journal of Social History*, 36 (Winter 2002): 319–338. For a lively analysis of the relationship between working-class masculinity and sport, notably lob-ball, see Thomas W. Dunk, *It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 65–100. For more explicit examinations of male homosocial culture, see Adele Perry, "'Poor Creatures Are We without Our Wives': White Men and Homosocial Culture," in *On the Edge of Empire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 20–47, 208–215; Robert Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885–1930," in Franca Iacovetta et. al., eds., *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 206–230; Nancy M. Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding-Houses, and Blind Pigs: Gender Construction in a Multi-Ethnic Mining Community, 1909–1920," in Iacovetta et. al., eds., *A Nation of Immigrants*, 251–290. For discussions of the relationship between masculinity and organized labour in the Canadian context, see Todd McCallum, "'Not a Sex Question?' The One Big Union and the Politics of Radical Manhood," *Labour/Le Travail*, 42 (Fall 1998): 15–54; Mark Leier, "Portrait of a Labour Spy: The Case of Robert Raglan Gosden, 1882–1961," *Labour/Le Travail*, 42 (Fall 1998): 55–84; Gillian Creese, *Contracting Masculinity: Gender, Class and Race in a White-Collar Union, 1944–1994* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999). For American studies, see Gregory Wood, "'The Paralysis of the Labor Movement': Masculinity and Unions in 1920s Detroit," *Michigan Historical Review*, 30 (2004): 59–91; Francis Shor, "'Verile Syndicalism' in Comparative Perspective: A Gender Analysis of the rww in the United States and Australia," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 56 (Fall 1999): 65–77.

19. Forestell, "'And I Feel Like I'm Dying from Mining for Gold,'" 93.

through Saint John and the other Atlantic ports. Despite the strains that migration placed on housing facilities in the city, AR and Ida bought one of the many houses in a “bad state of repair” (213 Queen Street West), and spent most of their married lives renovating it.<sup>20</sup>

The Martin’s postwar family economy reflected typical 19th-century working-class patterns.<sup>21</sup> Ida managed the household affairs, carefully engaging in whatever strategies were appropriate to stretch the family’s meagre wages: taking in boarders, renting out the bottom flat to tenants, and participating in an informal economy wherein friends and family helped each other to survive. Ida’s participation in the paid labour force was occasional. She worked at the telephone office in Westfield shortly after her marriage and at Beck’s Drycleaning in Saint John from 1954 until 1957, sporadically in the early 1960s, and more regularly between 1966 and 1968. Like many women before her, Ida also took in piecework (from Beck’s), “doing seams on her old treddle machine.”<sup>22</sup>

AR was the primary breadwinner, and it was not an easy obligation. Like many male residents in west Saint John, AR earned much of his income from working as a longshoreman at the port of Saint John. The first entry on AR’s Employee Information Card for the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) Local 273 is 1 June 1943.<sup>23</sup> The port played an important role in Saint John’s economic development. It had been a centre for shipbuilding and the

20. The population of Saint John grew from 70,927 to 78,337 between 1941 and 1951. Carmen Miller, “The 1940s: War and Rehabilitation,” in E.R. Forbes & D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 311–316.

21. Bonnie Huskins and Michael Boudreau, “‘Getting By’ in Postwar Saint John: Working-Class Families and New Brunswick’s Informal Economy,” in Michael Boudreau, Peter G. Toner, and Tony Tremblay, eds., *Exploring the Dimensions of Self-Sufficiency for New Brunswick* (Fredericton: New Brunswick and Atlantic Studies Research and Development Centre, 2009), 77–99; Alison Prentice et. al., *Canadian Women: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996), 354; Hitchhiking and bus, Ida Martin’s diaries, 28 July 1946 and 2 August 1946.

22. Working at Beck’s, Ida Martin’s diaries, 8 December 1962: “Mr. Beck brot [sic] me a dress to fix”; 21 February 1963: “sewed for Mr. Beck all afternoon”; 22 February 1963: “fixed drapes”; 13 September 1963: “sewed 5 things for Becks”; 25 September 1963: “sewing for Becks all day”; Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 8 January 2005. For more on piecework, see Bettina Bradbury, “Women’s Workplaces: The Impact of Technological Change on Working-Class Women in the Home and the Workplace in Nineteenth-Century Montréal,” in Veronica Strong-Boag, et al., eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, 4th ed. (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002), 121–134; Huskins and Boudreau, “‘Getting By’ in Postwar Saint John,” 81.

23. Employee Information Card, ILA Local 273 Collection, New Brunswick Museum Archives and Research Library (hereafter NBMARL). Ida’s first diary reference to longshoring is 28 August 1945. According to *McAlpine’s and Might’s Greater Saint John City Directories*, AR was listed as a longshoreman from 1955–1971, NBMARL. *McAlpine’s and Might’s Greater Saint John City Directories* (Saint John: McAlpine Directory Company, 1955–1965) and *Might’s Greater Saint John and Lancaster City Directory* (Saint John: Might Directories Atlantic Limited, 1966–1971).



### Harbour

Image courtesy of Heritage Resources, Saint John.

timber trade in the early-to-mid-19th century, but with Confederation and the arrival of the CPR in 1889, the port gradually integrated into the Canadian economy, achieving winter port status in 1895. In agitating for national aid for the port in the 1920s, the Maritime Rights Movement contended that the Saint John port “belonged not to Saint John or the Maritimes but to all of Canada.” In 1927, the port of Saint John was nationalized, due to “the economic plight of the region,” which made “nationalization desperately needed to relieve Saint John of the responsibility it could no longer afford to bear.”<sup>24</sup> In 1936, the National Harbours Board, a crown corporation, was established, which leased dock facilities in Saint John and other ports to shipping companies. The federal government also provided much-needed monies to repair the west side of the harbour after a devastating fire in 1931, which “proved in a sense to be a blessing in disguise,” for it provided employment in the Great Depression and ensured that the west side’s wharves, piers, transit shed, and grain elevators were still relatively new in the 1960s. By the time that AR began to work at the port, the Government of Canada had already subsidized the seventeen-acre Navy-Island Terminal in 1934. The following decades would

24. Elizabeth W. McGahan, *The Port of Saint John, Volume I: From Confederation to Nationalization 1867–1927* (Saint John: National Harbours Board, 1982), 237.



see the reconstruction of the Pugsley Terminal berths between 1948 and 1952 and major renovations to Long Wharf.<sup>25</sup>

There is a voluminous literature on the history of dock workers and longshoring, but much of it focuses on union history and labour unrest,<sup>26</sup> and the technological transformations of the world's ports.<sup>27</sup> While social historians are beginning to examine the implications of race on the waterfront,<sup>28</sup> they

25. Frederick William Wallace, *The Romance of a Great Port: The Story of Saint John New Brunswick* (Saint John: The Committee of the Transportation Festival Held on the Occasion of the Jubilee of His Majesty King George V, 1935), FC 2497.4 W34 1935, Harriet Irving Library Archives and Special Collections, (hereafter HIL-SPECAR); Bill Lovatt "The Port of Saint John", *Atlantic Advocate* 53, 7 (March 1963): 19; Gerald Childs "Fight for the Super-Port: The Saint John Port Controversy," *Atlantic Advocate* 58, 7 (March 1968): 12; *National Harbours Board News Bulletin* 4 (November 1961), FN257 N558b and *National Harbours Board News Bulletin* 7 (November 1962), FN 257 N558b, Harriet Irving Library Government Documents (hereafter HIL-GOV); supplement in *Telegraph Journal*, 11 July 2015, upon the announcement of a \$205,000,000 modernization project for the Saint John port; Alexander C. Pathy, *Waterfront Blues: Labour Strife at the Port of Montréal, 1960–1978* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 4.

26. Peter Cole, "Quakertown Blues: Philadelphia's Longshoremen and the Decline of the IWW," *Left History* 8, 2 (2003): 39–70; Colin J. Davis "Launch Out into the Deep and Let Down Your Nets: Father John Corridan, S.J., and New York Longshoremen in the Post-World War II Era," *Catholic History Review* 86, 1 (January 2000): 66–85; Colin J. Davis "New York City and London Dockworkers: A Comparative Perspective of Rank-and-File Movements in the Post-Second World War Era," *Labour History Review* 65, 3 (2000): 295–316; Howard Kimeldorf, "World War II and the Deradicalization of American Labor: The ILWU as a Deviant Case," *Labor History* 33, 2 (1992): 248–278; Bruce Nelson, "Unions and the Popular Front: The West Coast Waterfront in the 1930s," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 30 (Fall 1986): 59–78.

