The Struggle for Capitalism in the Fishing Industry in Newfoundland

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Few questions in Canadian political economy have been as topical in recent years as the question of Canada's Atlantic fishery. In 1977, Canada declared a 200-mile economic zone, and in 1979, the country became the world's leading exporter of fish. From 1977 to 1980 there was an industry-wide boom and, over the same period, inshore fishermen in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island were organized into bodies such as the Maritime Fishermen's Union. In 1980, Newfoundland inshore fishermen (members
of the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers Union) conducted a five-week, province-wide boycott, for higher fish prices, of the twenty-one processing firms to which they usually sold raw fish. Since 1981, there has been a continuing crisis in the industry, including the declaration of insolvency by three of the former “Big Four” fish companies. In 1982-83 the federal state commissioned a task force to report on the Atlantic fishing industry (the Kirby Report). Most recently, we have witnessed the restructuring of the Big Four into North America’s two largest fish companies: National Sea Products and Fishery Products International (the latter being state-owned).

But interest in the fishery question is not only due to its newsworthiness. It is also due to a recognition of its importance for the development of a socialist programme for the Atlantic region and for Canada. Not unrelated to developments in the fishery during the 1970s was the emergence of what Michael Clow referred to in SPE 14 as the “Maritime Marxist labour history school”; conflict in the fishery has been central to these authors’ socialist praxis. Henry Veltmeyer, for example, writing on “the capitalist underdevelopment of Atlantic Canada,” has argued that inshore fishermen in Atlantic Canada constitute a hitherto overlooked proletariat:

Prior to World War II, inshore fishermen ... predominated [in the fishing industry] but increasingly these “independents” ... are dependent on conditions of exchange (input industry, processing, and marketing) controlled by large, vertically integrated corporations that themselves buy labour. Under monopoly conditions, the price that the “independent,” inshore fishermen ... receive for their products amounts to a wage, and in effect, despite their ownership of limited means of production, these “independents” must be counted among the proletariat.¹

James Sacouman, perhaps the leading member of the school, has referred to inshore fishermen as “semi-proletarians” for similar reasons.²

Turning to recent struggles involving these inshore fishermen, Richard Williams, who was a research consultant to the Maritime Fishermen’s Union (MFU) in the late 1970s, has argued that while the unionization movement of inshore fishermen represented by the MFU “is not at this stage a self-consciously socialist one, the logic of both this struggle itself and the requirements of modernization and development will
place socialism squarely and inexorably in our paths."³ Sacouman has enunciated a similar, but more general, interpretation of the character of "inshore" struggles in the Atlantic fishery. He speaks of the "working-class-like militancy of inshore fishermen." More specifically, he believes that the fight for higher fish prices "is not just a struggle for better returns but, at least structurally, an anti-capitalist working-class struggle" — this because it is also a "fight . . . for the means of subsistence" that "runs against the entire system of capitalist underdevelopment."⁴ The donation to the MFU of the royalties from the seminal book, Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada — "in order to help its members in their organizational work" — suggests that these are views shared by many, if not most, members of the Maritime Marxist school.⁵

The relevance of the fishery question — of the struggles of inshore fishermen and other "petty primary producers" in general — to the struggle for socialism is for me the most significant issue of the many raised by the Maritime Marxists. But in spite of its practical importance, the issue has drawn surprisingly little explicit attention. So far it seems to have been passed over in favour of other questions;⁶ or it may be that the Maritime Marxists' interpretation has simply been taken as common sense (particularly by other progressives in the region). Even the Maritime Marxists themselves have done little more on the issue. Under the pressure of the rapid succession of events (and perhaps, too, in the absence of pressure from critical attention), they have moved on to more programmatic statements in which their view of the "anti-capitalist, working class" character of inshore fishermen's struggles is now largely implicit.⁷

But more has to be said, if only because the relationship of "petty primary producers" to the struggle for socialism has never been, and can never be, taken for granted. Two points should, however, be noted at the outset. First, insofar as the interpretations of various Maritime Marxists are referred to, my particular point of reference is the Newfoundland fishery, not the Maritime fishery — the major referent of the Maritime Marxists. Since Newfoundland and the Maritimes have had different constitutional and cultural histories, this immediately suggests limitations. Like Sacouman, though, I believe that the
basic socio-economic processes at work in both fisheries are the
same. As well, recent political conflicts are directly comparable: the policy practice of the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers Union is, for instance, substantively similar to that of the MFU, and fishery policy falls under the jurisdiction of the federal state.

A second limitation is temporal. References are largely limited to the post-war era up to 1981; so there is, therefore, virtually no consideration of the changed circumstances due to the present fishery crisis. But while such a consideration is certainly needed, its lack does not affect the central issue under discussion here. It is now clear that the crisis, unlike others in the post-war era, is not just a cyclical economic crisis whose resolution can be left to the benign influence of the "unseen hand." It is, rather — and above all else — a political crisis, a crisis of a particular capitalist project whose resolution demands either a drastic revitalization of the old project, or a new project (capitalist or otherwise). But what the old project was, or what the new one(s) can be, can hardly be grasped unless the classes, class fractions, and projects formed prior to the crisis are first appreciated.

The Growth of Capitalism In order to appreciate the relevance of developments in the fishing industry to the struggle for socialism, it is necessary first to consider the extent to which production in it has become capitalistic. At first sight this question would seem to be unnecessary, and easily answered in terms of the distinction made repeatedly within the industry itself between the "offshore" and "inshore" fisheries (the former being capitalistic and the latter not). All that would seem to be necessary is to provide the relevant data concerning the rise, since the 1940s, of large-scale capitalist enterprises involved in the catching and purchase of raw fish, and the processing, distribution and marketing of fish products, perhaps together with some other small and medium-sized firms engaged mainly in purchasing and processing. Undoubtedly, this "offshore," "company," "trawler-processor" or "large-scale" fishery (as it is variously called), one dominated economically by the "Big Four" (Fishery Products, the Lake Group, National Sea Products, and H.B. Nickerson and Sons) during the 1970s, and cur-
rently by the two “supercompanies” formed from these firms, does represent the most palpably capitalist segment of the industry.

The identification of the offshore fishery as the only locus of capitalistic production tends to be a characteristic feature of the literature on the post-war development of the fishing industry throughout Atlantic Canada. For example, although the terminology (e.g., modernity-tradition) is different, it was the approach taken in the 1960s and early 1970s by Parzival Copes, the Newfoundland fishery’s modernization theorist par excellence, and by his critics Ottar Brox, the late David Alexander, and the influential Committee on Federal Licensing Policy. It is also the approach taken more recently by the Maritime Marxists. And one can easily understand why all of these authors have made the equation. In the case of Newfoundland, the offshore fishery contrasts sharply with the fishing industry as pursued in previous periods, and it is unarguably capitalistic, both socially and technically. It also has clearly capitalistic origins. The rise of many of the offshore companies represents a classic case of the transition whereby, given the appropriate social conditions (notably the existence of a mass of “free” labour separated from the means of production), the merchant becomes an industrial capitalist. The origins of the Big Four, for example, all lie in the region’s mercantile past. Finally, the offshore-inshore cleavage is undoubtedly the most significant political fact in the industry.

It is, however, just this equating of capitalism and modernity with the offshore industry that must be questioned. It is, in the first place, too easy, and this, if nothing else, should cause us to look more closely. As Marx insisted: “All science would be superfluous if the appearance and essence of things directly coincided.” However, by the late 1970s developments had proceeded so far that one no longer had to go very far beyond appearances. For even conventionally, the offshore-inshore dichotomy has been found wanting, and statisticians, in consequence, have begun to specify within the “inshore” fishery what has come to be referred to commonly as a “longliner” or “nearshore” fishery of larger vessels between 35 and 65 feet in length. And one can now easily understand why this is appropriate. Quantitatively speaking, over the past twenty-five years
this "nearshore" fishery has so clearly distinguished, maintained and extended its position vis-à-vis the rest of the inshore fishery, and the offshore fishery, that the inshore-offshore dichotomy simply could not be maintained any longer as a meaningful statistical device.

