

The Background to Change in the Newfoundland Cod Fishery at the Time of Confederation

Miriam Wright

Volume 14, numéro 2, fall 1998

Special Issue on Confederation

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds14_2art08

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-1430 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Wright, M. (1998). The Background to Change in the Newfoundland Cod Fishery at the Time of Confederation. *Newfoundland Studies*, 14(2), 253–265.

The Background to Change in the Newfoundland Cod Fishery at the Time of Confederation

MIRIAM WRIGHT

CONFEDERATION WITH CANADA remains a major reference point in Newfoundland's collective memory, although many disagree about the meaning of this event for the subsequent development of the province's social, political and economic life. Many have also assumed that 1949 also represented a turning point for Newfoundland's fisheries, when the Terms of Union transferred jurisdiction for marine resources to Ottawa. Undeniably, the 1940s saw the beginning of one of the most dramatic transformations in the history of the Newfoundland fishery. The inshore, household fishery based on merchant credit evolved into a cash-based economy, with fishers selling their catch directly to frozen fish firms instead of curing it themselves. Still others went to work in the processing plants and on company-owned offshore trawlers. Newfoundland's fishing economy moved away from its roots in the transatlantic saltfish trade, and towards the North American food industry. Although these changes roughly coincided with the change in political regimes, Confederation itself was not as important in fostering these changes as has been commonly assumed. Indeed, as Neary and Sinclair have shown, the shift towards the industrial frozen fish sector began during World War II, several years before Confederation.¹ And clearly, the state, beginning with the Commission of Government in the 1930s and 1940s, and continuing with the federal and provincial governments, played a major role in facilitating these changes.

In recent years, the state, particularly the federal government, has been attacked for pursuing the industrial model of development, favouring frozen fish development while allowing the saltfish trade to wither away. David Alexander in particular was highly critical of the federal government for its general neglect of the saltfish

trade and lack of interest in diversifying Newfoundland's fishing economy.² While there is no denying that both federal and provincial governments ultimately failed as guardians of the fishery over the past fifty years, we need a better understanding of why fisheries planners chose to support the industrial, frozen fish sector for Newfoundland's cod fishery. The decade immediately before Confederation was a particularly critical period for the fishery. A number of major technological and economic changes occurring in the international fishing community had a profound effect on Newfoundland, and greatly influenced the way that fisheries planners thought about the future. As well, the 1940s marked the beginning of a much higher level of state intervention in the economy than had ever been experienced before. The purpose of this paper is to look at the political responses to the fishery in the years leading up to Confederation in the context of the larger social, technological and economic changes that were occurring outside Newfoundland's borders.

To understand why an industrial fishery seemed such an attractive option, we have to recognize that the fishery had been languishing for decades. Since the late 19th century, the saltfish industry had been plagued by stagnating production levels, deteriorating cure quality, unregulated marketing and growing competition from fishing nations such as Norway and Iceland.³ Attempts by both merchants and politicians to fix the malaise in the first twenty years of the 20th century through marketing regulations, technological innovations and scientific methods, however, had failed.⁴ Although high prices during World War I brought some relief, the post-war recession left the Newfoundland fishery with its old problems. The Great Depression of the 1930s and the collapse of world prices dealt a heavy blow to an already-weakened economy. With prices so low, fishers could not catch enough fish to cover the costs of their supplies. Merchants ended up carrying heavy debt loads, and some could not continue providing credit to fishers. Many fishing families were forced to apply for "the dole," the meagre few dollars a month then offered by the Newfoundland government.

