CANADIAN ISSUES
THÈMES CANADIENS

August / Août • September / Septembre 2001

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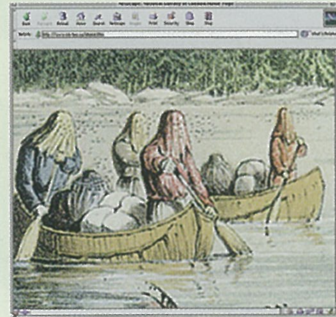

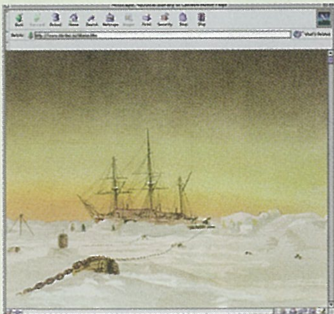

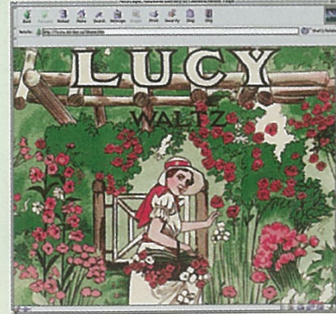

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CANADIAN ISSUES
THÈMES CANADIENS

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WHAT'S INSIDE

LOSING A PIECE of Ourselves

BY Raymond Blake

ALTHOUGH CANADA CEASED BEING A RURAL SOCIETY A LONG TIME AGO, MANY OF THE REMAINING RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE IN DANGER OF DISAPPEARING. WITH THE DEPLETION OF MANY OF THE RESOURCES SUCH AS FISH AND MINERALS AND THE TREMENDOUS CHANGES IN AGRICULTURE, MANY COMMUNITIES HAVE SIMPLY LOST THEIR REASON TO EXIST. WHETHER IN NEWFOUNDLAND, CAPE BRETON, THE GASPÉ, ACROSS THE PRAIRIES OR IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE DEPENDED ON THE RESOURCE SECTOR ARE VANISHING. THIS ISSUE OF *CANADIAN ISSUES/ THÈMES CANADIENS* EXAMINES THIS IMPORTANT CANADIAN PROBLEM.

The demise of individual communities in Canada is nothing new, but what we are witnessing today is the widespread disappearance of much of rural Canada. If we continue at the current rate, fishing villages on both coasts will largely disappear, as will many farming communities throughout the country; many mining communities face a similar fate. What we are seeing, then, is the disappearance of a way of life in Canada. Yet this transformation is occurring without much alarm or notice.

The essays in this issue attempt to bring the matter to the attention of Canadians. Anthony Davis, Johanne Castonguay and Mel Baker examine the plight of fishing communities on the east coast. Dan Edwards and Cheryl Wilson offer the perspective from the west coast. The interview with Ingeborg Boyens and Judy Piercey's story of saving the grain elevators tell of the changes in the Prairie West. Stephen High provides a general overview of the impact of industrial closures on Canadian communities. David Frank examines the vision of a pioneer in the mine workers' unions who believed that there were alternative forms of resource development. John O'Donnell reminds us that culture born of a proud spirit can survive even as industry falters. Pat Chamut shows that the future is bright for a few of those engaged in the resources sector, while Rick Beaton explores efforts underway in Cape Breton to shift the economy in new directions.

Yet, as Len Evenden warns in his concluding editorial, even as communities across Canada are being transformed there is no indication of what the final outcome will be for the people living there. As Mel Baker notes, most of the young people have left the fishing villages of Newfoundland, a trend that is all too apparent in farming communities as well. Evenden urges us to pay 'due attention to the concerns that new patterns of consumption of the nation's spatial resources are bound to produce, including the impact that such exploitation may have upon the lives of those who already inhabit these lands.'

This is not happening and one consequence of apparent apathy towards the demise of rural communities is a widening divide between urban and rural Canada. A vast majority of Canadians are now maturing without any connection whatsoever with the rural parts of the country. Too frequently, it seems, the attitudes towards our rural cousins have hardened. It is not difficult to find Canadians who complain about the supposed transfer of wealth from the urban centres to support farming or fishing or mining communities in rural Canada. Even premiers from predominately urban provinces have been known to utter such criticisms in recent months.

How important is 'rural' to a society like Canada that has become increasingly urbanized? It is something we should think more seriously about.

Raymond Blake is Director of the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy at the University of Regina

PERDRE UNE PARTIE de nous-mêmes

MÊME SI LE CANADA A CESSÉ D'ÊTRE UNE SOCIÉTÉ RURALE IL Y A LONGTEMPS, PLUSIEURS DES COMMUNAUTÉS RURALES ENCORE EXISTANTES RISQUENT DE DISPARAÎTRE. COMPTE TENU DE L'ÉPUISEMENT DE NOMBREUSES RESSOURCES NATURELLES TELLES QUE LE POISSON, LES MINÉRAUX ET AUSSI À CAUSE DES IMMENSES CHANGEMENTS EN AGRICULTURE, UN GRAND NOMBRE DE CES COMMUNAUTÉS ONT SIMPLEMENT PERDU LEUR RAISON D'ÊTRE. LES COMMUNAUTÉS QUI DÉPENDENT DU SECTEUR DES RESSOURCES NATURELLES, QU'ELLES SOIENT À TERRE-NEUVE, CAPE BRETON, GASPÉ, DANS LES PRAIRIES OU EN COLOMBIE-BRITANNIQUE, SONT MENACÉES. CE NUMÉRO DE *CANADIAN ISSUES / THÈMES CANADIENS* EXAMINE CET IMPORTANT PROBLÈME CANADIEN.