The nearshore fishery has distinguished itself, for example, in terms of the value of vessels employed and in terms of employment. Regarding the value of vessels engaged in each of the three Newfoundland fisheries (defined according to vessel displacement), by 1973 the "nearshore" fishery had surpassed the rest of the "inshore" fishery. In that year, it accounted for almost 19 per cent of all vessels by value, while the latter fishery accounted for less than 10 per cent (the large-scale offshore fishery accounted for the remaining 71 per cent). The nearshore fishery has since maintained and extended its position at the expense of the offshore fishery. By 1981, the nearshore fishery was pursued by 24 per cent of vessels by value, while the offshore and inshore fisheries were pursued by 60 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, of vessels by value. As well, in 1973 the nearshore fishery overtook the offshore fishery in terms of employment, employing some 2,150 people compared to the latter's 1,475. (By 1981, perhaps as many as 4,000 persons worked on nearshore vessels compared to probably less than 2,000 on offshore vessels.)

The nearshore fishery has also distinguished itself by its rate of growth as indicated by the growth in the number of vessels in each of the fisheries between 1964 and 1981. Defined according to vessel displacement, and indexed with 1971 equal to 100 (and rounded off to the nearest 5), the nearshore fishery, which had stood at 35 in 1964, stood at 120 in 1973, 265 in 1980, and 270 in 1981. In contrast, the rest of the inshore fishery went from 150 in 1964 to 75 in 1973, back to 150 in 1980 (at the height of the boom), then down again to 130 in 1981 (as the crisis deepened). The offshore went from 50 to 100 between 1964 and 1973, and to 190 in 1981.

Finally, and most revealingly, the nearshore fishery has distinguished itself in terms of the relationship between the value invested in vessels, on one hand, and the number of persons employing those values, as well as the volume of fish caught, on the other. In 1981, for example, while only 14 per cent of
people engaged in fish-catching were active in the nearshore fishery, they employed 24 per cent of the craft by value and caught fully one-third of the total Newfoundland catch of all species. Active in the rest of the inshore fishery, it may be noted, were 80 per cent of the people engaged in fish-catching. Nevertheless, the latter group only caught an equivalent amount of fish and used only 10 per cent of the vessels by value. (Not surprisingly, in the offshore fishery less than 7 per cent of the persons employed in the industry used 60 per cent of craft by value to catch 42 per cent of fish by volume and 32 per cent by value.)

More than any other, these last data suggest the real reason that the equation of capitalism with the offshore fishery must be questioned: the nearshore segment of the inshore fishery is in fact an empirical representation of the rise of a significant number of other capitalist enterprises in the Newfoundland fishing industry. But these data are just one approximate indication. The capitalistic character of the nearshore phenomenon is more clearly indicated when it is examined as a social process of production. Evidence suggests that nearshore enterprises have a capitalistic structure of ownership and surplus appropriation. At least this is the conclusion that can be drawn from John Proskie's examination of production on various types of vessels in the Atlantic Canadian fisheries between 1952 and 1969, and from the 1980-81 Newfoundland royal commission inquiry into the province's inshore fishery.

In 1968, for example, Proskie sampled five Newfoundland longliners. The vessels in his sample averaged fifteen gross tons in displacement and thirty-eight feet in length, and were thus among the smaller ones in the nearshore classification. An average of three persons worked on each of these vessels. Proskie found that three longliners were owned by individual fishermen, while ownership of the other two was divided between two fishermen. Thus, of the total fifteen persons employed, seven brought both labour power and means of production into the production process, while eight brought only their labour power. In no case was the crew of any of these longliners composed entirely of owners.

The division between owners and non-owners in the crews of these vessels was reflected in the division of the proceeds.
The value of the product was divided among the persons employed entirely according to the "co-adventurer" or "share" system — a system that was also used until 1975 in the offshore fishery in Newfoundland. In the case of these enterprises, the average price received for the annual catch was $6,053 (1968 dollars). Sixty-five per cent of this sum, or $3,907, was divided equally among owners and non-owners, while the remaining $2,146 formed the so-called "boat-share." Had the production carried on been a purely cooperative affair, this "boat-share" would have only covered the costs of the enterprise's reproduction and any surplus (or loss) would have been shared equally by all participants. This did not happen. While the sum of $1,165 was spent on depreciation, maintenance and repair (and other operating costs such as fuel and bait), the remaining $981 went to the boat owners. In other words, after stripping away the mystified form of appearance of the share system, the enterprise earned a profit of 13.5 per cent on a net capital investment of $7,267, and its owner(s) (after marine insurance and interest payments) appropriated an average surplus value of $724 — a 10 per cent return on the total investment (and even an higher rate of return on the personal investment).

The capitalist structure of ownership and surplus-appropriation in nearshore enterprises, as revealed by Proskie's research, was also identified by the more extensive (but somewhat less useful) examination done by the 1980-81 Newfoundland royal commission on the inshore fishery. The commission gathered information on the 1979 operations of 179 longliner enterprises. Of these enterprises, 130 (or 73 per cent) were owned by individual fishermen and 29 (16 per cent) were owned by two partners. (The remaining 20 enterprises were owned by three, four or five partners, suggesting that these were cooperative ventures.) On the other hand, in all but 18 of the 179 enterprises, non-owning crews were employed and were paid incomes varying from $6,863 to $22,748 per person. In 28 enterprises (16 per cent of the total studied), one non-owner was employed, while two non-owners were employed in 59 enterprises (33 per cent), three non-owners were employed in 31 enterprises (17 per cent), four non-owners were employed in 31 enterprises, and five or six non-owners were employed in 12 enterprises (7 per cent). The structure of
appropriation in these enterprises also seemed to be capitalistic (i.e., after payments to non-owning crew-members and payments for other operating expenses, an amount was left which was available to the owner(s) for their labour, for return on the total capital investment, and for depreciation).

What the data provided by the royal commission also show, however, is that the rates of return to owners indicated by Proskie’s sample were not by any means universally realized among longliner owners in 1979. On the contrary, while the average owner of larger (otter-trawl-equipped) longliners engaged in the groundfishery earned profits of 7 per cent (after deduction of interest and insurance payments), and while typical owners of longliners engaged in catching crab or both shrimp and groundfish earned profits of 13 per cent (after deduction of interest and insurance payments), the typical owners of the more numerous, smaller longliners engaged predominantly in the groundfishery earned returns that barely allowed their enterprises to break even; after interest and insurance payments, these owners had to absorb losses of 3.3 per cent on the total capital value of their enterprises.22

Yet at least until 1981 (when the crisis deepened), not only those longliner enterprises that had returns above the average, but even many of those whose returns were at or below the average of those engaged predominantly in the groundfishery should be seen as capitalist enterprises. They should be seen as enterprises that were capitalistic in ownership structure and mode of surplus appropriation, but ones that failed, as many capitalist enterprises periodically do, to provide an adequate return to their owners because of catch-levels achieved, species-mix pursued and caught, and/or prevailing fish prices. With a relatively small increase of $0.038 per pound in the price of fish caught, the average owner of a smaller longliner in the groundfishery would have received a 10 per cent return (after interest and insurance payments) on the total capital value of his enterprise.23 Put another way (as the royal commission itself put it), had the average enterprise received $0.039 more per pound of fish caught, then each crew member could have received an average Newfoundland wage per week worked ($336 per week); the skipper-owner, in turn, could have received this amount, plus an increment for performing management func-
tions (for a total of $403 per week), plus a 15 per cent return on the total investment. (By comparison, the average small-boat, inshore enterprise, according to the commission, would have had to receive $0.104 more per pound to achieve such returns.) This sort of increase in prices must be seen, and must have been seen by longliner owners in 1979, as economically (to say nothing, as yet, of politically) possible. While $0.038 per pound represents a 28 per cent increase in price, this is quite in keeping with the strong price performance of fish since 1968, and, specifically, with the year-over-year increases in Newfoundland inshore prices of 12 per cent in 1977, 23 per cent in 1978, 13 per cent in 1979, and 15 per cent in 1980.

Yet another insight into the capitalist character of the near-shore fishery was recently provided by Peter Sinclair's detailed examination of what he calls "petty capitalism" and "domestic commodity production" in the Port au Choix area of northern Newfoundland — work that is just being published. While he is adamantly opposed to the notion that the rest of the inshore fishery is about to disappear and be replaced by the nearshore fishery, he nonetheless found during his field research in 1981 and 1982 that all but two of the longliners engaged in the shrimp fishery in this area were owned by individuals. And, he says, although these "skippers" often employed sons, brothers or cousins as crew,

nevertheless skippers do own means of production, they do hire others who are without property, and they are willing to invest their profits to expand their enterprises. Furthermore, in control of the daily routines of fishing and in planning fishing strategy, the skipper enjoys a clear position of authority, although it is not exercised in an officious manner. Thus, the [longliners used as shrimp] draggers function as small-scale or petty capitalist enterprises.