The chronic weaknesses in the fishing economy contributed to Newfoundland's financial trouble in the early 1930s, and were a major focus of the 1933 Royal Commission report on conditions in Newfoundland written by Lord Amulree.⁵ He blamed the merchant credit system in the inshore fishery for impoverishing the population and stifling economic diversification. Despite his insistence that the fishery should continue to provide the foundation for the Newfoundland economy, Amulree had few ideas on how to resolve its problems. After the Commission of Government was installed in 1934, the Department of Natural Resources introduced programs such as land settlement schemes and co-operative organizations aimed at reducing fishing people's dependence on merchant credit (and on government welfare). Although the Commission hesitated to intervene directly in the saltfish economy, it did build a foundation for a more comprehensive state fisheries organization. The Newfoundland Fisheries Board, created in 1936, set and administered fisheries policies, supported scientific research and began to organize

saltfish marketing.⁶ The NFB, led by chairman Raymond Gushue, a St. John's lawyer, set regulations on standards and culling practices, and required all saltfish exporters to buy licences. In addition, the Department of Natural Resources built a series of bait freezing depots around the island and arranged for a ship to freeze bait and make deliveries to remote areas.

Although the activities of the Commission of Government represented a much higher degree of involvement in the economy, they did little to halt the downward slide of the Newfoundland fishery. By the late 1930s, approximately one third of fishing families were collecting government welfare. In response, the Commission hired a British civil servant, John Henry Gorvin, to develop a more comprehensive rural development strategy. In 1939, he was named Commissioner for Natural Resources, and he began drafting a Special Areas Bill.⁷ The intent of the legislation was to install government-appointed regional economic development councils in rural Newfoundland. The councils were to oversee economic development by operating local enterprises, organizing co-operative buying and providing loans for other projects.

Although opposition from some members of the business community made the Special Areas Bill controversial, ultimately, the outbreak of World War II played a major role in halting Gorvin's plans.⁸ Almost immediately, the Commission of Government's priorities shifted away from economic development and towards mobilizing Newfoundland for war. Restructuring the fishing economy, it was agreed, would have to wait. The war years, however, proved to be a catalyst for the fishing industry. New processing technologies — "quick freezing" methods for preserving groundfish developed in the United States in the late 1930s — offered the Newfoundland fishery an alternative to salting fish. At the same time, war-time demands from England for this quick-frozen fish gave local firms the impetus to invest in new technologies. The convergence of the introduction of freezing methods, with the ready market created by war-time food shortages, changed the possibilities for the Newfoundland cod fishery.

The technological changes had been brewing since the early years of the 20th century, when growing urban populations in North America and western Europe led to the expansion of the prepared food industry. For centuries, the international trade in fish had depended on the relatively simple methods of salting and drying to preserve the product until it was sold. In the early 20th century, however, people involved in the North Atlantic fisheries began searching for new ways of preserving fish. The fresh meat industry had benefitted from the use of cold storage techniques, allowing countries such as Argentina to sell fresh beef to distant urban markets in Europe. Anxious to expand their markets for groundfish into the growing urban markets of the eastern United States, New England fishing firms began packing freshly-caught fish in ice and holding them in cold storage facilities until they could be shipped to the fish markets of Boston and New York.

These technological developments in the United States piqued the interest of both politicians and some local entrepreneurs in Newfoundland. Hoping to access potentially lucrative new markets on the mainland, Newfoundland politicians made several attempts to bring cold storage facilities to the island in the first two decades of the 20th century. William Reeves has described how Sir Robert Bond's government tried to encourage a Montreal firm to build cold storage plants in Newfoundland in 1903 and 1904.⁹ The deal collapsed in a sea of political controversy. Likewise, Robert Hong has described the efforts of Sir Edward Morris, prime minister from 1909 to 1917, to introduce the new technology to Newfoundland.¹⁰ In addition to providing a new outlet for the island's production, Morris believed that cold storage could be used for storing saltfish, allowing exporters to control the release of the country's saltfish production onto world markets. By avoiding the sale of most of Newfoundland's saltfish at the end of the summer fishing season when prices were lower, fishers and merchants alike could expect better returns. The Morris government passed Cold Storage acts in 1910 and 1911 in the hopes of attracting capital. Although two American companies showed some initial interest, the deals never materialized. Subsequent initiatives taken by local firms also ended in failure. Morris, however, continued to promote the idea that cold storage would one day transform the Newfoundland fishery.¹¹