PAR Raymond Blake

Le déclin de ces communautés n'est pas un phénomène nouveau, mais nous assistons aujourd'hui à une désintégration à grande échelle du Canada rural. Si nous continuons à ce rythme, des villages entiers de pêcheurs, sur les deux côtes, vont disparaître. Il en va de même pour certaines communautés agricoles à travers le pays et pour de nombreuses communautés minières qui partagent aussi ce destin. Ce à quoi nous assistons n'est ni plus ni moins que la disparition d'un mode de vie au Canada. Malgré cela, cette transformation se produit sans faire trop de bruit et d'éclats.

Les textes de ce numéro du CITC tentent d'attirer l'attention des Canadiens et Canadiennes sur ce problème. Anthony Davis, Johanne Castonguay et Mel Baker examinent le sort des communautés de pêcheurs de la côte est. Dan Edwards et Cheryl Wilson nous présentent la perspective de la côte ouest. Les changements qui surviennent dans les Prairies sont discutés en entrevue avec Ingeborg Boyens et dans l'histoire de Judy Piercey concernant le sauvetage des élévateurs à grains. Stephen High nous propose un regard général de l'impact des fermetures d'industries sur les communautés canadiennes. David Frank examine la vision d'un pionnier des syndicats de mineurs qui croyait en l'existence de formes alternatives de développement des ressources. John O'Donnell nous rappelle qu'une culture née d'un esprit fier peut survivre même quand l'industrie s'affaiblit. Pat Chamut démontre que le futur est brillant pour quelques-uns de ceux engagés dans le secteur des ressources naturelles, tandis que Rick Beaton explore les efforts en cours au Cape Breton afin de donner une nouvelle direction à l'économie.

Dans son éditorial, Len Evenden nous prévient que même si les communautés se transforment, il n'existe aucune indication du résultat final pour les gens qui y vivent. Comme le note Mel Baker, la plupart des jeunes gens ont quitté les villages de pêche de Terre-Neuve, une tendance qui est toute aussi présente dans les communautés agricoles. Evenden nous pousse à porter « une attention particulière aux inquiétudes générées par les nouveaux types d'utilisation de nos ressources naturelles, incluant l'impact qu'une telle exploitation pourrait causer sur la vie de ceux qui habitent ces terres. »

Cette prise de conscience est absente et une conséquence de cette indifférence relative à la volatilisation des communautés rurales prend la forme d'une division grandissante entre le Canada urbain et rural. Une vaste majorité des Canadiens vieillissent sans aucun contact avec les régions rurales du pays. Trop fréquemment, il semble que l'attitude envers nos cousins ruraux s'est durcie. Il n'est pas difficile de trouver des Canadiens qui se plaignent du supposé transfert de richesse des centres urbains visant à supporter les communautés de mineurs, de pêcheurs ou de fermiers. Même que certains premiers ministres de provinces largement urbanisées ont récemment émis de telles critiques.

Jusqu'à quel point « le monde rural » compte-t-il aux yeux d'une société de plus en plus urbaine comme le Canada? Il s'agit d'une question qui mérite réflexion.

Raymond Blake est directeur de la 'Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy à l'Université de Regina

LETTERS

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VANISHING INDUSTRIES
Rusted Landscapes

BY Steven High

THE COUNTRY IS STREWN WITH COME BY CHANCE-LIKE MONOLITHS, THE MASTERPIECES OF SOME SCULPTOR WHO WORKED ON A GRAND SCALE AND WHOSE MEDIUM WAS RUST. QUARRIES, MINES, MILLS, PLANTS, SMELTERS, AIRPORTS, SHIPYARDS, REFINERIES AND FACTORIES, TO ALL OF WHICH PAVED ROADS STILL LEAD, THOUGH NO ONE TRAVELS ON THEM ANY MORE.

- WAYNE JOHNSTON, *THE COLONY OF UNREQUITED DREAMS*

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There is a widespread belief that economic decline is geographically contained to inner cities and isolated rural areas and restricted to the "vanishing" resource and manufacturing industries associated with the "old" economy. This supposition sometimes results in the claim that the people living in economically disadvantaged areas are themselves to blame for this decline. This author suggests instead that the creation of new economic spaces and the destruction of old ones is endemic to capitalism. One influential explanation for this transformation has been Joseph Schumpeter's characterization of capitalism as a "gale" of "creative destruction" that sweeps the globe devouring the "old" in order to create the "new." Simultaneous growth and decline thus produces spatially uneven development, even as the creative rather than the destructive traits of capitalism are emphasized in the nation's media.