Furthermore, in estimating the maximum extent of "petty capitalism" in the fishery, Sinclair seems to consider it not unreasonable to assume that all "longliners" (i.e., vessels over 35 feet) are capitalist enterprises.

Analyses of the nearshore phenomenon, such as those by Proskie, the 1981 royal commission and Sinclair; the different character of the "nearshore," quantitatively speaking, relative to the "inshore" fishery; and the very fact that the "nearshore" fishery has been distinguished empirically in its own right — all are suggestive of the capitalist character of the nearshore en-
Enterprise. As such, it is also an empirical representation of a specific and important form of the development of capitalism. It is a form that contrasts, for example, with the rise of the large-scale Big Four whose genealogy was mentioned above. The rise of the nearshore fishery is an instance of what Marx called the "really revolutionizing path": the proprietary producer (in this case the fisherman) has become an industrial capitalist (albeit a small one). Indeed, as a process whereby the fisherman becomes capitalist, its expression is not limited to the nearshore phenomenon. This appears to be the conclusion to be derived from unpublished 1979 federal government data on vessels by ownership class. According to these figures, twelve of the twenty-one 65-to-100-foot "midshore" vessels, and four of the ninety 100-foot or more "offshore" vessels were also fisherman-owned.29

Underdeveloped, or Just Less Developed and Developing? Having documented the existence and character of capitalism outside the offshore fishery, it is now possible to appreciate better the extent to which capitalism has developed in the Newfoundland fishery as a whole. In terms of the published data, the development of capitalism is most accurately indicated if data on the offshore fishery are combined with the nearshore data. It is then quite evident that capitalism has established its presence in the fishing industry in the post-war period to a substantial extent and, at least to 1981, at a substantial pace. Rising from approximately 50 per cent in 1960, by 1973, 89 per cent of the value invested in fishing vessels in the industry was capital; in 1981 (despite very high fish prices between 1977 and 1980 as a consequence of the declaration of the 200-mile limit in 1977, and rising unemployment nationally — two factors which together encouraged the expansion of a petit bourgeois fishery) this figure still stood at 84 per cent. Moreover, in terms of the values invested in the industry, the growth and presence of capitalism would be all the more impressive if the values invested in processing plants were included.

Employment figures provide an equally striking indication of the extent of the development of capitalism in the fishery. According to the 1945 Newfoundland census, only 3,485 per-
sons were engaged in the catching and processing of fish on a capitalist basis; in 1960, this number was little changed at 3,648. In 1980, however, at the height of the 1977-80 boom, perhaps as many as 18,000 people (5,900 in catching, 12,180 in processing) were employed on a capitalist basis.30

Of course not all of the nearshore fishery defined by statisticians should be identified as capitalistic. Some nearshore enterprises are purely proprietary-cooperative ventures, while some others would never realize profits under any conceivable circumstances. However, while it is undoubtedly true that the appropriation of unpaid labour (the production of surplus value) does not occur on every longliner, it is indisputable that every single nearshore vessel does represent the result of a process of differentiation of the proprietary producers; as R.D.S. MacDonald says: "The intermediate or nearshore fisheries developed from the old artisanal community base."31

The nearshore fishery as a whole shows not only that more and more proprietors in Newfoundland have been forced to give up their boats, other fishing equipment and flakes to become proletarians in the nearshore fishery, in the offshore fish-catching and processing enterprises, or in other branches of industry in Newfoundland and elsewhere — or to exist in a state where they are barely able to hang on to this privately held productive property. (Of this situation, the work of the Maritime Marxists properly reminds us.) It also shows that a significant number of others "got on in the world" — acquired better, larger and more expensive boats — and even began, or put themselves in a position, to exploit some of their erstwhile fellow proprietors. And if we want to abstract from the material processes of development, it would be more valuable to visualize a three-fold stratification by 1981 in the old "inshore" fishery. First, there are those marginalized producers who make up the large majority of inshore fishermen and whose boats correspond to the 1981 average of $2,750. They have no real future in the fishery and participate only as a last resort, flowing in (as in 1977-80) and out (as in 1981) according to the price of fish, fishing conditions, and the demand for labour elsewhere. Then there are the fishermen who own the largest inshore and smallest nearshore vessels. These fishermen purchase labour power irregularly, either for shore work or when

SPE 44
fishing conditions demand. The future of most of these fishermen is also suspect. Finally, there are the formerly proprietary fishermen who operate most of the nearshore vessels (especially if such vessels are defined by displacement), more than half of the "midshore" vessels, and a few of the "offshore" vessels; these fishermen are outright capitalists who must employ labour (wage-labour paid by piece-wages under the co-adventurer system) in addition to their own, due to both the size of their vessels and the technology employed on these boats. Many of these fishermen have a future under existing circumstances, but a significant number are at or near the precipice, their future dependent on continuing (though achievable) positive change.

So the forms and extent of the development of capitalism in the fishing industry are far greater than has generally been recognized. This means two things. First, it means that those commentators (notably the Maritime Marxists) who have held to an "underdevelopment" problematic cannot argue that the fishing industry in Newfoundland has not experienced capitalist development and modernization. At most, they can make the purely quantitative claims that the Newfoundland fishery is less capitalistically developed, and that the rate of capitalist development has been slower than it might have been under different circumstances. Second, it casts the politics of fishing in an entirely new light. It suggests that these politics probably represent, not a single "anti-capitalist, working-class struggle" against "the entire system of capitalist underdevelopment," but several discrete struggles for change — struggles that could and can (but not necessarily will) be won. To this entirely different matter we now turn.

The Struggle for Capitalism When one turns to the political conflicts and policy debates that have accompanied the economic transformation experienced by the Newfoundland fishing industry since 1945, scarcely any sign or indication of this transformation is to be detected. It has been argued above that the rise of the "nearshore" fishery constitutes a refutation of all the analyses of the industry conducted in terms of the "offshore-inshore" dichotomy. However, in the 379 pages of the Kirby Report of 1982, the "nearshore" is rarely mentioned.
Studies in Political Economy

The traditional "inshore" fishery may well have experienced a process of differentiation, and smaller-scale fish-catching may now as a result be characterized by a "three-fold stratification," but the politics of the fishery, particularly in Newfoundland, do not present us with the spectacle of a bickering plurality of interests representing capitalists, better- and worse-off petits-bourgeois, and proletarians. Finally, capitalism, and its "grave-diggers," the working class, may have grown substantially, but these gravediggers, like everyone else these days, are unemployed. Instead, as it was in the 1950s and especially the 1960s, so it was as we entered the 1980s: the politics of the fishery present themselves as Offshore vs. Inshore, Inshore vs Offshore. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

This unchanging, dualistic character of political conflict in the fishing industry is the real basis for the prevalence of offshore-inshore treatments of its development. In other words, whatever the intent of those such as the Maritime Marxists, or of the non-Marxist commentators to whom we referred, their analyses should be seen as reflections of the politics, not statements about the economics, of fishing. To note that their work has this real basis is, however, not to suggest that it is any more valid than has so far been argued. For, as Marx says: "Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge . . . a period of transformation by its consciousness" (as these authors seem to do). On the contrary, "this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life";32 and this is in fact where the preceding analysis assumes its real importance.

When the politics of fishing in Newfoundland over the post-war years are examined in the context of the economic transformation of the same period, the appearance of continuity and stagnation disappears. We find instead that just as the development of capitalism in the industry took two different forms (i.e., the "offshore" and the "nearshore" developments), so have two radically different conflicts been concealed within the offshore-inshore dichotomy.

1. Offshore and Inshore: Modernization and Reaction The first of these offshore-inshore conflicts belongs to the headiest period of growth of large-scale capitalism in the industry (i.e.,
from 1965 to 1974-75 in Newfoundland, and much earlier in Nova Scotia). This conflict is the one most often associated with the Atlantic fishery (for example, in the notion of a conflict between “efficient” and “social” conceptions of the fishery); and in this regard, the concepts connected with the offshore-inshore dichotomy (modernity-tradition, capitalism-non-capitalism, capitalism-reserve army of labour) are, in fact, quite useful.