While cold storage had managed to lengthen the "shelf life" of fresh fish, the industry had yet to devise a means of preserving the item for more than a few days. In the 1920s and 1930s, several methods of freezing fish had been invented, but the results were less than palatable to the North American public. Fish has a delicate flesh, and the traditional freezing methods such as dipping the product into vats of cooled brine destroyed its texture and flavour. In the late 1930s an eccentric American inventor, entrepreneur and former resident of Labrador, Clarence Birdseye, developed a method of "quick freezing" packages of fish fillets. This process, which froze the fish between cooled metal plates, arrested the decay process without turning the flesh into a pulpy mass after it was thawed. American consumers found this new product more acceptable and demand increased. The dominant firms operating in New England, including General Seafoods (the firm founded by Birdseye), Booth Fisheries and Gorton Pew, underwent a process of consolidation as they invested in freezing facilities.¹² By the post-war years, most had divested their harvesting divisions and were becoming horizontally-integrated food processing firms.

Developments in transportation in the United States also allowed the New England-based groundfish companies to expand their marketing efforts. Refrigerated rail cars had helped the fresh fish industry in the early twentieth century. With the growth of road networks in the United States and Canada, the movement of fish from coastal areas to the interior by refrigerated trucks became even more efficient. Filleting fish before shipping it to market also cut down on transportation costs because it decreased the weight of the product. According to Edward Ackerman's

study of New England's fishing industry in 1941, these developments had reduced shipping costs by 90 percent since 1911.¹³ Ackerman claimed that "The combination of quick-freezing, filleting, and motor transportation has, in the last ten years, given New England a footing in the Midwestern fish market which it has not had since the days of salt fish."¹⁴

Other changes in the way North Americans purchased, stored and consumed food also helped the demand for frozen fish. Frozen food was quickly becoming an important part of the American diet. Between 1936 and 1943, frozen food consumption in the United States rose from 170 million pounds to 800 million pounds.¹⁵ These numbers were reflected in the number of retail stores with refrigerated dispensing cabinets, which went from none in 1930 to 50,000 in 1944. Most of these were in the northeast and north-central states, the prime markets for New England fresh and frozen fish. The growth of self-serve supermarkets, which were more likely to contain refrigerated cabinets, also pushed the sales of frozen foods. And of course, the popularity of home refrigerators with freezing compartments made buying and storing the new products much easier for consumers. In 1940, of the 27.6 million households in the United States with electricity (34.8 million households total), 27 million contained home refrigerators.¹⁶

The Commissioner for Natural Resources from 1936 to 1939, Robert Ewbank, had recognized the significance of these developments in the New England fishing industry, but was largely unsuccessful in bringing them to Newfoundland.¹⁷ He negotiated with General Seafoods, which planned to install a freezing plant on the south coast of the island. The firm was particularly interested in harvesting other species of groundfish besides cod, such as haddock and redfish, species that the American processing industry favoured, but which had not been utilized by the Newfoundland fishery. The deal collapsed, however, after protests from American fishing people who feared competition from the cheaper Newfoundland product.

Ultimately, the outbreak of war in Europe provided the initial push for the Newfoundland frozen fish sector. On the eve of World War II, only two firms were producing frozen fish in Newfoundland. After the war began, however, Great Britain, unable to meet all its food needs, began importing fish from North America.¹⁸ Early in the war, representatives of the British Ministry of Food came to Newfoundland looking for supplies of frozen fish fillets.¹⁹ They signed a contract with three St. John's-based firms to provide 10 million pounds. Although the Newfoundland companies had trouble filling the order, it did alert local firms to the opportunities offered by the frozen fish sector. After the Combined Food Board was created to organize food production for the war effort, this agency continued to buy a large share of Newfoundland's frozen fish. Private investment in the frozen fish sector began to grow. Production rose from just 1.5 million pounds of frozen fish in 1939, to nearly 36 million pounds by 1945.²⁰ By 1946, six firms were operating eighteen frozen fish plants in Newfoundland.