27. Marc Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006); John Bellamy Foster, "Two Ages of Waterfront Labour," *Labour/Le Travail* 26 (Fall 1990): 155–163; Pathy, *Waterfront Blues*; William Finlay, *Work on the Waterfront: Worker Power and Technological Change in a West Coast Port* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Bryan O'Neill, *Work and Technological Change: Case Studies of Longshoremen & Postal Workers in St. John's* (St. John's: NAFE-Ten Days Committee, 1981); Francis Baird & Jane von Eicken, eds., *The Dynamics of Change: Labour Relations on the Montréal Waterfront* (Montréal: Industrial Relations Centre, McGill University, 1970); Joseph P. Goldberg "Containerization as a Force for Change on the Waterfront," *Monthly Labor Review*, 91, 1 (1968): 8–13; International Labour Conference, *Social Repercussions of New Methods of Cargo Handling (Docks)*, 58th Session (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1972); Archibald A. Evans, *Technical and Social Changes in the World's Ports* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1969).

28. Andrew Parnaby, *Citizen Docker: Making a New Deal on the Vancouver Waterfront, 1919–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Andrew Parnaby, "'The best men that ever worked the lumber': Aboriginal Longshoremen on Burrard Inlet, BC, 1863–1939," *The Canadian Historical Review* 87 (March 2006): 53–78; Calvin Winslow, ed., *Waterfront Workers: New Perspectives on Race and Class* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Cole, "Quakertown Blues"; Colin J. Davis "'Shape or Fight?': New York's Black Longshoremen, 1945–1961," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 62 (Fall 2002): 143–163; Arnold R. Hirsch "On the Waterfront: Race, Class and Politics in Post-Reconstruction New Orleans," *Journal of Urban History* 21, 4 (May 1995): 511–517; Eric Arneson, "Learning the Lessons

have not explicitly tackled the relationship between longshoring, the family economy, and masculinity. The ILA had managed, by the early 20th century, to partially decasualize longshoring by formalizing the hours of work, but families who relied on income from the port found that work rhythms were still governed by “seasonality and the availability of work.”<sup>29</sup> The employment of dock workers had traditionally been casual, due to a variety of factors such as the nature of the cargoes (some “requiring more men or greater skill than others”); the level of mechanization available; and the efficiency of “inland transport services.” Port employment was also affected by “general economic conditions, by seasonal fluctuations in trade and by changes in the international situation.”<sup>30</sup>

Longshoremen in Saint John like AR participated in the “shape up,” during which workers were chosen by stevedoring companies who, in turn, contracted out their services to the shipping companies. AR was fortunate in being a member of a “regular gang.”<sup>31</sup> Ida at times recorded the activities of “O’Neil’s gang:” “own gang out today for first,” “own gang at tea boat,” and “O’Neil’s gang [working] then [visiting] downstairs.”<sup>32</sup> Gang members were notified of work through notices posted on bulletin boards, in newspapers, and through radio announcements and telephone messages. As daughter Barbara notes “The gangs never knew for sure when they would be out, so they ... listen[ed] to the radio to get their information. Every night after supper it would say ‘so and so’ gang report for 7pm tonight, or next morning, etc.”<sup>33</sup> Membership in a regular gang was not a “formal guarantee of [one’s] ‘right’ to [his] position in the gang,” however, and he could be “replaced by a casual at any time,” and oftentimes

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of Solidarity: Work Rules and Race Relations on the New Orleans Waterfront, 1880–1901,” *Labour’s Heritage* 1, 1 (January 1989): 26–45; Harvey Schwartz, “A Union Combats Racism: The ILWU’s Japanese-American ‘Stockton’ Incident of 1945,” *Southern California Quarterly* 62, 2 (1980): 161–176.

29. Robert H. Babcock, “Saint John Longshoremen during the Rise of Canada’s Winter Port, 1895–1922,” *Labour/Le Travail* 25 (Spring 1990): 8, 43; Huskins and Boudreau, “Getting By’ in Postwar Saint John,” 80.

30. International Labour Organization, Inland Transport Committee, *Decasualization of Dock Labour*, Third Session (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1949), 2–3.

31. Edgar T. Dosman, *Labour Management Relations on the Saint John Waterfront: ILA Local 273 and The Maritime Employers Association*, University of Toronto/York University Joint Program in Transportation, Transportation Paper No 6 (Canada: National Harbours Board, CMTA and Transport Canada, 1980), 12, HIL-GOV; Evans, *Technical and Social Changes in the World’s Ports*, 64; Charles P. Larowe, *Shape-Up and Hiring Hall: A Comparison of Hiring Methods and Labor Relations on the New York and Seattle Waterfronts* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1955), 53.

32. Ida Martin’s diaries, 15 December 1952; 12 November 1953; 10 February 1959.

33. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2006. Longshoremen would also obtain their information from bulletin boards at various piers. Larowe, *Shape-Up and Hiring Hall*, 69.

one's gang was not called out at all. On 14 February 1969, Ida writes: "Home at noon. They put O'Leary's gang on instead (There [sic] mad)." <sup>34</sup>

If one's gang was not called, then one could participate in the "open shape," where men were picked individually as "supplements." There was also the "chip system" where the foreman would toss chips into the air and if a worker caught one, he had work for that day. Barbara describes the open shape this way:

... you would go down to the sheds and stand around before they started the shift and if all the gang members didn't show up, they would choose some of those 'hoping' on the side-lines. Naturally, sometimes some of the guys in the gang didn't hear the message [to work], or were ill ... and they were missing – so someone else would replace them. <sup>35</sup>

Sometimes AR was hired casually. On 16 April 1968, he was called to Pugsley Wharf to work with McCormick's gang. In January 1969, AR "worked till Dinner to get boat finished then Perry called him to drive jacklift." Later in the season, "Edgar McGuire called at 9 and wanted A[R] for a gang." <sup>36</sup> Sometimes he worked two jobs in one day: on 19 August 1952, AR worked until 3pm for O'Neil and in the evening for Green. Despite technological modernization of the port's facilities, Saint John continued with the shape up as "its root form of hiring and dispatch" into the mid-1980s. <sup>37</sup> Since Saint John was a winter port, AR usually began work in November or December and ended in April. Cold, snow, or incessant rain often made working at the port untenable. <sup>38</sup> As late as 1970, a port development study showed that seasonality still affected employment at the port of Saint John: "Cargo seasonality causes considerable employment fluctuation – approximately 46 gangs (including two grain and one sugar) were employed.... As a result of the seasonality, some port workers from Saint John seek summer employment elsewhere." <sup>39</sup>

Like many male heads of household who engaged in casual labour in the postwar era, AR was forced into a pattern of occupational pluralism. By June 1956, besides working at the port, and odd-jobbing, AR began working for Stephens Construction and Paving. In the diaries, Ida kept abreast of the company's work: "all fill disappeared from Long Wh[arf] that boys were hauling

34. Larowe, *Shape-Up and Hiring Hall*, 53; Ida Martin's diaries, 14 February 1969. On 5 February 1951, a "Frenchman" (possibly an Acadian) took AR's place on the *Empress of Britain*.

35. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2006; Larowe, *Shape-Up and Hiring Hall*, 52–53; Patti Breen, *Along the Shore: Saint John Longshoremen 1849 to 1999* (Saint John: The New Brunswick Consortium of Writers, 1999), 41.

36. Ida Martin's diaries, 6 January 1969 and 9 April 1969.

37. The retention of the "shape up" was largely due to the ILA, which saw it as a way to restrict the entry of newcomers and control the workforce. Larowe, *Shape-Up and Hiring Hall*, 74–75; Winslow, "Introduction," *Waterfront Workers*, 6–7; Dosman, *Labour Management Relations on the Saint John Waterfront*, 19–20.

38. Ida Martin's diaries, 31 January 1951; 13 February 1967; 29 December 1966.

39. *Saint John Port Development Study* (Vancouver: Swan Wooster Engineering, 1970–1971), 128.

– 10,000 tons per day,” and “worked at R[ail]R[oad] crossing at causew[ay] CPR railed tracks 18 in[ches].” Sometimes the work would overlap. On 23 May 1947, AR hauled mud in the morning and worked at the port in the afternoon. In the spring of 1958, he worked at the port during the day and for Stephens Construction at night. Weather sometimes interfered with paving work. In June 1971, it was simply too warm for the “fellows who spread asphalt,” so the workers dispersed early.<sup>40</sup> Seasonality was not always frowned upon. The winter provided alternative ways to generate income: in December of 1964, AR worked into the early morning hauling snow. During the Christmas seasons of 1946 and 1947, he engaged in ‘treeing’: cutting down Christmas trees (often on private and Crown land) and selling them in King’s Square in downtown Saint John.<sup>41</sup> AR and Ida also applied for unemployment insurance when necessary, although AR retired before they could take advantage of the reforms to the *Unemployment Insurance Act* in 1971, which established higher rates and made it easier to qualify for benefits.<sup>42</sup>

According to the Saint John city directories, AR was employed as a trucker in 1941 and a general driver in 1943.<sup>43</sup> Barbara notes that her father had his own truck in the 1940s, and used it to haul loads for various employers.<sup>44</sup> Due to their importance as a source of income, motorized vehicles feature prominently in Ida’s diaries. She recorded AR painting his truck, selling the truck, and installing a new motor.<sup>45</sup> When AR began working for Stephens, he drove their trucks, but she still differentiated between them. In 1959, AR drove the “Red Truck.” On 25 August 1967, No. 20 truck broke down so AR had to drive “old No 6.” By November he had his own truck back. In 1970, AR obtained Tom’s truck, a “newer one.” She also knew when the truck was in the garage.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the trucks were often in a state of disrepair. In the heat of August 1960, a truck’s generator broke while paving the Harbours Board property. On 1 May 1967, AR “got gassed in an old truck his own no go.” One month later, on 1 June 1967, AR “broke axel [sic] of truck then something else and then something else gave way. He’s awful tired tonite.” Two months later “another

40. Ida Martin’s diaries, 10 October 1962; 8 September 1974; 23 May 1947; 8–9 April 1958; 23 June 1971.

41. Ida Martin’s diaries 2, 7, 8 December 1964; 10 December 1946; 10 December 1947.

42. Huskins and Boudreau, “Getting By’ in Postwar Saint John,” 82.

43. *McAlpine’s Greater Saint John City Directory 1941–43*, NBMARL. No employment was listed for AR in the directories between 1944 and 1946.