The struggle by fractions of capital in Newfoundland against tradition and for the production and reproduction of capital on an extended scale is usually understood as one in which the state — both provincial and federal — played the dominant role. This view is summarized aptly by Farley Mowat:

The day that [Joseph] Smallwood [Liberal premier of Newfoundland, 1949-72] came to power, the continuity and evolution of the Newfoundland way of life was disrupted, probably forever. . . . Progress, so the new policy dictated, demanded the elimination of most of the 1,300 outport communities that encircled the island, and the transformation of their people into industrial workers. Progress dictated that the men of the sea forswear their ancient ways of life and move, as rootless migrants, to the alien milieu of industrial and mining towns. . . . The outport people had to be induced — and if not induced, then forced — to abandon the ways and the world they knew. The tactics used combined both methods. The first step was to wither the fisheries and the mercantile marine [in the outports] by withholding the support which would enable them to make the transition into effective economic enterprises. . . . With their underpinnings knocked out the outports began to totter; but their intrinsic strength was greater than the politicians had anticipated. The next step was to reduce basic services. . . .

There is much truth in this, as any Newfoundlander knows (and as Brian Peckford will not let us forget). The state did play a large role in providing the conditions for the free expansion of capital in the fishery. Its most innocuous role was in education. In 1964, for example, the Fisheries College of Newfoundland and Labrador was established in St. John’s to train labour for employment on trawlers and in fresh-fish processing plants. More significantly, beginning in 1954 various programmes were introduced to centralize the labour force (it is to these programmes that Mowat refers). The most ambitious, controversial and fishery-oriented of the programmes was the joint federal-provincial effort launched by the Resettlement Act of 1965, the object of which was the relocation of rural Newfoundlanders to (in order of priority) eight major large-scale “fishery growth centres,” “other fishery growth cen-
tres," and finally, "other designated growth centres." Over the five-year period of this programme, 119 outports were evacuated, individual households from another 252 communities were moved, and, in sum, a total of 16,141 people in 3,242 households were relocated.34

But Mowat, Peckford and popular opinion notwithstanding, the role played by the state in the struggle by fractions of capital for a skilled and consolidated labour force was less central than is usually supposed. Long before Smallwood and the Liberal Party thought of it, capital was operating its own "resettlement programme" in Newfoundland by means of its process of accumulation and pauperization. Especially after World War I, the Newfoundland fishing industry — until 1910 the leading world exporter of saltcod — was increasingly driven, by Norwegian, French, and particularly Icelandic trawler-based enterprises, from every market for every grade of saltfish (soft-cured varieties), "where large-scale production methods were most effective." In turn, this "pressure of increased production of soft cured fish . . . weakened the market for dry-cured fish," the product for which Newfoundland proprietors were most famous.35 At the same time, with the decay and decline of plantation production in the West Indies and Brazil (in turn, a consequence of capitalist development, particularly in the sugar industry), Newfoundland proprietors were confronted by shrinking markets (and thus falling prices). As a result of these changes, by the 1950s prices for saltcod had fallen below even those being paid to Newfoundland fresh-fish processing companies for frozen fish, and those proprietors who could, turned solely to catching and selling fresh fish. Many others — especially women who had previously made saltfish in proprietary fishing families — were either forced out of the industry altogether or had to enter processing plants as wage-labourers.

It is this other "programme" that explains why the official, state-led one actually resulted in the relocation of so many people rather than in street riots (to say nothing of the fact that it also resulted in the re-election of the Smallwood government, in the fourth year of the programme, with 36 of the 42 seats in the legislature). By the time the state introduced its programme, rural residents were well-prepared and thoroughly demoralized. Polls showed, and at least some opponents of re-
settlement have acknowledged, that of the people who relocated, “most readily admitted that the traditional economic basis of their communities had declined, and that they had moved because they could see ‘no future for the children’.”\textsuperscript{36} In fact, on closer examination it is clear that the resettlement programme was not even one that hurried (or “overdetermined”) the tendencies inherent in the process of capital accumulation. Rather, the programme was as much one that partially offset other state interventions that hampered the accumulation process through programmes of social assistance (family allowance, unemployment insurance) and small-scale fisheries development (provincially sponsored cooperatives) — interventions that were necessitated by the Smallwood government’s rural basis of support, and by its populist ideology (and which reflected the characteristic contradictions to which the state is subject in all such capitalistically less-developed regions).

Nonetheless the struggle by and for large-scale industry — a struggle carried on chiefly through the resettlement programmes — did give rise to a real dichotomy which is reflected in much of the non-Marxist commentary on the fishing industry. The categories of the latter are, so to speak, “capital’s” categories. They express the imperatives and parameters of accumulation: offshore and non-offshore (i.e., inshore); large-scale capitalism and (given the low level of capitalist development) non-capitalism; large-scale capitalism and the reserve army of labour required by it; modern, large-scale industry and tradition — the lack of specialized skills necessary for capitalism.

These categories are those employed by Parzival Copes. His approach, as we saw above, does not provide an adequate means of grasping the development of the industry. But as an expression (indeed as a manifesto) of the struggle by and for large-scale industry, his approach is more than adequate, not only to assail traditional outport Newfoundland, but to call for and praise resettlement programmes as restitution by the state for its interference in the programme of capital:

\begin{quote}
Measures of economic assistance and welfare perversely tend to freeze the province in a position of economic retardation. Resettlement is helping overcome the immobility of the outport labour force. . . . In doing so resettlement is assisting in the restoration of balance between manpower and resources.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}
It is in the context of this struggle too that we should understand the work of Alexander, the Committee on Federal Licensing Policy and its members, and, for that matter, the work of Memorial University's Institute of Social and Economic Research in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Alexander and other members of the Committee were associated with this institute). Their work is as valid as Copes's, and for the same reason; it is simply the reverse of his. It was a reaction to the attack of capital, and a defence of the attacked in the face of attack ("My research revealed that resettlement often occurred as a result of fear and intimidation within the community"); a defence of the closeness of proprietary kinship relations in the face of modernity ("It seems improper to judge a way of life in terms of a cost-benefit tabulation"); a defence of the closeness of proprietary kinship relations in the face of the empty, impersonal relations of capital ("Outport women now find themselves suffering from the same isolation, alienation and sense of powerlessness that plague women in urban, industrial centres"); a defence of the latent reserve army of labour in the face of its latency ("The urban-industrial sector is hardly able to absorb the natural increase in the urban population let alone any extensive rural in-migration"); and, above all, a defence of proprietary fishing (described as "the nexus or pivotal occupation and source of income in many relatively pluralistic outport adaptations") in the face of proletarianization and specialization. All of these elements are found in the work of Alexander and the Committee on Federal Licensing Policy, which most closely resembles a "polemical inversion" of Copes's modernization perspective. Not only is any state interference (such as anything that smacks of resettlement) rejected by these authors, but they argue in a most "Copesian" fashion that the traditional sector of the fishery is more "modern" than its modern sector: "Occupational pluralism promotes economic rationality . . . and it promotes economic efficiency . . . ."

2. Inshore and Offshore: Independents and Companies The struggle against tradition and for large-scale industry in the fishery is not, however, the context in which the Maritime Marxists have worked. Rather, their work on the fishing industry can only be grasped in terms of a second, more recent
“offshore-inshore” conflict — a conflict whose difference from the earlier one was first made clear by Alexander when, in reviewing the concerns of the Committee on Federal Licensing Policy, he was compelled to acknowledge the existence of some misguided souls in the “inshore” camp:

Support for this policy [of restricting fishing licenses to all bona fide, full-time fishermen] can be found among the more heavily capitalized inshore fishermen and the Fishermen’s Union whose membership is comprised mainly of trawlemen and the elite of inshoremen.\textsuperscript{45}

The “Fishermen’s Union” Alexander was referring to is the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers Union (NFFAWU), and its rise is the most important feature of the second conflict, one subsumed by the offshore-inshore dichotomy. This conflict belongs to the period of the most rapid growth of capitalism on the small-scale, inshore base (i.e., the later 1970s), and was paralleled by a corresponding conflict during the same years in the other Atlantic provinces. This conflict is often confused with the first “offshore-inshore” conflict, but in this instance the concepts “modernity-tradition” and “capitalism-non-capitalism” are all but useless. This is because the second conflict has not been a struggle of modernity against tradition, but of modernity against modernity, and, increasingly, of capitalism against capitalism — a fight by the industry’s new bourgeoisie (the owners of capitalist and larger proprietary fish-catching enterprises\textsuperscript{46} against the restrictions imposed on them by the large-scale, vertically integrated enterprises in the fishery, and for an industry structured to favour their continued existence and expansion as industrial capitalists.