With the emergence of a frozen fish sector in Newfoundland, the Commission of Government was offered a new way of reconstructing the fishery. The frozen fish industry was particularly attractive because it seemed to solve a number of entrenched problems in the fishery. Most importantly, it offered a way of eradicating the merchant credit system. From the beginning, the Commission of Government had blamed the credit system for stifling economic diversification and impoverishing fishing people. Unlike the saltfish sector, however, the frozen fish firms operating in Newfoundland operated on a cash, not credit basis. Fisheries planners believed that frozen fish plants paying cash for fish, and providing wages for others, could be the seeds that fostered the growth of a diversified, cash-based economy in rural Newfoundland.

Second, the industrial organization of the frozen fish sector centralized production in processing plants. One of the great difficulties in producing sun-dried, salted fish in Newfoundland was the many variations in cure. Indeed, each importing country seemed to have a preference for a different type of cure. With processing taking place under one roof, instead of on the fish flakes scattered along the coast, both quality and production volumes could be managed and controlled more easily. As well, the industrial methods meant that the companies could offer paid employment to people in fishing communities. By employing people both on fishing trawlers and in processing plants, Commission planners assumed the frozen fish sector could spread the benefits of the industry to more people than the saltfish sector.

Third, indications were that the United States would become the main market for frozen groundfish in the post-war years. By the end of the war, Newfoundland was already shipping more of its fish to American destinations. Although relying on a single market to take most of Newfoundland's frozen fish production had its risks, the prospect of getting paid in American dollars was an attraction. As Alexander explained in *The Decay of Trade*, by the 1930s, Newfoundland was importing most of its goods from North America, but exported most of its products to non-dollar and sterling countries overseas.²¹ While the British economy was stable, London was able to exchange Newfoundland's sterling for dollars. But with many uncertainties looming ahead in the post-war European economy, Newfoundland could not be assured of a continuation of pre-war currency exchange arrangements.

There were also strong ideological reasons for Commission of Government members to support the growth of the frozen fish sector. The industrial fishery, with its centralized production and employment of new technologies, seemed to embody the characteristics of a modern, "progressive" economy. Apart from Gorvin, the various Commissioners for Natural Resources saw the inshore fishery with its household production as "old-fashioned," even regressive, and incompatible with a western standard of living. Indeed, these strong beliefs in the transforming powers of technology and industry were predominant in western culture. In the context of

the 1940s, when the industrial capabilities of the Allied forces were considerable factors in the events of the war, technological solutions were particularly compelling. These ideas were so strong that few questioned the ability of technology and the industrial model to bring prosperity to everyone.

The Commission recognized, however, that gearing production towards the American market had some risks, particularly considering the uncertainty of future tariff policies. Before the war, high tariffs had made the American market inaccessible. On January 1, 1939, however, a new trade agreement had come into effect between the United States, Canada and Great Britain which favourably affected the export of Newfoundland frozen fish to the United States. It reduced the import tariff from 2.5 cents per pound for cod and haddock fillets to 1.8 cents per pound, up to a total amount of 18 million pounds.²² Any amount over 18 million pounds was subject to a higher tariff rate. A study by an American consulting firm, George Armstrong Incorporated, suggested that favourable trade terms would be important, because the profit margin in the frozen fish sector was narrow. The costs of building and operating the processing plants were high, and if prices dropped, as they had occasionally during the war, the companies would have a hard time recovering those costs.

The other drawback to directing fish production to the United States was the fact that Americans were not traditionally large consumers of fish. The Armstrong report acknowledged that the 13 pounds of fish consumed by the average American each year fell far below the 35 pounds eaten by the British and the 55 pounds eaten by the Japanese.²³ The report suggested, however, that the sheer size of the United States market made selling fish there worthwhile. While Britain had been the major importer of frozen fish during the war, the report warned that Newfoundland could not expect to continue selling to that market. With relatively few cold storage or refrigerated dispensing facilities, Great Britain made a poor potential destination for frozen fish.