44. This included his brothers-in-law, Russell Friars and James Friars, who formed their own trucking company in 1945 called Transportation General Freight Dry-Bulk Specialists. In 1960 they incorporated as R.E. and J.E. Friars Limited. *50 Years in the Making R.E. & J.E. Friars’ Limited* pamphlet (in authors’ possession, Friars’ family collection).

45. Ida Martin’s diaries, 27 September 1946; 28 May 1947; 11 September 1951.

46. Ida Martin’s diaries, 27 April 1959; 7 November 1967; 11 November 1970; 1–2 May 1946; 4 November 1974.



Ida and AR, circa 1940s

The Authors.

Spring” in the truck broke.<sup>47</sup> On 28 April 1975, a wheel came off the truck, rolled down the street onto “some man’s lawn, thru fence, etc.” In May, after a two week delay, he finally found a part that he needed. AR sometimes worked on his vehicles in the middle of the night. Barbara remembers: “I would get up in the night and there would be nobody in the house at 3:30 AM and look out the window and there was mom and dad working on the truck. [Mom] worked right along with him, holding the light so he could see. They made a good team.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Obligation and Irresponsibility: Ida’s Critique of Working-Class Masculinity**

ALTHOUGH IDA’S DIARIES functioned primarily as an account of what she did each day, she occasionally used the diaries to critique AR and his friends. It has been established that Ida was the family’s financial manager, which meant that she kept track of her husband’s paycheques, paid his ILA and truckers’ union dues, and renewed his truck licenses.<sup>49</sup> On 20 May 1966, Ida went to the ILA office in person to obtain AR’s “last cheque.” On 22 December 1967, she went to Stephens Construction “for our turkey” and also picked up Christmas bonuses in person. Historians have suggested that working-class wives did this to ensure that the money was not misspent. One thing is certain: Ida did not think AR was capable of doing *her* job: “AR took cheques to bank and got

47. Ida Martin’s diaries, 8 August 1960; 7 August 1967.

48. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2006.

49. Ida Martin’s diaries, 21 May 1947: “Allan’s license”; 19 Jan 1949: “payment on truck”; 4 April 1951: “stood in line for truck license”; 13 June 1963: “paid ILA dues”; 29 January 1968: “paid ILA and truckers dues.”

bawled up.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, he became confused about cashing or depositing them. Ida at times also questioned AR’s capabilities as a breadwinner. On 20 December 1967, she implied that AR was lazy and irresponsible: “back at 8 shed after *loafing* [emphasis added] for 12 days.” Such an allegation could wound a male breadwinner’s pride deeply, particularly if made in public.<sup>51</sup>

But what caused Ida the most consternation was AR’s membership in a homosocial network of associates who worked, played, and drank together. This tradition of companionate drinking had its roots in the “rural working-class masculinity” of early New Brunswick, where a boy’s “first drink” was a “male rite of passage.”<sup>52</sup> In a book of lore collected by local historian David Goss, Saint John resident Barbara Gilliland tells of the exploits of a young AR and her father Fred Haslum when they lived in Westfield. Their pranks, namely stealing apples, rhubarb, and pumpkins, and making daring getaways in the process, embody the elemental camaraderie and mischief of subsequent exploits.<sup>53</sup> AR’s workplace culture – working together on paving crews and longshoring gangs – also fostered strong connections between the men. Brian O’Neill has noted that “longshoremen derived much of the[ir] work satisfaction from being with their ‘buddies.’”<sup>54</sup> Dock workers of AR’s generation tended to live in waterfront communities like the lower west side of Saint John, in close proximity to the port. This allowed them to come home together at lunch time and for breaks during night shifts. AR would frequently walk home with a “bunch of men and they would horse around on the way.”<sup>55</sup> This “horsing around” was part of the repertoire of working-class masculinity, which included “swaggering, shouting, whistling, singing, swearing, belching, and farting in deliberately performative ways.”<sup>56</sup>

50. Ida Martin’s diary, 3 February 1959; 18 December 1972; 4 January 1980.

51. In the minutes of ILA Local 273, a Saint John dock worker defended his outburst on the waterfront by asserting that “he was mad because the Business Agent told him he was Hungry in front of the other men” and “tol[d] him he wanted all the work on the Water-front.” The Business Agent seems to have insinuated that the longshoreman was hungry because he was not a good provider, which was an affront to the worker’s masculinity. ILA Local 273, Executive Board Minutes, 7 September 1971, 2-F3-39, F28, NBMARL.

52. Deborah Stiles, “Martin Butler, Masculinity, and the North American Sole Leather Tanning Industry: 1871–1889,” *Labour/Le Travail* 42 (Fall 1998): 85–114; Stiles “The Gender and Class Dimensions of a Rural Childhood: Martin Butler in New Brunswick, 1857–1871,” *Acadiensis* xxxiii, 1 (Fall 2003): 82.

53. Barbara Gilliland, “Fred Haslum’s Swimming Exploits and Other Mischief Surprise Daughter,” in David Goss, ed., *West Side Stories: People, History and Local Lore from West Saint John* (Halifax: Nimbus, 2004), 31–34.

54. Babcock, “Saint John Longshoremen during the Rise of Canada’s Winter Port,” 22; O’Neill, *Work and Technological Change*, 27.

55. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2006.

56. Heron, “Boys Will Be Boys,” 7.

Sometimes these close bonds were compromised by the sectorialism of the waterfront, as workers were divided between wharves, piers, and sheds. Stevedoring firms in Saint John also “cultivated favourites,” which led to rivalries between the gangs. Indeed, in 1954 Ida records a “row” between “Allan’s and Charleton’s gangs.”<sup>57</sup> More often than not, however, socializing and drinking reinforced homosocial bonds. According to sociologist William Sonnenstuhl, “occupational drinking cultures present liquor as normative rather than deviant.” Dock workers (and other manual labourers) “earned reputations for on-and-off-the-job drinking.”<sup>58</sup> Several scholars have argued that working men like AR and his companions viewed their status as breadwinners as an entitlement to recreational time away from home.<sup>59</sup> Working-class men in Saint John did not construct their drinking culture around the iconic local tavern, as elsewhere, for the public consumption of alcohol in New Brunswick as late as the early 1960s was still illegal.<sup>60</sup> Thus drinking was relegated to the workplace and a number of unofficial private locations. In 1955, AR was drinking on a German boat in port. He also was “over to Pugsley’s [Wharf] but didn’t work but was ?.” In September 1958, he “worked but [was] LOADED.” On 4 March 1961, AR was “working but ? Late for supper.”<sup>61</sup> Like railroaders, AR’s time on the road as a trucker also led to episodes of conviviality. While in Campbellton, AR and his brother-in-law, who had accompanied him on the trip, telephoned Ida, both inebriated. Ida also notes: “Took ?? to Minto and drunk all day till 1/4 to 3 in am and landed back”; “Allan on a drunk all day out to Barnseville”; “Allan and \_\_\_\_\_ spreeing out at Purdy’s”; and “terrible bad-he and others to drive in.”<sup>62</sup> Ida’s opposition to AR’s drinking exploits meant that when he drank at home, he usually did so alone. On 17 March 1960, “Allan bad. Still sitting out front [during a snow storm] when I came home.” At other times he drank in the garage (“terrible in eve[ning]. Stayed in garage”) or in the truck (“Down in truck till 12pm”).<sup>63</sup>

57. Ida Martin’s diaries, 19 February 1954; Babcock, “Saint John Longshoremen during the Rise of Canada’s Winter Port,” 19–20.