This struggle has in large part been carried on through the NFFAWU, though this is by no means as obvious as it might be. First, in addition to the owners of proprietary and capitalist enterprises, and their “sharemen,” the membership of the NFFAWU also includes the most developed segments of the working class in the industry — those working in processing plants and on trawlers. Formed in 1970, and officially constituted in April 1971, the union is an amalgamation of the Newfoundland section of the Canadian Food and Allied Workers Union (CFAWU), which had been active in the province since 1967, and, significantly, the Northern Fishermen’s Union.
(NFU), an organization of small-scale enterprises formed in 1969 at Port au Choix, "an important longliner centre since the opening of a fresh-fish plant there in 1965." 47 Constitutionally the NFFAWU was established as a division of the CFAWU (later the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union [UFCWIU]) with two sections: CFAWU/UFCWIU Local 1252 is the "industrial section" representing workers in fish processing plants and CFAWU/UFCWIU Local 465 is the "fishermen's section" representing small-scale enterprises and workers on trawlers. 48 The two sections have a common president who, since the NFFAWU's formation, has been Richard Cashin, a former Liberal member of Parliament and parliamentary assistant to the minister of Fisheries.

Second, as David MacDonald's study of the NFFAWU's early years (Power Begins at the Cod-End) makes clear, until 1975 the union was occupied mainly with the trade-union interests of plant and trawler workers. Between 1971 and 1974, the NFFAWU engaged in a series of industrial actions in pursuit of union recognition, standardization of working conditions, and improved wages and benefits for workers in processing plants. Despite initial losses, by late 1972 the union had achieved many of its goals, and in 1973, with the help of the 1973-74 boom conditions, it was signing two-year agreements that doubled hourly wages. Furthermore, a successful ten-month strike in 1971-72 for a first contract at the Lake Group's main plant at Burgeo showed that plant workers and the NFFAWU were capable of fighting sustained campaigns. 49 This was also shown by the most significant action organized by the NFFAWU during this period: the trawlermen's strike of 1974-75 (on which MacDonald concentrated). The consequence of this nine-month dispute was that trawler workers were recognized as employees of the vessel owners for whom they worked. Although a large portion of their income was still to be paid by piece-wage, at least for these workers co-adventurer status was at last brought to an end, leading to the guaranteeing of at least some of their income. 50

Notwithstanding these and later trade-union activities, however, it would be a mistake to consider the NFFAWU a working-class body. On the contrary, it is a bourgeois one in which the political and economic interests of the workers and pauper-
ized proprietors are expressed only to the extent that such interests are in keeping with the project of the new bourgeoisie confronted by the necessities of capital accumulation. This was made explicit in 1982, by which time the deepening crisis had put such stress on the longliner owners that a tear had appeared in theirs and the NFFAWU's hegemonic cloak. Consider the union's evaluation of the crisis, adopted at the NFFAWU annual convention in December 1982 (from which we quote at length):

This convention recognizes as distinct but equally important, two crises that threaten our fishing industry and the whole of rural society in Atlantic Canada.

There is a disastrous situation in the inshore fishery, with many of our independent boat operators effectively bankrupt because present fish landings and prices cannot keep pace with sharply rising costs.

And there is another, separate crisis in the deepsea fishery brought about by the mismanagement of the large, vertically integrated companies. In the inshore sector, many of our most productive fishermen, especially the longliner-gillnet skippers, will be forced out of the fishery unless drastic measures are taken.

In the deepsea sector, at least seven of the twelve trawler ports in Newfoundland have a very uncertain future.

This Convention calls on both levels of government to recognize the two equally drastic crises outlined above, then work with fishermen and fish plant workers in trying to pick up the pieces of our crumbling industry.

This convention also endorses the following specific measures. In the inshore sector:

1. That a federal/provincial/fishermen's conference be called forthwith to devise a strategy for saving the longliner fleet.

2. That this conference look specifically at ways of refinancing the longliner fleet.

3. That the ... 50% increase in the cost of fishermen's loans be reversed.

4. That the Fisheries Loan Board ... allow fishermen to shop around for the best deal in buying boats and equipment.

5. That the federal government ... establish a fishermen's bank.

6. That the federal government ... remove the inequitable duty on boats less than 100 feet.

7. That ... an inquiry be launched into the cost of fishing gear.

8. That a significant subsidy be paid on fish landings [and improved quality] as an interim measure ... [towards] establishing fish prices in line with the economic needs of fishermen.

9. That Revenue Canada put an end to its tax audit of fishermen.
In the offshore sector:

1. That . . . a separation of the harvesting and processing sectors be [effected].

2. That there be substantial government equity in the deepsea harvesting sector.

3. That [the companies be restricted in their movements of trawler landings from port to port].

4. That . . . [there be] worker participation in the management of the industry . . . [where the state has provided financial aid to companies].

5. That [there be a single state agency for the marketing of fish products].

This Convention endorses the above . . . people-oriented approach to revitalizing our industry.51

As far as the class character of the NFFA WU is concerned, little more need be said. While there were 16,939 registered vessels in the “inshore” fishery according to the most recent figures (1981), the union took up the problems of just 1,320 of them. What is more, while workers in “at least seven of the twelve trawler ports [were viewed as having] a very uncertain future,” the first and major measure offered for the resolution of the crisis in the offshore sector was, in fact, a thoroughgoing capitalist one — the monopolization of harvesting by the inshore fishery.

The class character of the NFFA WU has not only been clear since the onset of the crisis, however. The union’s previous policy actions also made its bourgeois character evident. One of these was its attempt to have the fishery restricted to “full-time, bona fide fishermen” — a policy that would finally eliminate many of the remaining proprietary inshore fishermen. Defending this policy in 1980, Cashin “damned as ‘a romantic élitism that will keep the fishermen forever in bondage’ the policy preference . . . for a large part-time shore fishery rather than a small full-time one.”52 This policy has been pursued by the union in part through collective agreements with the large processing companies. In 1977, for example, provision was made with the companies for professional fishermen to have priority of sale during the summer fish glut.

The restrictive policy has also been pursued by the NFFA WU’s proposal of, and support for, “inshore” licensing schemes enforced by the federal government. In 1973, for ex-
ample, the union called for, and obtained, a licensing programme which, by dividing inshore enterprises into full-time and part-time categories, threatened many small-boat owners with expropriation. This measure led the Committee on Federal Licensing Policy to come to the defence of that other “inshore” fishery. Similarly, at the NFFAWU’s annual convention in 1980, praise was bestowed upon a new federal licensing programme which, among other things, froze the number of “inshore” fishermen, further refined the division of enterprises into full- and part-time ones, established local licensing committees composed of fishermen and federal officials, and gave preference in the receipt of government assistance, and in the opportunity to fish for herring with fixed gear and cod with traps, to “full-time fishermen with a previous history in the fishery.” James Morgan, provincial minister of Fisheries, described the initiative as one that appeared to give the “10,000 full-time fishermen in the province ... almost a monopoly in the fishery and [one that would] squeeze out the remainder of the 40,000 people in the fishery through [their] placement ... in the part-time category.” Earle McCurdy, secretary-treasurer of the NFFAWU, said “the new licensing program will provide better opportunities and recognition for full-time fishermen, something the NFFAWU has been pushing for over the past years.”