Nevertheless, when the Commission of Government began making plans for post-war reconstruction, the development of a frozen fish industry was a central feature. P.D.H. Dunn, Commissioner for Natural Resources from 1941 to 1946, proposed the government assist in the building of centralized processing plants on the island, with freezing plants located on the south coast, and combined freezing and salting facilities on the northeast coast. With private companies controlling processing and paying local fishers cash for raw fish, Dunn argued the plan would "have ... the effect of freezing the credit system, the harmful effects of which have been commented upon by every committee which has examined the fishing industry in Newfoundland."²⁴ Dunn organized a loan program for private companies wishing to build frozen fish plants and acquire offshore trawlers for the new industry. From 1943 to 1949, the Department of Natural Resources extended over \$800,000 in loans to the small group of Newfoundland fishing companies that had made the transition to frozen fish production. Even when the Commission received protests

from the British Treasury about extending loans to private enterprise with little security, the Commissioner for Natural Resources, W.H. Flinn (1946-1949) replied, saying:

Anything in reason should be encouraged that will help to divert sales from the salt-codfish, non-convertible sterling markets in Europe and, generally, that will accelerate or develop the modernization of methods of production whether of frozen or dried salt codfish, I think that Government has taken a very fair risk and is indeed to be commended for its bold and imaginative policy at a time when some lead of the sort is desirable.²⁵

After the war, the Commission continued to support the saltfish sector, but the search for radical solutions to restructure the saltfish trade had been abandoned. The war had been beneficial to saltfish; while total production varied little between 1939 and 1945, rising prices on world markets caused the value of exports to triple. The Combined Food Board had regulated international saltfish production and sales during the war. After the return to free trade in saltfish in 1946, the Newfoundland Fisheries Board, under the leadership of Raymond Gushue, began planning for the post-war economy. The Newfoundland saltfish trade faced many obstacles, including post-war recessions and difficulties in selling fish to non-dollar European countries.²⁶ In 1947, the NFB created the Newfoundland Association of Fish Exporters Limited (NAFEL), a non-profit organization with the exclusive right to market Newfoundland saltfish products. The agency did not, however, have a mandate to address saltfish production or development issues.

The question of the future direction of Newfoundland's fisheries emerged during the National Convention, which met between 1946 and 1948. The Fisheries Committee, chaired by Robert Brown Job of the St. John's firm Job Brothers and Company, prepared reports on conditions in the fisheries and recommended courses for development.²⁷ In general, the reports suggested that the committee members saw the frozen fish industry playing a much larger role in Newfoundland's economy in the years ahead. A report on the salt cod sector revealed the committee members' pessimistic views on its future.²⁸ Although values for Newfoundland's saltfish production had jumped from \$5 million in the mid-1930s to over \$17 million in 1946, the report suggested that they should not expect returns like that in the future. They expected the traditional saltfish consuming countries to increase their own production in the post-war years, reducing the need for Newfoundland saltfish. The committee members also feared world saltfish consumption would stagnate as the spread of refrigeration and the rise of world living standards would lead to higher consumption of fresh and frozen fish. The report concluded that Newfoundland should divert as much production as possible into the frozen fish sector. Saltfish would continue to be an important part of the fishing industry, but the production

process needed to be industrialized as much as possible with centralized curing stations and artificial dryers.

For the subcommittee examining frozen fish, the major concerns were about getting access to the American market.²⁹ Because of the quota attached to the existing duty rate, increased production would mean higher tariffs on fish exports. Despite those uncertainties, the committee clearly believed that the industrial structure of the frozen fish sector made it more beneficial to the Newfoundland economy than saltfish. The report claimed "the frozen fish industry is in the class of a 'manufacturing' industry and for one thing, employs more labour."³⁰ Although fewer fishers would be needed in the new fishery, the displaced people could find employment in the processing plants and on trawlers. The report noted that in 1946, 1280 people, one quarter of whom were women, worked in the processing plants. In all, wages paid to people associated with the processing industry that year totalled more than \$700,000. The subcommittee lauded the government's investment in the frozen fish sector.