58. As quoted in Taillon, “What We Want is Good, Sober Men,” 320–321.

59. Rosenfeld, “It Was a Hard Life,” 343–345; Heron, “Boys Will Be Boys,” 66–67; Heron, “The Boys and their Booze,” 411.

60. Greg Marquis, “Civilized Drinking: Alcohol and Society in New Brunswick, 1945–1975,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* II (2000): 173–203.

61. Ida Martin’s diaries, 10 March 1955; 18 February 1955; 10 September 1958. Ida occasionally used question marks to indicate that AR had been drinking. Huskins and Boudreau, “Daily Allowances,” 104–106.

62. Ida Martin’s diaries, 2 November 1957; 16 November 1951; 29 May 1946; 24 March 1948; 31 July 1959.

63. Ida Martin’s diaries, 19 October 1959; 16 May 1958; 9 September 1960.

According to Mark Rosenfeld, working-class wives like Ida became concerned when their husbands' drinking and carousing was "done to extremes."<sup>64</sup> However, in Ida's case, she was more sensitive due to her Baptist faith and her membership in the Women's Christian Temperance Union.<sup>65</sup> The following excerpts are from Ida's diaries:

5 June 1946: "not working today but went over and was drunk all day."

24 January 1948: "Didn't work. He and \_\_\_\_\_ to hockey and came back (soused)."

24 January 1951: "Allan lied – wasn't working but ?."

12 July 1951: "Allan [and] \_\_\_\_\_ on a bat? I walked floor till 1/4 to 4am."

15 December 1951: "didn't work but were bad."

20 December 1951: "Allan and \_\_\_\_\_ out being bad."

21 December 1951: "didn't work partying til 3am."

18 February 1952: no port work due to a storm, but "Allan and \_\_\_\_\_ left at noon and returned at 6am. I walked the floor all night."

28 March 1952: "with \_\_\_\_ boozing til 2am".

4 April 1953: "Allan away with \_\_\_\_\_ and ????"

24 June 1953: "went to ui and boozing the rest of the day."

16 April 1956: "Allan ? Who with ? Till 2am."

27 March 1957: "Allan terrible bad. Got a roast of meat somewhere? I don't know where."

22 December 1958: AR "worked ½ day got ? And got [Christmas] tree. I don't know who with."

5 April 1960: "Allan off all day so I guess he watch TV and ?."

This series of blunt and minimalist phrases is an example of what scholars call "intensive writing," wherein each word carries a "large burden of information."<sup>66</sup> Decoding these entries suggests that drinking often occurred during periods of under or unemployment, or when applying for unemployment insurance. Craig Heron posits that turn-of-the-century workers may have looked forward to "bouts of joblessness," for they provided more opportunities for "male companionship."<sup>67</sup> Indeed, in most of these entries, AR is drinking with someone else, often identified by a blank space in the diaries. Perhaps Ida thought that it was inappropriate to include the proper names of her husband's friends in her diaries. Alternatively, she may have been so angry with AR's associates that she could not bring herself to mention them by name.

64. Rosenfeld, "It Was a Hard Life," 345.

65. Huskins and Boudreau, "Daily Allowances," 97.

66. As quoted in Huskins and Boudreau, "Daily Allowances," 94.

67. Heron, "Boys Will Be Boys," 41.



In another entry she refers to one of AR's friends as "2 face," no doubt because she saw him as duplicitous.<sup>68</sup> Ida also accused AR of deception: he "lied – wasn't working but ?" It is clear from this entry that Ida uses the question mark to signify that she does not know the details of her husband's whereabouts. Like many working-class wives, she had "some knowledge of [her] husband's recreation away from home, though not necessarily the details."<sup>69</sup>

Ida also used code words in her diaries to refer to AR's binges. Three times in the entries above, Ida uses the word "bad": either AR is bad or he is "being bad." In Ida's vocabulary, this usually means that AR has been drinking.<sup>70</sup> In the 12 July 1951 entry, she describes AR and his companions as being "on a bat"; other colloquial phrases include being "tipsy," "caned to the eyes," and "soused." On one particularly bad day he was "full, full, full, disgusting," and on a better day "a little? but not too much."

Why did Ida record AR's recreational activities so meticulously? An obvious reason is that she worried about him. The above entries clearly indicate that AR was frequently out all day and night, into the early morning, while Ida paced the floor. Where was he? What was he doing? Most worrisome for Ida was the extent to which drinking led to "risky activities."<sup>71</sup> On 23 September 1953, AR and a friend left for Fredericton, but were "[a]rrested and [j]ailed that nite," probably for driving under the influence, and she bailed them out of jail the next morning. This episode clearly upset Ida: "I was sick all day." The following year "Allan and \_\_\_\_\_ boozing all day. Allan missed work. They hit a car coming over from town." In 1960, "Allan smashed Truck Up by Cath[olic] Ch[urch] He's ???." <sup>72</sup> AR's risk-taking also occurred at the work place:

... every Friday [at Stephens] he would have a case of beer in the cab with him and he couldn't hold his liquor, so he would be pie eyed in mid afternoon. Then he would show off and do stupid things. They had so much free time as there might be 4 trucks waiting in line to receive the hot asphalt – go dump it and be back in line again. So ... he enjoyed that job. There was no cruise control in those days, so he used to take a stick and press it down on the gas and wedge it under the dash, put his feet up on the dash and steer. The guys called him a crazy bugger! But they loved him!<sup>73</sup>

Risk-taking while driving was an expression of working-class masculinity, but Ida and Barbara did not appreciate AR's driving skills in the same way: "Allan took fill up to Worden's Barb and I went too (we were plenty scared???)"<sup>74</sup> AR

68. Huskins and Boudreau, "Daily Allowances," 100.

69. Rosenfeld, "It Was a Hard Life," 345.

70. Huskins and Boudreau, "Daily Allowances," 100.

71. Marian Binkley, *Set Adrift: Fishing Families* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 127.

72. Ida Martin's diaries, 3 February 1954; 6 October 1960.

73. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 8 January 2005.

74. Ida Martin's diaries, 2 October 1948.

also told stories about how some of the longshoremen he worked with at the port would be “half lit” while driving the jacklifts, “taking all kinds of chances and horsing around.”<sup>75</sup>

Working-class wives like Ida also became concerned when such behaviour adversely affected the family.<sup>76</sup> Like the fishermen’s wives studied by Marian Binkley,<sup>77</sup> Ida resented AR’s friends for taking him away from his family. Ida spent many nights alone: “I was alone all even[ing]. Allan out spreeing till 1 oclock.”<sup>78</sup> One of Ida’s most cutting comments in this vein was on 22 May 1947: “Daddy was away on a spree.” Here she is clearly critical of AR’s failure to spend more time with his daughter. Instead, wife and daughter spent time with their own sets of acquaintances: on 20 February 1946, while AR was “drunk all day” and “[d]idn’t come home till 3 am,” Ida “[w]ent to prayer m[ee]ting[.]” On another occasion when AR “met 2 face and was boozing all afternoon and nite,” Ida “went to Milly’s [her sister-in-law]” and Barbara to a “Weanie roast.” Furthermore, AR’s drinking companions made him neglect his domestic responsibilities: “\_\_\_\_\_ came and took Allan from his work at the house, loaded scales on truck and drank from then til 12pm.”<sup>79</sup> While AR’s sprees may have been viewed as foolhardy revelry by his co-workers and friends, they were more than that for Ida: they were threats to the stability of the family economy and embarrassing for her.

Four of the entries above occurred around Christmas time; AR’s recreational activities frequently interfered with the family’s seasonal festivities. On 26 December 1951, “Allan [was] bad all day and finally hit LaBlanc[s] car and broke it. \_\_\_\_\_ and ? Cop. Allan here to get details.” According to Ida, “there [they are] all in dog house.” On Christmas Eve 1955, AR was “terrible all after and evening got only bush for a tree.” According to Barbara:

... it would be Dad that would get the tree and he would go down some old back road and get out on someone’s farm and cut it down, and then he cut a whole bunch of spare branches so he could bore holes in the tree and insert new branches in the bare spots ... sometimes he cut limbs from another kind of tree to fit in these holes. Then he would string twine from branch to branch to keep them stable. They were the absolutely worst looking thing you ever saw in your life. One day Butchie [family friend] went upstairs and when he saw it he went into gales of laughter and couldn’t stop ... especially with it in the bow window and the light shining in through showing up all the string, different colours, etc. Dad would be half-shot on the tree hunting expedition and wouldn’t know nor care what it looked like.<sup>80</sup>

75. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2006.

76. Rosenfeld, “It Was a Hard Life,” 345.

77. Binkley, *Set Adrift*, 123.

78. Ida Martin’s diaries, 11 March 1951.

79. Ida Martin’s diaries, 30 May 1952; 15 November 1951.

80. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 8 April 2004.