Another step taken by the NFFAWU to guarantee the future of the new bourgeoisie was in the area of unemployment insurance and workmen’s compensation. The union has staunchly defended, for the purpose of premium payment, the Unemployment Insurance Commission’s definition of those owning and/or working in small-scale enterprises as employees of the processing firms to which these enterprises sell. The union has also sought to have benefits calculated on the best, rather than the last, ten weeks of the fishing season, so as to maximize them — a measure of great benefit to the owners of the largest enterprises which pursue the longest fishing season. Similarly, the NFFAWU launched a campaign in 1980 to have all persons in the inshore and nearshore fishery covered by workmen’s compensation by having the processing companies defined as employers for the purpose of these premium payments. As the St. John’s Evening Telegram reported it, the union’s major con-
cern seemed to be the Workmen’s Compensation Board’s lack of grace in defining the owner of a vessel on which three or more persons worked as an employer. These “skippers,” according to the NFFAWU, were being billed for premiums that “in many cases” amounted to $1,000 or more. In short, the NFFAWU’s proposals consistently relieved the nearshore owners of the obligations placed on capitalist employers by the state, while ensuring that workers would nonetheless be fully available to them.

But the most important steps taken by the NFFAWU to secure the future of its bourgeois membership have been its attempts to ensure, as Cashin put it, that prices paid for fish “will bear a better relationship to fishermen’s needs.” Its efforts in this direction have been directed at both the processing companies and the state.

In relation to the major processing companies, the union has endeavoured, since its formation, to organize small-scale enterprises and to negotiate province-wide fish prices on their behalf. This was achieved for the first time in 1976 (in the aftermath of the trawlermen’s strike of 1974-75) when, representing 4,500 persons in “inshore” and “nearshore” enterprises, the union negotiated industry-wide prices. In the course of these negotiations and in the pursuit of provincial bargaining, moreover, the NFFAWU has not been averse to employing strike and boycott action. It is often forgotten, for example, that the celebrated trawlermen’s strike began when these workers were called out in support of a NFFAWU-organized boycott of Fishery Products Limited by “inshore” enterprises in the Port au Choix area, to secure higher prices. Only under the pressure of later circumstances — notably the positive recommendation of the Harris Conciliation Board and the militancy of trawler workers themselves — was the abolition of the co-adventurer system put on the agenda. The most significant action taken for higher inshore fish prices was, however, the five-week-long boycott (during the summer of 1980) by the union’s 10,000 inshore and nearshore members of the twenty-one processing firms represented by the Fisheries Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (FANL) — an action that was reportedly most militantly supported by longliner owners. While this action did not result in higher prices, as
part of the agreement to end the boycott the NFFAWU did get a provincial royal commission inquiry into the "inshore" fishery. (This was the 1980-81 royal commission, referred to above, which found that the processors could not afford to pay higher prices.) Furthermore, the action indicated, as federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Romeo Leblanc later put it, that the NFFAWU was "a leading voice, not only for the long-term interests of your members, but for the long-term interests of the fishery itself." It was, in short, a power to be contended with: "If I had any doubts about your strength, I had none by the end of last summer."58

The NFFAWU has not turned only to the processing companies for better fish prices, however. In more recent years (i.e., since 1980), it has also turned to the state. Since experience and two enquiries into fish prices — the Harris Conciliation Board of 1974 and the provincial royal commission of 1980-81 — have made it increasingly clear that fish prices are determined by more than the companies' meanness, the NFFAWU has been increasingly compelled to seek what Cashin describes as "a fundamental change in the system." The measures required for this fundamental change, he has said, are a price stabilization fund supported by a levy on company profits in boom years, the nationalization of a large processing firm to establish a price leader, and full disclosure of the companies' books. More recently still, in 1982, the union reiterated its demand for a stabilization fund (this time to be supported by the state as well as processors) before the Kirby task force; and, in 1983, in light of the task force's failure to recommend such a fund, the NFFAWU asked for the complete nationalization of the trawler fleets of the Big Four fish companies.59

However, contrary to the impression often given (especially by the NFFAWU's appeals for direct and regular subsidies for inshore prices, and by the state's recent refusal to provide them), the pursuit of the cause of "our inshore and nearshore fishery" (as Cashin often puts it) and, correspondingly, of the fishery's new bourgeoisie, has not been a lonely one undertaken only by the NFFAWU and other organizations elsewhere in Atlantic Canada. The state, and especially the federal state which has jurisdiction over fish-catching in Canada, has taken
measures that have favoured the owners of small capitalist and larger proprietary enterprises even more clearly than those of the NFFAWU. In fact, dating from 1974, when Romeo Leblanc was appointed, as he put it, "minister of fishermen," rather than "minister of the fishing industry," the central theme of federal fisheries policy changed from the encouragement of large-scale industry in fish-catching to the promotion and consolidation of capitalist development on the small-scale inshore base. This change was repeatedly indicated by Leblanc's own comments. To cite only one example, in 1978 he stated that

I want the ordinary man to own something solid and to have power enough, with his mates, to resist control and, instead, shape his own destiny. We want to give the fishery back to the fishermen. . . . I believe the independent fishermen should grow increasingly into the midshore and, as necessary into the offshore class of vessels. . . . Until the fishermen are truly equal partners [with the processors], the federal government will stand up against the big interests and favour the fishermen. . . .

The change to a policy of "giving the fishery back to the fishermen" in Atlantic Canada was indicated by federal action in three main areas during the Leblanc era: licensing, harvesting management, and fish prices.

In the area of licensing, the federal state enacted licensing programmes either proposed or supported by the NFFAWU. As already noted, the logic of these programmes is, in effect, to see that the fishery is taken away from most fishermen.

In the area of fish prices, the federal state sought to develop, by several means, what "the most extensive policy review" initiated by Leblanc shortly after his appointment called "optimal efficiency in port markets." First, arguing that "the [port-market] price, which usually is set by the leadership of the integrated firms themselves, assumes for them the character of an internal transfer price," and that there is, therefore, "some time lag" in the transmission of higher finished-product prices back to smaller-scale enterprises, the state repeatedly threatened during the 1970s to enforce a "separation [of] the profit centre in catching from that in other divisions of integrated enterprise," and has encouraged the organization of fishermen into bodies like the NFFAWU and MFU. Further, in at least one instance the federal state provided direct aid in the battle for higher prices from the processors for smaller-
scale enterprises. During the 1980 boycott by the NFFAWU's inshore members, the Canadian Saltfish Corporation (a federal crown corporation) bought all the saltfish inshore fishermen cared to make.63 Second, by funding such projects as the construction of the $61 million fish-landing, storage and marketing centre begun at Harbour Grace, Newfoundland in 1979, the state advanced the development of multi-buyer port markets. Third, and of great importance for Newfoundland's small enterprises, which have little access to outside markets (i.e., they are not close to the United States, as southwestern Nova Scotia is), federal policy, beginning with Leblanc, permitted so-called "over-the-side" or direct sales such as those organized by the NFFAWU in 1978 and 1979 with Bulgarian and Swedish factory ships. Direct sales such as these resulted both in improved fish prices, and in cries of "unfair competition" from the Nickerson brothers.64

The federal state also actively promoted smaller-scale catching enterprises in the area of resource management. Whereas in 1973 a departmental committee was recommending that the number of 35-to-140-foot vessels be frozen at the 1973 level, with a controlled increase in those over 140 feet, in 1978 it was the number of vessels over 140 feet that was frozen and the introduction of factory trawlers that was prohibited, while an increase in the number and "independent ownership" of 35-to-65-foot vessels was encouraged.65 Similarly, on the basis of the increase in fish stocks and management opportunities which followed Canada's extension of offshore jurisdiction to 200 miles, the federal state set aside increasingly large quotas of fish for smaller-scale enterprises in its annual groundfish-harvesting plans — especially with regard to the stocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the east coast of Newfoundland. These harvesting policies produced protests from the Big Four, the most extreme reaction being the 1980 "strike" by National Sea Products and H.B. Nickerson, which tied up the companies' Nova Scotia-based trawler fleets and threatened the lay-off of 3,000 plant workers.66

It is this struggle by and for capitalism in smaller-scale fish-catching — a battle carried on chiefly through the NFFAWU in Newfoundland and by the federal state throughout Atlantic Canada after 1974 — that must be clearly understood if the
“offshore-inshore” terminology in which it is expressed is also to be clearly grasped. The categories “inshore” and “offshore” are, first and foremost, the language in which the NFFAWU, fishermen’s organizations elsewhere in Atlantic Canada, and federal policy-makers have expressed their fundamental problem in recent years: the relationship of fish-seller to fish-buyer, of so-called “independent” (i.e., non-company) fishing enterprises to larger, vertically-integrated enterprises. But these categories also express much more than this. In the context of the differentiation of the proprietary fishery — a process revealed in the rise of the “nearshore” fishery — they are, in a different way, just as much capital’s categories as those of the first conflict encompassed by the inshore-offshore dichotomy. The categories of “inshore-offshore” (i.e., seller-buyer, independent-company) are means by which interests that belong only to the new bourgeoisie are generalized and put forward as universal interests. The notion of an “inshore” fishery erases all quantitative and qualitative differences between smaller-scale enterprises, and thereby obscures the fact that all policies fought for and/or implemented in the name of “giving the fishery back to the fishermen” or “our inshore and nearshore fishery” are, regardless of intent, inevitably of greatest benefit to a specific and limited category of enterprises: those that catch the most fish because they employ the largest vessels and gear; those that have the most licenses (and, maybe soon, the largest quotas); those that enjoy the longest fishing seasons and are closest to the richest fishing grounds and the largest processing plants; and, most of all, those that with a relatively small change in fish prices would find their future guaranteed. In short: the enterprises owned by the new bourgeoisie.