In the referendum campaigns that followed, there was debate over whether the fishery would prosper better if Newfoundland were independent, or part of Canada. The assumption that "Water Street merchants" supported Responsible Government has become part of the mythology of the Confederation campaigns, but a close look at the supporters of both sides reveals a more complex picture. According to Jeff Webb, very few merchants involved in the saltfish trade appeared among the contributors of \$25 or more to the Responsible Government League.³¹ Only 12 of 89 contributors sold saltfish, and most of these were either very small firms or large diversified enterprises, of which saltfish was only one of several divisions. No representatives of the frozen fish trade appeared on the lists of the Responsible Government League, but they did declare themselves in support of Confederation. A newspaper advertisement for the Confederate Association listing its supporters included the names of Walter S. Monroe, Arthur Monroe, Sir Leonard Outerbridge, S.W. Moores, and George Penny, all of whom were involved in the frozen fish industry.³² The only major Newfoundland frozen fish firm not represented on that list was Job; R.B. Job favoured Economic Union with the United States. The list also included a few people involved with the saltfish trade, such as Eric Bowring.

The reasons for the frozen fish company owners' preference for Confederation became clear in the latter days of the second referendum campaign. In an article in the St. John's *Evening Telegram* just days before the vote, four men involved in the frozen fish sector, George Penny, Arthur Monroe, R.B. Job and Sir Leonard Outerbridge, were asked their opinions on Economic Union with the United States and the best option for Newfoundland's future.³³ Although Economic Union would have been beneficial to the frozen fish industry by providing access to the American market so important for their trade, all except Job dismissed the idea. Penny, Monroe and Outerbridge claimed that, in light of the general trends in United States trade policy, the Americans would not likely grant trade concessions to Newfound-

land that they would not also grant to Canada. Monroe argued that only as part of Canada, with its large domestic market, could it negotiate favourable trade terms for its fish. Moreover, Newfoundland's saltfish sector was declining, and the only hope for the future was in developing the frozen fish industry. Confederation, he claimed, could help speed a process already underway. Penny, Monroe and Outerbridge also supported Confederation because they believed it offered the best hope for a sounder, more diversified economy and a higher standard of living for Newfoundland's people. R.B. Job was also thinking about the future of the frozen fish industry, but argued that an independent Newfoundland could negotiate better trade terms with the United States.

For the saltfish sector, however, the advantages of being part of Canada were less clear. Just weeks before the final referendum, Raymond Gushue warned that Confederation could harm the Newfoundland fishery. In a speech to the Medical Association on July 10, Gushue claimed that the Canadian government would dismantle the Newfoundland Fisheries Board and NAFEL, and the gains Newfoundland had made in organizing saltfish marketing would be lost.³⁴ The Responsible Government League capitalized on these warnings, and ran two full-page advertisements in the St. John's *Evening Telegram* highlighting Gushue's speech.³⁵

Whether or not Gushue's comments affected voting is unknown, but his concerns were impressed upon the Newfoundland delegation which negotiated the Terms of Union with Canada after Confederation won the second referendum. Indeed, the correspondence and accounts of the negotiating process suggests that the future status of NAFEL and the NFB dominated the discussions about the fishery.³⁶ The team eventually obtained a 5-year extension for NAFEL (later extended until 1959) and a "phasing in" period for employees of the Newfoundland Fisheries Board.³⁷ All other fisheries matters including research and the operation of the bait depots, were transferred to the Canadian Department of Fisheries. The question of *how* Canada would manage and develop Newfoundland's fisheries was left for the politicians and bureaucrats to determine in the years that followed.

The relative lack of discussion about the fishery in general compared to other questions such as education is somewhat puzzling. As well, issues of particular relevance to the frozen fish industry such as tariff agreements with the United States received scant attention. This could suggest the Canadians' general lack of interest in fisheries questions; perhaps they saw the fishery as a liability, not an asset, so were not anxious to spend time on the matter. The make-up of the Newfoundland negotiating team could also explain the inattention to questions about the fishery. Of the group, only Ches Crosbie, whose family enterprise was involved in the herring industry, was directly involved in the fishery.³⁸ Judging from his comments during the fisheries debates in the National Convention, Crosbie had a sharp mind and firm understanding of many aspects of Newfoundland's fisheries, including the frozen fish sector.³⁹ Reports suggest, however, that for various reasons he was isolated from the rest of the negotiating team during talks with the Canadian

delegation. In fact, he refused to sign the Terms of Union, citing dissatisfaction with the financial terms.