This type of behaviour often led to public embarrassment for Ida. On 30 November 1956, she wrote in her diary of meeting AR on the bus with his “[f]ly open etc etc.” More serious was the episode when one of AR’s friends brought him home drunk: “terrible terrible. Robt [Roberston, a neighbour] here. YPF [young’s people’s church group] was vacated down to Mac’s instead [downstairs flat].”<sup>81</sup>

It is obvious that the “profoundly contradictory tendencies in working-class masculinity – between self-indulgent irresponsibility and deeply ingrained commitments to collective solidarity owed to family and workmates” – still had relevance in the postwar period.<sup>82</sup> According to family tradition, AR did not drink as much after his daughter’s marriage in 1960, realizing that he was aging and had missed out on much of his family’s milestones. The diaries bear this out. Instead of imbibing, Ida records him as turning to household chores. In 1964, he did not secure work at Stephens, so he “worked at car fenders,” put “rain coating” on the “woodshed etc.,” and painted the front of the house. In January 1965 he did not get on at the port, so he repaired the gas boiler. In August, he fixed a hole in the roof and “renewed” the brakes on the “Chevy.”<sup>83</sup> He even attended church in his later years, but not the same church as Ida.<sup>84</sup>

### Radical Masculinity on the Waterfront: Contested Definitions of Manhood

IDA USED HER DIARIES to record key pieces of information about ILA Local 273. This Local was founded in 1911, when competing waterfront unions in Saint John merged and voted to affiliate with the American-based International Longshoremen’s Association.<sup>85</sup> Ida records meetings and elections in her diaries. On 10 March 1964, AR worked at the ILA election, came home at 4am, and then worked all day and half of the night. On 17 March he was back to the polls for a recount. Four years later AR “went over to vote for ILA Pres,” and in 1970 he “work[ed] til noon at 3 shed then an Election of Officers for ILA. All men voted back in office. Ronnie Smith President.”<sup>86</sup>

81. Ida Martin’s diaries, 17 March 1961.

82. Heron, “Boys Will Be Boys,” 68.

83. Ida Martin’s diaries, 13 May 1964; 20 May 1964; 12 September 1964; 12 January 1965; 9 August 1965.

84. AR attended Calvary Pentecostal Church and Ida continued to attend Hillcrest Baptist Church.

85. Babcock, “Saint John Longshoremen during the Rise of Canada’s Winter, Port, 1895–1922,” 16–32; *History of Saint John Labor Unions* (Saint John: Saint John Trades and Labor Council and Subordinate Unions, 1929), 15–46, HIL.

86. Ida Martin’s diaries, 11 March 1968; 9 March 1970.



### Loading Cars

Image courtesy of Heritage Resources, Saint John.

Ida also chronicled incidents of unrest initiated by the longshoremen. An example of this can be found on 12 February 1965: “A Riot started at the waterfront. No one working all day,” and then on 13 February: “A RIOT at the waterfront for rights of parking. No 1 work all day.” On 12 February, approximately 1000 longshoremen and 500 CPR truckers walked off the job to protest the loss of their usual parking lots, which were filled with new cars assembled for export. Saint John had turned to foreign and Canadian-made automobiles as one of its primary cargoes and had thus expanded storage facilities. Therefore, the cars received preferential treatment as cargo.<sup>87</sup> The dock workers were frustrated by the attitude of port managers like J.R. Mitchell of Halifax, who noted that “the cargo gets preference.” Saint John longshoremen also complained that the parking lots were the last to be ploughed, and if they parked elsewhere they were ticketed. Union executives made it clear throughout this dispute that they did not condone the walk-off and they tried to convince the men to return to work.<sup>88</sup> The dispute was eventually settled

87. “Saint John...On the Move: ‘A City in Transition,’” *Atlantic Advocate* (February 1972): 20. For a photograph of the automobile exports parked at the port, see *National Harbours Board Bulletin*, 16 (March 1965), HIL-GOV.

88. S.E. Truman, Unemployment Insurance Commission, to Economics and Research Branch,

on 15 February when the National Harbours Board and Local 273 agreed to study proposals for extra parking areas, as well as plans to expedite snow removal and to reduce fines for illegal parking.<sup>89</sup>

Five years later, on 12 February 1970, Ida noted that “Allan worked till dinner then came the WALKOUT.” This time the issue was a new payroll system. Instead of obtaining their pay from local stevedoring firms, as had been the custom, the cheques were now issued by a centralized computer network in Montréal. The men argued that there were frequent delays in receiving their pay, and if the cheques were not picked up in time, they were sent back to Montréal to be reissued the following week. This grievance was aggravated by the workers’ “branch plant relationship to Montreal.” According to Edgar Dosman, who interviewed Local 273 members in the 1970s, “memories of ‘domination’ by Montreal when Saint John and Halifax were primarily winter ports remain[ed] vivid.”<sup>90</sup> The longshoremen of Saint John had been severely impacted by the rationalization of the shipping industry. In 1903, the Shipping Federation of Canada was created by Act of Parliament, comprised of “deep sea and coastal shipowners, agents, charterers, and operators” which provided services to and from eastern Canadian, St. Lawrence River, Great Lakes, and Arctic ports. The Shipping Federation negotiated collective agreements with workers in Saint John, Montréal, Québec, Trois-Rivières, Halifax, Toronto, and Hamilton. Beginning in 1968, the consortium Maritime Employers Association (MEA), represented shipping agents in these ports. Three Atlantic directors sat on the MEA, but the head offices were in Montréal, so the MEA was “branded” as an “outsider” by local workers.<sup>91</sup> This sense of regional alienation was accentuated during the payroll dispute by the employer sending workers’ cheques to St. John’s, Newfoundland instead of to Saint John, New Brunswick.<sup>92</sup> As Ida noted in her diary, her husband and his work mates were “MAD ABOUT THE WAY OF BEING PAID.” At a union meeting to discuss the issue, several members were fined by the local for expressing their anger too vociferously, and for drunk and disorderly conduct.

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Department of Labour, Ottawa, 15 February 1965, in Labour Canada, Strike and Lockout Files, RG 27, Vol 3106, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC).

89. Truman to Economics and Research Branch, Department of Labour, Ottawa, 15 February 1965, in Labour Canada RG 27, Vol 3106, LAC; *Evening Times Globe* 12–13, 15 February 1965 and 1 March 1965; *St. Thomas T-Journal*, 15 February 1965, *Sudbury Star*, 15 February 1965, and *St. John Telegraph Journal* 13 February 1965 in Labour Canada, Strike and Lockout Files, RG 27, Vol. 3106, LAC; *Labour Gazette* LXV, 4 (April 1965), 389, HIL.

90. Dosman, *Labour Management Relations on the Saint John Waterfront*, 10, 44.

91. Pathy, *Waterfront Blues*, 4; Breen, *Along the Shore*, 40; Dosman, *Labour Management Relations on the Saint John Waterfront*, 3.

92. *Evening Times Globe* 11 February 1970. For a discussion of this centralized computer dispatch system, see John Bellamy Foster, “On the Waterfront: Longshoring in Canada,” in Craig Heron & Robert Story, eds., *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), 281.

These two incidents illustrate the propensity for longshoremen to engage in forms of direct action such as refusing to work, walking out, and swearing and shouting. Indeed, the longshoremen of Saint John were known as men who “responded with actions not words.” In that sense they emulated the radical manhood of labour activists like Robert Gosden, who once said that “Talk was cheap. What mattered was action.” Even writers and intellectuals who believed in “talk,” such as Maritime socialist Colin McKay, did not accept lethargy or insouciance. As Ian McKay remarked in an open letter to Colin McKay: “You were marginalized, but you did not take it lying down: you argued with the world, you mobilized counter-opinions, you treated with a scoffing irony the supposedly authoritative view points of the bourgeoisie and its numerous intellectual allies.”<sup>93</sup> Since at least the late 19th century, industry has partnered with conservative unions like the ILA to contain this form of activism and replace it with a more acceptable and temperate form of manhood.<sup>94</sup>

The waterfront and union hall were arenas for the negotiation of “contending definitions of what it mean[t] to be a man.”<sup>95</sup> One prominent area of contestation was drunk and disorderly behaviour. The records of unions like the ILA and the Railroad Brotherhoods contain lists of members who were “reprimanded, suspended and expelled” for excessive drinking and engaging in raucous behaviour.<sup>96</sup> Throughout the early 20th century, Local 273 regularly disciplined their members for such transgressions as “fighting, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and breaking their hall’s windows and furniture (and even its stove on one occasion).”<sup>97</sup> In the 1939 *By-Laws of Local No. 273*, the motto was “Sobriety, Truth, Justice, and Morality.”<sup>98</sup> It is doubtful that the union’s campaign to produce abstemious men was successful in the long run, for officials continued to battle inebriation and disorderly conduct well into the 1960s and 70s. As illustrated previously, AR had been drinking at the port, although he was never formally reprimanded for being drunk and disorderly.