The notion of an offshore fishery also universalizes the interests of the new bourgeoisie by identifying their foe as one common to all fishermen. In so doing, this notion also minimizes the differences between the smaller enterprises. More significantly, by specifying as the enemy, not capitalism, but the processors, and especially the vertically integrated enterprises, it also glosses over class distinctions — distinctions between the owners of “inshore” vessels and their crews and (as the NFFAWU itself exemplifies) between these owners and the most developed segments of the working class: the trawler...
crews and processing employees.

The struggle by and for capitalism in smaller-scale fish-catching is also the basis of the form and content of the work of the Maritime Marxists. As we saw above, their “offshore-inshore” approach, like that of Copes and Alexander, is an inadequate means of conceptualizing the development of the industry. But as an (albeit unconscious) expression of the struggle of the new bourgeoisie, it is more than adequate. Even more than the language of the NFFAWU or Leblanc, the notions of “petty primary production,” “the inshore fisheries segment of the domestic mode of production,” or “the industrial reserve army” erase all points of difference among inshore enterprises. What is more, by always opposing to these categories, as the Maritime Marxists do, “capitalist production” or the “capitalist mode of production,” something that is only implicit in the notions of “offshore” fishery, “fish-buyer” or “companies” is made explicit: capitalism is always “over there” with the big companies and never found among “the fishermen.”

**Socialism** It should now be clear that the Maritime Marxist view of the “anti-capitalist, working-class” nature and “socialist” logic of “inshore” struggles is mistaken in the case of Newfoundland and at least questionable in relation to the Maritimes, where “inshore” fishing organizations have pursued policy practices similar to those of the NFFAWU. Although it is certainly true that many inshore fishermen should be counted within the proletariat, they should be counted as such not just for “structural” reasons, but because they are the employees of other inshore fishermen. Similarly, while many inshore fishermen may indeed be considered semi-proletarians because their pauperized condition places them in the ranks of the industrial reserve army, it is stretching meanings to call the owner of a $100,000 longliner a “semi-proletarian,” and it is doubtful that many of the poorest fishermen are politically active and actually belong to the NFFAWU or other organizations.

The same can be said of the politics of fishing. In Newfoundland, to be sure, the post-war battles of the inshore fishery have displayed neither an “anti-capitalist, working-class,” nor a “socialist” logic: they have consistently displayed bourgeois characteristics. In the “first” inshore-offshore conflict (as
it has been called here), "inshore" politics were a reaction to modernization and large-scale capitalist development — a reaction amplified by the members of the Institute of Social and Economic Research, and now cynically played on by Mr. Peckford. The "second" inshore-offshore conflict, although in some respects expressive of a bona fide "lower class social movement" (the membership of the NFFAWU includes plant and trawler workers and "inshore" sharemen), was and is also a bourgeois one in which pro-inshore and anti-offshore policies have been in complete accord only with the interests of the fishery's new bourgeoisie.

But to argue that the politics of inshore fishing have this bourgeois character does not mean that these politics, or the concerns raised about them by the Maritime Marxists (for which their work has justly commanded respect), are irrelevant from a socialist, working-class point of view. What it means is that in contrast to the work of these authors, specific attention must be paid to the measures that are being fought for and implemented in the name of the inshore fishery. There must be no expectation that even the most complete victory of inshore fishing interests will offer anything more than opportunities — and not necessarily even those.

The inshore interest that arose out of the large-scale, capitalist modernization of the fishery was and remains strictly reactionary. It offers nothing to the working class, to socialism, or (as Cashin correctly argues) to the "inshore" fishermen of whatever class. All it offers is a hankering for a not-so-bright past — a past which, by the time members of the Institute of Social and Economic Research had raised the alarm, could not be recaptured. It is to the present and the future that socialists must look.

The "second" struggle by and for the "inshore" fishery is a different matter and calls for a different attitude on the part of socialists. Although it is a bourgeois struggle, the very fact that it is a fight of a new class-on-the-rise whose "interest has not yet been able to develop as the particular interest of a particular class" means that many of the interests pursued in that struggle are shared with those of inshore, non-owning crewmen and plant and trawler workers. For example, the fight by owners of inshore enterprises in Nova Scotia and Prince
Edward Island for the legal right to combine to negotiate fish prices would also seem to be a fight for workers in inshore enterprises (so-called “co-adventurers”) to organize — and not in the same organization as their skippers. Similarly, the nationalization of the largest processing companies and their trawler fleets, while originating within the terms of this struggle as an attempt by the new bourgeoisie to bring fish prices more in line with their costs of production, also implies the more complete socialization of these productive forces.

The fact remains, however, that current “inshore” struggles are struggles for capitalism, and this means that it must be asked again whether this is all there can be in the Atlantic fishery, or whether there can be something more. There can be something more, but if there is to be something more — if there is to be a struggle for socialism — two requirements must be met. Ideologically, much more needs to be done to demonstrate that “inshore” vs. “offshore” is so much nonsense from a working-class point of view. Politically, authentic working-class organizations of plant, trawler and inshore (piece-wage) workers — organizations that play a leading and hegemonic (rather than subordinate) role — still have to be formed. But they will never be formed if socialists continue simply to lend support, and to devote their first attentions, to any struggle against big capital in the name of an alliance against “capitalist under-development.”

Meeting these requirements will not be easy. But no serious struggle for socialism can be undertaken unless they are accepted.

Notes

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Studies in Political Economy


3. Rick Williams, "Inshore Fishermen, Unionization, and the Struggle against Underdevelopment Today," in Brym and Sacouman, Underdevelopment and Social Movements, 174 (see n. 1 above).


5. See the back cover of Brym and Sacouman, Underdevelopment and Social Movements. This view is also held by no less than the Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist), which in 1978 issued a pamphlet in support of the Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU), entitled For a Class Struggle Union: Fishermen and Workers Unite (cited in R.D.S. Macdonald, "Inshore Fishing Interests on the Atlantic Coast," Marine Policy (July 1979), 186 n.).


7. See, for example, Don Grady and James Sacouman, "The State versus the Wood Harbour 15 and 1043," Canadian Dimension 18: 2 (June 1984), 4-6; and Gene Barrett and Anthony Davis, "Floundering in Troubled Waters," Gorsebrook Research Institute, Occasional Paper no. 1-0783, p. 17


9. See the statement on the Kirby Report made by Gilles Theriault, executive director of the MFU (reprinted in A. Winson, ed., "The Atlantic Fisheries Dilemma," Gorsebrook Research Institute, Special Document no. 2-1283), and compare it to that made by Earle McCurdy, secretary-treasurer of the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers Union (NFFAWU), and to the resolution on the crisis adopted at the NFFAWU's annual convention in December 1982 (Union Forum [January 1983], 6-7).


11. I mean capitalist production in the strict sense, that is, the production of commodities and of surplus value (profit) by nominally free, productive, propertyless wage-labourers for another (the capitalist) who owns the means of production. Wage payment may take various forms (the most common being by time and by piece). While not usual in larger enterprises, the capitalist may work alongside those whom he has hired.