After Confederation, Newfoundland's changed constitutional status did have some impact on the way its fishery was handled. Being just one of five provinces with an ocean fishery meant that Newfoundland's concerns would never have the undivided attention of the federal government. Indeed, in the first decade after Confederation, the federal Department of Fisheries refused to get directly involved in fisheries development in Newfoundland, partly because of fears of protests from the Nova Scotian fishing industry.⁴⁰ 1949 did not, however, stop the transition to an industrial, frozen fish sector in the newest province. On the contrary, the provincial government of Premier Joseph Smallwood continued the practice of directly funding frozen fish companies begun by the Commission of Government, investing over \$30 million in the project in the first twenty years after Confederation. In the mid-1960s the federal government also began supporting the frozen fish sector through loans to companies, and other development programs. Sadly, the promised prosperity for Newfoundland's fishery and fishing people never materialized; as is generally the case, the effects of industrial development were uneven, producing a few who benefited from the process, but many more in the long term, who did not. As well, in the post-Confederation years, the Newfoundland fishery faced a new set of problems, including an excess capacity in processing facilities, years of glutted New England groundfish markets, and unprecedented levels of fishing by European vessels in the northwest Atlantic. Newfoundland's fishing economy, based on frozen fish, like the salt fishery before it, continued to limp from crisis to crisis.

While 1949 is a significant milestone in the history of Newfoundland, we should not assume that it necessarily represented a major shift in the management and direction of the fishing economy. The shift from market-oriented strategies and towards industrial solutions had occurred much earlier, with the advent of World War II and the introduction of new processing technologies. Despite the creation of NAFEL in 1947 and attempts to secure its survival after Confederation, the Commission of Government planners and others believed that the frozen fish sector, with its use of cash, its centralized production, and North American orientation could transform Newfoundland society. As we reflect on the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation, it may be tempting to speculate that Newfoundland's fate might have been very different if control over its fisheries had not been relinquished to Ottawa. But such speculation must be governed by an understanding of how larger economic, technological and ideological forces have affected the history of Newfoundland's fisheries.

I acknowledge the financial assistance of the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Notes

¹Peter Neary. *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-1949*. (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1988), 249-57; Peter Sinclair. *State Intervention and the Newfoundland Fishery*. (Aldershot: Gower, 1985).

²David Alexander. *The Decay of Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965*. (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977).

³Shannon Ryan. *Fish Out of Water: The Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1814-1914*. (St. John's: Breakwater Press, 1986), Chapter Three; Rosemary Ommen. "One Hundred Years of Fishery Crises in Newfoundland." *Acadiensis* 23, 2 (Spring 1994), 5-20.

⁴William Reeves, "'Our Yankee Cousins': Modernization and the Newfoundland-American Relationship, 1898-1910." Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Maine at Orono, 1987; Robert Hong, "'An Agency for the Common Weal': The Newfoundland Board of Trade, 1909-1915." Unpublished M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1998; Ian McDonald, *"To Each His Own": William Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925*. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1987).

⁵United Kingdom. *Newfoundland Royal Commission Report*. London: Command Paper 4480, 1933.

⁶Melvin Baker and Shannon Ryan. "The Newfoundland Fishery Research Commission, 1930-1934," in *How Deep is the Ocean: Historical Essays on Canada's Atlantic Fishery*. James E. Candow and Carol Corbin, eds., (Sydney, NS: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1997), 161-73.

⁷Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (hereafter, PANL) GN 38, S2-1-17, file 26.

⁸Neary. *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World*. 123-4.

⁹Reeves. "'Our Yankee Cousins.'" 292-8.

¹⁰Robert Hong. "An Agency." 70-2, 107-16.

¹¹Lord Edward P. Morris. "Cold Storage in its Application to the Newfoundland Fisheries." *Newfoundland Quarterly* 22, 2 (October 1922), 30-1.

¹²Margaret Dewar. *Industry in Trouble: The Federal Government and the New England Fisheries*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983, Chapter Two.

¹³Edward Ackerman. *New England's Fishing Industry*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941.