The union leadership of Local 273 also insisted that the men treat their union officers with more respect and decorum. During the payroll incident, President Ronnie Smith tried to set the tone at one of the meetings by fining

93. Ian McKay, “Socialist Vision and the Realm of Freedom: An Open Letter to Colin McKay,” in *For a Working-Class Culture in Canada: A Selection of Colin McKay’s Writings on Sociology and Political Economy, 1897–1939* (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1996), 502.

94. Taillon, “What We Want is Good, Sober Men”; Wood, “The Paralysis of the Labor Movement,” 70.

95. Shor, “‘Verile Syndicalism’ in Comparative Perspective,” 66.

96. Taillon, “What We Want is Good, Sober Men,” 330.

97. Babcock, “Saint John’s Longshoremen during the Rise of Canada’s Winter Port,” 23.

98. *By-Laws of Local No. 273 General Longshore Workers of Saint John New Brunswick Adopted and Effective May 1 1939*, F85-1 F20, NBMARL.

himself \$10.00 for swearing.<sup>99</sup> Smith also filed a complaint against Brother Kenneth Thibodeau for giving him a “hard time” at the wharf:

He tried to explain to Brother Thibodeau about the central pay system. But Brother Thibodeau did not let him explain, he just kept hollering louder, and told him he should have been at the pay centre when the trouble was going on trying to get their pay. The President stated he was at a meeting at the time and he told the Business Agent to call him if he was needed. He is charging Brother Kenneth Thibodeau with maligning him as he ... felt he should not be treated as such.<sup>100</sup>

This insistence on formalism and deference did not sit well with many of the dock workers in Saint John, who were becoming disenchanted with the ILA due to its conservative tendencies, as well as allegations of corruption and connections to organized crime.<sup>101</sup> Workers more generally felt that their unions were becoming “less attentive to needs at the local level, thus weakening grass-roots connections and stifling spontaneous worker self-activity.”<sup>102</sup> Thus it is not surprising that longshoremen like Thibodeau refused to capitulate during the payroll incident. He explained to the Union that “he had a hard time getting his pay at the Data centre, and thought that the President should have been the[re] to look after this.”<sup>103</sup> Local labour activist James Orr explained that Saint John longshoremen had always seen themselves as “partners on the waterfront;” now they were being reduced to the status of union members and employees.<sup>104</sup> As a result, longshoremen, including AR, clung to direct action and the “rough justice of casualism.”<sup>105</sup>

## The Body and Working-Class Masculinity

THE “BODY” HAS BEEN A CENTRAL component of working-class masculinity since at least the 19th century. Manual labourers require physical strength and stamina to do their jobs, and these qualities have subsequently been adopted as emblems of their manhood. As Thomas Dunk notes: “Workers prove their

99. ILA Local 273, Executive Board Minutes, 27 January 1970, 2-F1-6, NBMARL.

100. ILA Local 273, Executive Board Minutes, 27 January 1970, 2-F1-6, NBMARL.

101. Larrowe, *Shape-Up and Hiring Hall*, 19–41. Colin J. Davis “‘All I Got’s a Hook’: New York Longshoremen and the 1948 Dock Strike”, in Winslow, *Waterfront Workers*, 131–154. Labour priests often drew attention to this corruption. See Davis “Launch Out Into The Deep and Let Down Your Nets.”

102. Peter S. McInnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada, 1943–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 6.

103. ILA Local 273, Executive Board Minutes, 27 January 1970, ILA Box 2-F1-6, NBMARL.

104. Ryan Stairs, “The Making of a Labour Activist: James W. Orr, Saint John, New Brunswick, 1936–2009,” MA thesis, University of New Brunswick, 2014, 51. Also see Stairs’ biography of Jimmy Orr at *Frank & Ella Hatheway Labour Exhibit Centre* website: <http://www.wfhathewaylabourexcibitcentre.ca/labour-history/lives-lived-jimmy-orr/>.

105. Babcock, “Saint John’s Longshoremen during the Rise of Canada’s Winter Port,” 45.

worth as men by their ability to withstand dirt, noise, danger, and boredom. Working conditions are 'read' as a challenge to masculinity, rather than as an expression of the exploitation of capitalist relations of production."<sup>106</sup> Similarly, in her study of gold miners in the Porcupine camp near Timmons, Ontario, Nancy Forestell suggests that workplace accidents and injuries reverberated beyond the worksite to the home, the working-class family economy, and the community.<sup>107</sup> Ida's diaries record the arduous working conditions of longshoring, as well as the toll that they took on AR's body. She also chronicles the challenges of this hard life for aging port workers, like AR, and their families.

Although waterfront work was "complex and variegated," depending on whether one was a pier man, a deck man, a hold man, a winch man, a hatch handler, a trucker, or a freight handler, all of the work was physically demanding.<sup>108</sup> Sometimes AR worked the crane or drove the jack lift.<sup>109</sup> Most of the time, however, he was a hold man, below decks, loading and unloading cargo. Ida records AR unloading such cargo as tea, coal, sulphur, fertilizer, grain, pulp, bananas, sugar, and flour. The banana stocks that Saint John longshoremen unloaded weighed approximately 250 lbs each and they carried 18–20 stocks an hour. The fertilizer and raw sugar often hardened and thus the dock workers had to use picks and shovels to unload it. The flour bags weighed 90–240 lbs each and the men had to carry them while walking on top of the cargo.<sup>110</sup> Often Ida could tell what her husband had unloaded that day by the state of his clothing: in March 1953 she washed his work clothes which were covered with flour.<sup>111</sup> Longshoremen also had to endure the "intense cold on the docks. Sometimes the guys' faces would freeze because of the freezing wind and weather, so they had to dress according[ly]."<sup>112</sup> The *Evening Times Globe* acknowledged the brutal working conditions faced by dock workers in a 1957 photo caption: "Cold Spell Doesn't Stop Port Workers." The *Globe* was clearly appreciative because the port of Saint John was recovering from a 91-day CPR strike. The caption concluded with further proof of the longshoremen's physical strength: "Bags [in the photo] are raw sugar and weigh 260 lbs each."<sup>113</sup>

The waterfront remained a dangerous work environment well into the postwar period. Although the state and the ILA instituted improved safety

106. Dunk, *It's a Working Man's Town*, 97.

107. Forestell, "And I feel Like I'm Dying from Mining for Gold," 80.

108. Babcock, "Saint John Longshoremen during the Rise of Canada's Winter Port," 18.

109. Ida Martin's diaries, 29 January 1952; 6 January 1969.

110. Breen, *Along the Shore*, 32–33.

111. Ida Martin's diaries, 14 March 1953.

112. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2006. For another description of the unloading of grain, see Breen, *Along the Shore*, 34.

113. *Evening Times Globe*, 14 January 1957.



**ILA Local 273 Monument**  
Image courtesy of Heritage  
Resources, Saint John.



standards, many accidents and injuries continued on a regular basis, particularly as the labour force aged.<sup>114</sup> Like mining, longshoring remained a dangerous occupation.<sup>115</sup> Ida kept a running tally of the men that she knew who were hurt or killed at the port: those who were hurt included her brother Gars, AR's friend Delbert Carr (who was injured on his "last load"), Ottis McCallum, Ronnie Smith, Roy Ferris, and Alex Baird (who "got foot hurt at PORT").<sup>116</sup> On 17 March 1961, she noted that "A man fell down the hatch & hurt." Those who were killed included Edison Maxwell (who died in the "hold of ship at 13 shed"), James Le Clair from South Bay, Irvine Moore, and Ken

114. International Labour Conference, *Partial Revision of the Conventions concerning the Protection Against Accidents of Workers Employed in Loading or Unloading Ships*, Sixteenth Session (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1932); Breen, *Along the Shore*, 39; Dosman, *Labour Management Relations on the Saint John Waterfront*, 56.

115. Forestell, "And I feel Like I'm Dying from Mining for Gold," 81.

116. Ida Martin's diaries 14 January 1960; 7 November 1951; 3 November 1955; 29 January 1960; 25 March 1960; 14 March 1969.



### Ship Holmside

Image courtesy of Heritage Resources, Saint John.

Middleton. Ida helped the Middleton family by cooking for them and attending the funeral.<sup>117</sup>

AR was not immune to such dangers. He and a fellow worker were nearly buried alive in a grain hatch at the port. AR was

one of the ones they would put in the hold of the ship and start the grain coming down and he would have to shovel as fast as he could not to get buried in it. He had a helper down there usually, but one day the helper was drunk, and fell down and the grain covered him, and dad was clawing to get him up and at the same time more was coming in. It was scary.<sup>118</sup>

117. Ida Martin's diaries, 12 March 1953; 28 November 1959; 14 February 1960; 26 February 1960; 10 January, 13 January, 16 January 1952. See obituary for Kenneth Middleton in *Evening Times Globe*, 14 January 1952; Middleton also appears in the records of Brenan's Funeral Home, MC 793, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (hereafter PANB). For newspaper stories on the deaths of Edward LeBreton, Addison L. Maxwell, James E. LeClair, and Irvine E. Moore, see *Evening Times Globe*, 12 March 1953, 30 November 1959, 15 February 1960, and 26 February 1960. Also see information for Irvine E. Moore in Brenan's Funeral Home records, PANB. We are indebted to Harold Wright for sharing his research on these longshoremen. The names of the longshoremen who were killed on the job appear on the longshoremen's monument erected at Pugsley Wharf in 2003 by Local 273. For information on this monument, see <http://wfhatthewaylabourexhibitcentre.ca/photo-galleries> and David Frank and Nicole Lang, *Labour Landmarks in New Brunswick | Lieux historiques ouvriers au Nouveau-Brunswick* (St John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2010).

118. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 8 January 2005.

AR was injured several times, but Ida did not always specify the injury: on 27 December 1946, "Allan hurt at 3 in afternoon & taken to Hosp[ital]. Fred [Haslum] & I went to see him." Shortly thereafter in January 1947 he hurt his leg and was out for nearly a month. This may have been the accident described by Barbara, when her father was caught between two jack lifts.<sup>119</sup> Only 25 days after returning to work, "Allan got his head hurt with a flying gurney."<sup>120</sup> On 27 April 1948 "Allan worked on flour today. Skinned his shoulder." On 3 June 1952 AR was injured while working at Long Wharf and two days later, according to Dr. Baird's diagnosis, "Ribs not broke, mus[cle] pulled away." Later that year, while "out at Long W[harf] with Fred's gang," he "hurt his knee." AR was again forced to stay home for several weeks in the winter of 1955–56 due to a cracked foot bone.<sup>121</sup> AR "got his leg hurt a bit" in 1960, his shoulder in 1961, and his little toe in 1969.<sup>122</sup> Then on 26 March 1970, while working at No. 9 shed, AR hurt his back again: "A sling of lumber hit him a glancing blow." Not surprisingly, AR's body was covered with bumps and bruises, and gouges from his longshoreman's hook.<sup>123</sup>

Dock workers were also subjected to health hazards such as inhaling diesel fumes or being contaminated by dangerous cargoes such as cyanide.<sup>124</sup> Grain and flour were detrimental to AR and his companions because "everything was loose and the breathing was bad. They ... tied handkerchiefs around their nose and mouth, and dad would wheeze for days after."<sup>125</sup> After working with grain shipments, "everything he wore was full of grain dust and kernels, right into the creases of his skin. His face would be yellow and just two eyes looking out at you.... When he would be home at 11–12, he would dread to go back and face it again [at] 4AM."<sup>126</sup>

AR suffered from general aches and pains due to the continuous physical exertion of port labour. By the early 1960s his feet were becoming "awful sore" and he had to be fitted with arch supports.<sup>127</sup> Yet because physical weakness was a "visible sign of failure" according to the tenets of working-class masculinity,

119. Ida Martin's diaries, 7 January 1947; back at work: 4 February 1947; Barbara Huskins, emails to authors, 8 January 2005, 18 May 2006.

120. Ida Martin's diaries, 29 February 1947.

121. Ida Martin's diaries, 18 September 1952; 29–30 December 1955, back at work: 26 January 1956.

122. Ida Martin's diaries, 29 February 1960; 28 December 1961; 5 April 1969.

123. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 8 January 2005.

124. Breen, *Along the Shore*, 37–39.

125. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 8 January 2005.

126. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2005.

127. Ida Martin's diaries, 19 December 1961; 27 December 1965.

and a “threat to working and breadwinning” for aging labourers,<sup>128</sup> he tried to mask the symptoms and the cause. His working companions later told Barbara that he would say to them on the way home from work: “I’m just going to stop a minute here and enjoy the stars out tonight ... they are so bright and beautiful ... whatever excuse he could manufacture so they would go on ahead and he could stop and then crawl at his own pace. As time went on, he would take a lunch on this shift” so that he would not have to walk home.<sup>129</sup> This reveals the paradox of dangerous work: it both reinforces rugged masculinity as well as undermines it, especially for those who take “pride in and dr[a]w social prestige from the physical strength and agility attached to their work as well as their role as family provider.”<sup>130</sup> As a result, dock workers generally tended to “carry on work at an age when it constitutes an excessive effort for them.”<sup>131</sup>

In a newspaper advertisement promoting the port of Saint John in 1952, the port is anthropomorphized as a robust young male rising above the wharves and elevators. This imagery is similar to the tribute advertisements sponsored by employers during Labour Day festivities in the 19th and 20th centuries, wherein the worker is portrayed as “white ... dignified, powerful, and proud.” Organized labour also “celebrated the muscular young man” in advertisements and cartoons.<sup>132</sup> The picture as well as the subheading for this advertisement draws a connection between the vitality of youth, the hopes for postwar peace and prosperity, and Saint John’s potential as a modern industrial centre: “Saint John offers All Modern Facilities for the Exchange of Products between Canada and All Countries of the Peace-Loving World.” Like the Labour Day tributes, moreover, Mr. Port City is a “solitary figure,” with no evident class solidarities or union affiliation,<sup>133</sup> despite the contentious history of labour activism in Saint John.

Regardless of his youthful vigour, Mr. Port City was not representative of the waterfront workforce. By the 1960s, port boosters turned from images of youth to the productivity and reliability of their mature labour force. In a promotional pamphlet, the National Harbours Board asserted that the Saint John port had a “longstanding reputation for productivity,” which was based largely on “good management-labour relations. Port councils and advisory boards continuously seek out new methods to improve their performance. Ask what

128. Heron, “Boys Will Be Boys,” 7; Wood, “The Paralysis of the Labor Movement,” 91.

129. Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2006.

130. Forestell, “And I Feel Like I’m Dying from Mining for Gold,” 87.

131. Evans, *Technical and Social Changes in the World’s Ports*, 183.

132. Craig Heron & Steve Penfold, *The Workers’ Festival: A History of Labour Day in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 91–105; Wood, *Technical and Social Changes in the World’s Ports*, 97; Also see Forestell, “And I Feel Like I’m Dying from Mining for Gold,” 77–78.

133. Heron & Penfold, *The Workers’ Festival*, 96.

we can do for you?" In the modern era of the postwar labour compromise, employers were more willing to concede workers' contributions to productivity: "Saint John's port work force has a reputation – known to all – for the day-to-day production."<sup>134</sup> This was a manifestation of the "modernist project" with its emphasis on efficiency and productivity. While it is not surprising that the NHB and the MEA pushed for "more flexibility and productivity,"<sup>135</sup> it is interesting to see the longshoremen themselves embrace the vocabulary of manly modernism. In the early 1960s, in order to ensure their survival in the face of mechanization, longshoremen engaged in a public relations campaign to show that they were still handling cargo efficiently: for example, in 1962, it was reported that Saint John dock workers established "what is considered a record for fast loading. In seventeen hours they put 336,933 bushels of wheat aboard the vessel *Irish Spruce* from Dublin. Two miles of conveyor belts were used." They would continue to "break records" in grain handling and "container movement" throughout this period.<sup>136</sup> How were aging workers like AR able to keep up in this era of increasing modernization? Given their age, they probably did not operate the Munck cranes, nor would they have been involved in roll on/roll off operations.<sup>137</sup> Instead aging workers continued to handle much of the "break-bulk" cargo in the 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, "not all commodities were suitable for containerization," so many longshoremen like AR still performed manual labour as much as they always had.<sup>138</sup> Although total cargo increased over the years, "container traffic" remained low: liquid bulk (petroleum), dry bulk, and forest products dominated, cargoes that required traditional loading/unloading methods.<sup>139</sup>

During the celebration of "Port Days" in Saint John in 1970, several stories appeared in the local press praising the technological transformations at the port. Saint John, it would seem, was undergoing a process of mechanomorphosis. The only overt suggestion that workers might be part of this process was a photograph of a robust yet older longshoreman hauling cargo on his back. Juxtaposed with this image of traditional working-class masculinity was the caption: "An efficient up-to-date labour force second-to-none in any port is one of the Port of Saint John's biggest assets.... Vincent (Baldy) Kane is shown here

134. *Ship...Via Saint John New Brunswick...The Port That Puts Performance First!* (Ottawa: National Harbours Board, nd) HIL-GOV.

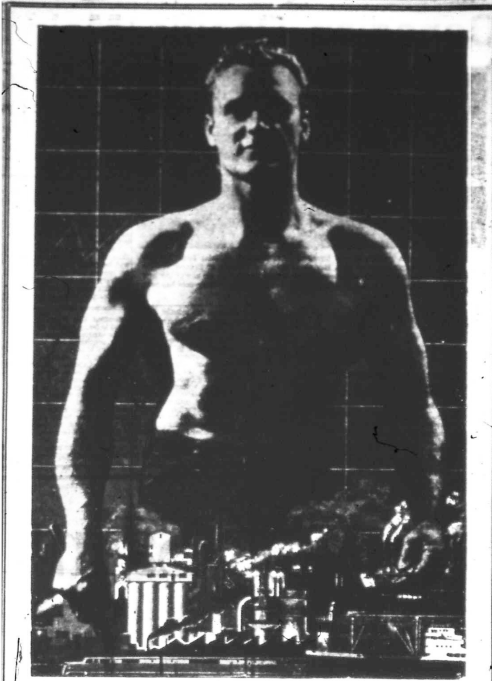
135. Stairs, "The Making of a Labour Activist," 58.