13. For example, Gene Barrett, in his analysis of the Nova Scotia fishing industry in the twentieth century ("Underdevelopment and Social Movements in the Fishing Industry in Nova Scotia," in Brym and Sacouman, *Underdevelopment and Social Movements*, 127-8), specifies only two "forms of capital," both of which are "offshore" and "large-scale." He then contrasts this "offshore" fishery with the "inshore", in which "the 'unit' of production [is] a two-fold domestic [i.e., non-capitalist] type." Similarly, Veltmeyer ("Capitalist Underdevelopment," 29 [see n. 1 above]) identifies "inshore" fishing with "self-subsistent, simple commodity or other pre-capitalist forms of production," and understands it as forming a locus of "latent relative surplus labour," while James Sacouman, who is cited by most of the Maritime Marxists, speaks of the "inshore fisheries segment of the domestic mode of production" or "petty primary production," and of the "offshore" capitalist fishery (Sacouman, "Semi-Proletarianization," 237).

14. Karl Marx, "Preface to the English Edition," *Capital*, 3 vols. (New York 1967), 1:4. In both earlier versions of this paper ("The Metaphysics of Dualism and the Development of Capitalism in the Newfoundland Fishing Industry"), and the unpublished master's thesis that preceded it, I sought to show that the theoretical-methodological perspective of the leading Maritime Marxists led to analysis that failed to go beyond what Engels called the daily "terms of commercial and industrial life," and was thereby "confined within the narrow circle of ideas expressed by those terms." For reasons of space, this question is not discussed here.

15. "Inshore" includes vessels under 10 tonnes; "nearshore" includes vessels between 10 and 50 tonnes; "offshore" includes vessels over 50 tonnes. This is a more conservative measure of the extent of the "nearshore" fishery than that provided by vessel length. Unless noted otherwise, the "three" fisheries will be designated by vessel displacement.


17. Employment figures for 1981 assume three persons working on 10- to 50-tonne vessels, six persons on 50- to 99.9-tonne vessels and fifteen persons on vessels 100 tonnes and over. (My thanks to T. Hsu of the Statistics and Analysis Division of Fisheries and Oceans Canada for his advice.)

18. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, *Annual Statistical Review of Canadian Fisheries*, vol. 14. (See n. 16 above.)

20. Department of Fisheries and Forestry, *Costs and Earnings*, 1968, 123-4. (See n. 19 above.)

21. See tables 1-2 to 1-11 and tables A-11 to A-45 in Royal Commission, *Report* (see n. 19 above). These data are less useful than those provided by Proskie because they are average figures rather than figures on each individual enterprise. It is, of course, the latter that are most useful in documenting accumulation and the development of capitalism.

22. Ibid. These rates of profit are calculated in the following manner: operating expenses (repairs, gear replacement, supplies), crew shares to non-owners, an equal crew share for the owner(s), and depreciation are deducted from total revenue (including miscellaneous income). The remaining surplus or loss is then divided by the total capital investment, which includes the vessel, electronic equipment, gear, shore vehicles and structures, and — though the commission did not include this — operating capital (equal to operating expenses, divided by the number of weeks of operation). This gives the total rate of profit for the enterprise. The rate of profit for the owner is calculated by first deducting insurance and interest payments.

23. This figure assumes the same percentage share of revenue for the non-owning crew, but a constant labour income for the owner(s).


25. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, *Annual Statistical Review of Canadian Fisheries*.


27. Sinclair, “Fishermen of Northwest Newfoundland,” 42. (See n. 26 above.)

28. Ibid.


30. The figures for 1945 and 1973, as well as for employment in processing, are based directly on the published data in Canada. See Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Newfoundland Census 1945* (Ottawa 1949); Canada, Statistics Canada, *Fisheries Statistics of Newfoundland*; and idem, *Fish Products Industry* (Ottawa 1961 and 1981). However, the 1980 figures for employment in catching are based on data for numbers of vessels, with the assumptions referred to in note 17.
31. R.D.S. Macdonald, "Inshore Fishing Interests," 175 (see n. 5 above). About the origin of the "nearshore" fishery, there can be little doubt. The issue is, rather, whether the significance attached here to its rise is justified.

32. Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (New York 1970), 21

33. See Farley Mowat and John de Visser, This Rock Within the Sea (Toronto 1968). Excerpted in Peter Neary, ed., The Political Economy of Newfoundland, 1929-1972 (Vancouver 1973), 224

34. Parzival Copes, "Community Resettlement and Rationalization in the Fishing Industry in Newfoundland," in Neary, Political Economy of Newfoundland, 227. (See n. 33 above.)


37. Copes, "Community Resettlement," 169. (See n. 34 above.)

38. Matthews, "Economic Vitality vs. Social Vitality," 186. (See n. 36 above.)

39. Ibid., 187


41. Cato Wadel, Marginal Adaptations and Modernization in Newfoundland (St. John's 1969), 133

42. Alexander et al., Federal Licensing Policy, 12. (See n. 12 above.)

43. The notion of radical development theory as a "polemical inversion" of the modernization perspective is Colin Leys's. See his "Underdevelopment and Dependency Theory: Critical Notes," Journal of Contemporary Asia 7:1 (1977), 95

44. Alexander et al., Federal Licensing Policy, 21

45. Alexander, "Political Economy of Fishing," 36. (See n. 12 above.)

46. In earlier versions of this paper, and in the thesis from which they were drawn, this new fraction of the class of capital was referred to as the nouveaux riches. In hindsight, the choice of this term was a poor one: it was ambiguous, had unintended connotations, led to justifiable misunderstandings, and obscured the real substance of my argument. Whereas I used nouveaux riches (1) to denote those fishermen who had a much higher than average level of productive consumption, and (2) to highlight the fact that there was far more happening in the "inshore" fishery than simply the pauperization of a homogeneous mass of "petty primary producers," it is none-
theless true that, whatever the intent, *nouveaux riches* is commonly understood to refer to personal consumption and, more often than not, conspicuous personal consumption. This kind of consumption, of course, has never been enjoyed in anything more than a few cases in the Atlantic fishery. Nor did I ever mean to suggest differently, because my argument had little to do with such conspicuous consumers. But I added to the possibility of misinterpretation by saying then that the *nouveaux riches* consisted of the "small capitalist and better-off proprietary fishermen." While this avoided what I thought at the time involved a lack of clarity in using the designation "small capitalist and more heavily capitalized" fishermen, it also opened the possibility of confusing the class position of the producer with their personal consumption. I hope that with "new bourgeoisie," and "owners of capitalist and larger proprietary fish-catching enterprises," I am at last managing to say what I mean.

47. David MacDonald, *Power Begins at the Cod-End* (St. John's 1980), 49

48. As of its December 1984 convention, the NFFAWU completely merged with the UFCWIU. As part of this merger Local 465 was constitutionally (but not actually) merged with Local 1252, and the NFFAWU changed its name to simply UFCWIU Local 1252.

49. MacDonald, *Power Begins at the Cod-End*, 54-61. (See n. 47 above.)

50. Ibid., 79-110

51. NFFAWU, *Union Forum* (January 1983), 7-8


54. Ibid., 15 February 1980.


57. See Richard Gwyn, *Telegraph Journal*, 28 August 1980. He pointed to Ellison Barsitt, a union member and owner of a forty-foot, $100,000 longliner. Before a union meeting of 62 longliner skippers, crewmen and "inshore" trap boatmen, Barsitt explained why he found it necessary to "strike": "They [the processing companies] forget we're always being struck against ourselves ... by the weather, by the ice.... Also they forget that we've got no choice but to strike, that net on my longliner cost me $24,000 .... On this [kind of investment] we must get more or I'm going under anyway. The system has got to change."


60. The significance of this interpretation of federal fisheries policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s has recently been enhanced by the quite contrary conclusions reached by Ralph Matthews in *The Creation of Regional Dependency* (Toronto 1983), 205. According to Matthews, the federal state's promotion of smaller-scale fish-catching interests during Leblanc's tenure demonstrates that the state in Canada is not always a creature of the capitalist class as Marxists believe. Whatever "Marxists" may believe, close attention to class formation within the so-called "inshore" fishery, together with a deeper appreciation of the overall forms of capitalist development in the industry, suggest rather that federal policy "only" changed to the promotion of the project of a different fraction of the class of capital.


62. Canada, Department of the Environment, *Policy for Canada's Commercial Fisheries* (Ottawa 1976), 25; app. 1, p. 4