¹⁴Ackerman. *New England's Fishing Industry*. 228.

¹⁵PANL GN 38, S2-1-5, file 2. "Report by George S. Armstrong, Inc. on Cod Fillet Production and Distribution." 1944.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Robert Ewbank. *Public Affairs in Newfoundland*. Cardiff: William Lewis Limited, 1939.

¹⁸For background on the impact of British Ministry of Food requests for canned salmon in British Columbia, see Dianne Newell, "The Politics of Food in World War II: Great Britain's Grip on Canada's Pacific Fishery." *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers*. 1987, 179-97.

¹⁹PANL GN 38, box S2-1-5, file 8. P.D.H. Dunn to Commission of Government, N.R. 56(b)-41, 16 October 1941.

²⁰PANL GN 34/2, file 25/79. "Report of the Fisheries Committee to the National Convention." 13.

²¹Alexander. *The Decay of Trade*. 39-67.

²²PANL GN 38, box S2-1-5, file 2. "George Armstrong Inc. Report on Cod Fillet Production and Distribution, 1944."

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴PANLGN 38, Box S2-2-2, file 7. "Draft Despatch to Secretary of State." NR 1(a) -'43, 7 January 1943.

²⁵PANLGN 34/2, file 83/2 vol 1. W.H. Flinn to St. John Chadwick, 12 February 1948.

²⁶Alexander. *The Decay of Trade*. 40-63.

²⁷J.K. Hiller and M.F. Harrington, eds. *The Newfoundland National Convention 1946-1948*. vol. 2, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1995. "Report of the Fisheries Committee of the National Convention, March 24, 1947," 181-250.

²⁸Hiller and Harrington. *National Convention*, vol. 2. "Report of the Sub-Committee on the Salt Codfish Industry," 187-9.

²⁹Hiller and Harrington. *National Convention*. vol. 2, "Report of the Sub-Committee on the Cold Storage Industry," 183-7.

³⁰Hiller and Harrington. *National Convention*. vol. 2, 213.

³¹Jeff A. Webb. "The Responsible Government League and the Confederation Campaigns of 1948." *Newfoundland Studies* 5, 2 (Fall 1989), 203-20.

³²St. John's *Evening Telegram*, 17 July 1948, advertisement, Confederate Association. W.S. Monroe, Arthur Monroe — Fishery Products Limited; Sir Leonard Outerbridge — Harvey's and Company; S.W. Moores (North Eastern Fish Industries); George Penny — John Penny. H.B. Clyde Lake was also on the list. He and his family invested in the frozen fish industry in 1951.

³³St. John's *Evening Telegram*, 19 July 1948, "Major Fresh Fish Producers on Economic Union."

³⁴National Archives of Canada RG 23, 1132, 721-54-4 [1]. "'Extreme Danger to the Fisheries in Confederation,' broadcast address by Raymond Gushue." In this document, he cites the address he gave on July 10.

³⁵St. John's *Evening Telegram*, 14 July 1948; 15 July 1948.

³⁶Paul Bridle, ed. *Documents on Relations Between Canada and Newfoundland: Confederation*. vol. 2, Ottawa: Department of Supply and Services, 1984, 1015-6, 1033-9.

³⁷Although NAFEL's mandate was extended until 1959, the federal Department of Fisheries removed its right to market saltbulk or "green" fish. By 1959, the saltfish industry had declined significantly. Many of the major saltfish exporters had left the business; 75 percent of the provinces' production was saltbulk, leaving only 25 percent for NAFEL to market.

³⁸Gordon Bradley and Gordon Winter, both members of the negotiating team, were directors in frozen fish companies, but were not actively involved in management.

³⁹J.K. Hiller and M.F. Harrington, eds. *The Newfoundland National Convention 1946-48*. vol. 1 Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1995), 84-5; 371-433; 1189-92.

⁴⁰For an analysis of the post-Confederation fisheries in Newfoundland, see Miriam Wright, "Newfoundland and Canada: The Evolution of Fisheries Development Policies, 1940-1966." Unpublished PhD thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1997.