136. Bill Lovatt, "The Port of Saint John," *Atlantic Advocate* 53, 7 (March 1963): 17; Breen, *Along the Shore*, 40, 44.

137. For some of the new tools and technologies, see Breen, *Along the Shore*, 46–47; Pathy, *Waterfront Blues*, 15; Foster, "On the Waterfront," 291–292.

138. Breen, *Along the Shore*, 23.

139. Greg Marquis, "Rethinking the Militant 70s: Labour-Business Cooperation in Saint John, New Brunswick," paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association, University of Western Ontario, 30 May–1 June 2005, 14.



Mr. Port City

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hefting a sack of seed potatoes.”<sup>140</sup> This underscores the transitional nature of the 1960s and 1970s at the port. AR’s aging cohort, while dominant for much of the 20th century, would increasingly find themselves on the outside looking in at the changes underway in Saint John.

## Postscript

IDA MARTIN’S DIARIES REVEAL that older forms of working-class masculinity persisted into the postwar period in Saint John, including participation in a homosocial recreational culture; risk-taking behaviour; and a commitment to direct action as a form of labour unrest. This can be attributed to the persistence of the relations of production which created and sustained such masculinities. Modernization was uneven on Saint John’s waterfront; aging longshoremen like AR continued to load and unload cargo alongside the emergence of containerization and other forms of technological innovation. AR retired from the port in 1971, the same year that the MEA arrived in town. This alliance of eighteen employers seemed bent on “drastically alter[ing] the traditional way of doing things” on the waterfront, including transforming the “amorphous ILA” into a “structured and flexible industrial-type workforce” or “bwf” (basic work force). James Orr remembers the MEA as “hatchet men” who were intent on “hammering us into the ground.”<sup>141</sup> This led to unrest on the waterfront in the mid-1970s, including the first “complete shutdown of the port” in 60 years in 1974 and participation in the “Saint John General Strike” in 1976, when workers took to the streets to protest wage controls imposed by the federal government.<sup>142</sup> It is clear that longshoremen would continue to express their radical manhood through direct action.

Ida’s diaries also remind us that the recreational and risk-taking behaviours associated with working-class masculinity had very real and often negative consequences for families, and therefore should not be romanticized. Ida spent many nights worrying about her husband, and about the implications that his behaviour would have on the family economy and on her family generally. Moreover, the diaries document the deleterious impacts that hard and dangerous labour had on the bodies of aging workers like AR. AR finally filed for his port pension at the age of 67. His daughter thinks that he was “just

140. Special Supplement of *Telegraph Journal* and *Evening Times Globe*, 16 February 1970.

141. Stairs, “The Making of a Labour Activist,” 49–52; Foster, “On the Waterfront,” 296; Dosman, *Labour Management Relations on the Saint John Waterfront*, 22. The bwf was a “flexible and interchangeable’ work force, devoid of any gang structure” and not subject to the same work allocation rules as other longshoremen. Foster, “On the Waterfront,” 295.

142. George Vair, *The Struggle Against Wage Controls: The Saint John Story, 1975–1976* (St John’s: The Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2006); Raymond Léger, “October 14, 1976 – The Saint John General Strike,” *Frank & Ella Hatheway Labour Exhibit Centre*, accessed 28 December 2015, <http://www.wfhatthewaylabourexcitecentre.ca/labour-history/october-14-1976-the-saint-john-general-strike/>.

wore out,"<sup>143</sup> which reinforces Heron's argument that "[w]orking-class men literally wore themselves out in pursuit of their masculinity."<sup>144</sup> But AR continued to work at Stephens Construction and Paving. He eventually suffered a heart attack in 1973, which kept him at home until May 1974.<sup>145</sup> AR also continued to endure a series of accidents and other health issues. In the fall of 1974, "Allan fell off his truck & hit his side on running Board broke 3 ribs & top of femur. He had a terrible night." But he was back at work within 26 days.<sup>146</sup> On 4 November 1974, AR took his truck to get the clutch repaired and had a difficult time walking to the car: he was "all in." Stephens thereafter assigned him tasks with fewer physical demands. This could be interpreted as a tactic to "get the old m[a]n out of the way,"<sup>147</sup> or they were legitimately trying to accommodate his diminishing capabilities. His tasks included working as an "acting mechanic" for the trucks and rollers, and putting handles on the shovels. Finally in December 1975, his No. 3 truck license was downgraded, so he had to return it.<sup>148</sup> In 1976, AR retired from the paid labour force, although he continued to do renovating and other manual work at home, despite his bad heart. This need to keep working was a testament to the persistence of dangerous manual labour as a badge of working-class masculinity. It may also signify that "'growing old' was becoming a prominent source of anxiety about manhood,"<sup>149</sup> so men engaged in physical labour as long as their bodies held out; AR died in 1981 of a massive heart attack.

Besides gender, age, and class, the city of Saint John is also an important factor in this analysis. Just as AR and Ida were aging in the postwar period, so too was the city of Saint John. The regional particularities that made life challenging for Ida and Allan Martin from the 1940s to the 1970s, continued until the present day. Initially developments looked promising for the Saint John waterfront in the 1960s and 1970s. A year before AR retired, Irving Oil Company Ltd. unveiled Canaport, a deepwater oil terminal. The city also opened a new container terminal, Brunterm, just as AR was retiring, and two years later completed Rodney terminal on the west side. Saint John would also witness the expansion of the Pugsley terminal and a number of other major port developments in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>150</sup> In 1986, Saint John was

143. Ida Martin's diaries, 13 April 1971; Barbara Huskins, email to authors, 18 May 2006.

144. Heron, "Boys Will Be Boys," 7.

145. Ida Martin's diaries, 10 December 1973; back at work: 6 May 1974.

146. Ida Martin's diaries, 10 December 1973; 6 May 1974; 2 October 1974.

147. Wood, *Technical and Social Changes in the World's Ports*, 117.

148. Ida Martin's diaries, 1 October 1975; 11 November 1975; 18 December 1975; 20 December 1976.

149. Wood, *Technical and Social Changes in the World's Ports*, 120.

150. For other developments, see Marquis, "Rethinking the Militant 70s," 14–15.



granted local port corporation status, joining Vancouver, Montréal, Halifax, Québec City, Prince Rupert, and St. John's.<sup>151</sup> The port of Saint John remained one of the busiest in Canada, even into the 1990s, but most of the tonnage still consisted of petroleum products, which were handled not by the port of Saint John but by the private Irving facilities at Courtney Bay and Canaport. In the early 1980s, there were still 500–600 unionized waterfront workers, but by 2000, less than 200 were employed. The Irving shipyards provided jobs in the mid-1980s building naval patrol frigates, but when the contract was completed, the shipyards and drydock entered a downward spiral and were mothballed in 2000.

After the opening of the St Lawrence Seaway in the late 1950s, political and business elites in Saint John began to diversify the city's economy, which meant less reliance on the port. Thus we see the emergence of pulp and paper mills and oil refineries in the 1960s; the establishment of mega-projects in the 1970s, such as the Coleson Cove thermal generating station, and the Point Lepreau nuclear facility; and the boom and bust cycles associated with infrastructure development. Premier Frank McKenna (1987–1997) viewed shipbuilding as a “sunset industry,” so he encouraged the province and the city to pursue “Post-Fordist development strategies” such as call centres and information technology.<sup>152</sup> Although the foundation of Saint John's economy has shifted over the years, it has always relied on large companies such as the Irvings, employers and unions headquartered in Central Canada and the United States, and the coffers of the provincial and federal governments. Thus it can be argued that working-class masculinity in Saint John was, and continues to be, informed by a history of regional dependencies.

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151. *Saint John Port Development Commission and Port of Saint John, IV* (Saint John: Saint John Port Development Commission, 1986): 6–7, HIL-GOV.

152. Greg Marquis, “Re-Imag[in]ing the Post-Industrial City: Contemporary Saint John,” paper presented at *Town and Country: Exploring Urban and Rural Issues in New Brunswick*, St. Thomas University, 23 June 2007; Marquis, “Multilevel Governance and Public Policy in Saint John, New Brunswick,” in Bob Young and Martin Horak, eds., *Sites of Governance: Multilevel Governance and Policy Making in Canada's Big Cities* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 136–161; Marquis, “Regime or coalition? Power relations and the urban agenda in Saint John, 1950–2000,” the *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in Global Economy* 3, 4 (2009): 355–368.