The debate over the meaning of economic transformation is fundamentally one about who is going to control the future. Economic decline has typically been set against an ascendant other: "sunset" versus "sunrise" industries; "industrial" versus "post-industrial" eras; and the "old" versus "new" economy. Each dual-metaphor encloses and structures our understanding of economic change. The deindustrialization/post-industrialism debate of the 1970s and 1980s, for example, revealed the ideological struggle over the meaning of industrial transformation. The "deindustrialization thesis" was first proposed by economic nationalists such as Robert Laxer in the early 1970s to explain the high "price" apparently paid by Canadian workers for this country's "dependent status" on the United States. It was subsequently adopted in a revised form by plant closing opponents in the United States who blamed deindustrialization on the "widespread, systematic disinvestment" of multinational cor-

porations in the "nation's basic productive capacity." For them, deindustrialization "does not just happen." Rather, "conscious decisions" have been made by corporate managers to shift production from one location to another or to diversify out of certain industries. In both formulations of this thesis, the constant movement of capital leaves deindustrialized spaces behind.

By contrast, political conservatives took their cue from sociologist Daniel Bell who wrote *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* in 1973. Bell interpreted the vast changes sweeping the industrialized world as evidence of an emerging knowledge-based economy of computers and telecommunications. While both sides of the debate could be blamed for selective vision, it has been post-industrialism which has proven to be the most influential. In fact, Bell's thesis underpins today's popular distinction between the "old" (industrial) economy and "new" (post-industrial) economy.

These binary-oppositions have a spatial fix as "old" and "new" geographic areas take shape; thereby producing a feeling that entire geographic areas are redundant to the needs of capitalism. For those living inside these blighted areas, discourses of rise-and-decline convey a sense of collective powerlessness and inevitability that makes this future appear unavoidable if not always desirable. It is precisely this disillusionment over the unrequited hopes and dreams of industrialism and modernization that forms the basis of Wayne Johnston's lament.

Anthropologists have long been immersed in the "vanishing ways of life" of those people caught on the "wrong side" of history. The intensive field study of what were once thought of as "disappearing" cultures made the "vanishing indian" appear indubitable. Increasingly, however, anthropologists have turned their attention to another "vanishing" group living amongst us: industrial workers. In an insightful study of deindustrializing, Kenosha, Wisconsin, anthropologist Kathryn Marie Dudley discovers that a cultural transformation accompanied the closing of the American Motors auto assembly plant in 1988. Displaced auto assembly workers stood to lose much more than their jobs; they lost a social structure on which their "collective integrity" depended. In other words, the workplace culture that had sustained (even legitimated) individual pride and dignity was replaced by a postindustrial culture where hard work was measured by educational credentials rather than seniority and physical prowess. Autoworkers who once stood at the centre of local life, now seemed out of place.

American workers are obviously not the only ones being shunted aside by deindustrialization. Canadian industrial workers have also faced widespread displacement. Fully 338,000 jobs in manufacturing – representing 16% of the jobs in the sector – disappeared in one four year period from 1989 to 1992. This massive loss of jobs, combined with the other waves of plant closings, have rocked many industrial towns and cities. The shutdown of the steel mill in Sydney, Nova Scotia, is just the most recent example. Other former industrial cities such as Toronto and Montreal have been reborn as post-industrial spaces. In the process, office towers have replaced mills and factories as the pre-eminent symbol of economic power and progress.

The tarnished image of industrialism in recent decades was such that local elites did not wait for plants to close to re-engineer their city's image as post-industrial. In Hamilton, Ontario, the city's longstanding association with the steel industry became a matter of intense embarrassment to civic leaders during the 1970s and 1980s. The city's reputation as a "lunch bucket town" – a label that was apologized for in David Proulx's 1971 coffee table book *Pardon My Lunch Bucket: A Look at the New Hamilton* – was downplayed by urban boosters such as Mayor Victor Copps: "I don't particularly mind Hamilton being called a lunch-bucket city. It's no crime to take your lunch to work. There's nothing indecent in getting your hands dirty in the foundry or rolling mill, making a decent living so you can bring up one of those large families that steelworkers are so fond of." In the "new" Hamilton, then, we see how a set of post-industrial values and images displaced the pride of place that industrialism once engendered.

The precariousness of life in Canada's industrial towns and cities, combined with an ascendant post-industrial economy, worked to undermine people's self-worth. A 1982 survey of three hundred Windsor, Ontario residents, and a focus group of thirty-five "opinion leaders," uncovered many people's embarrassment at living in a "Blue Collar Town." Even though seven thousand area autoworkers had just been laid off, more residents pointed to this working-class image than to the unemployment problem then plaguing the city as the main reason for Windsor's poor image. Fully 67% of respondents believed that the city had developed a negative reputation in the rest of Canada. Blue collar workers thus faced the problem of diminishing status and prestige. As one scholar observed, a "factory job is not a station that is often aspired to."

Mayor Victor Copps: "I don't particularly mind Hamilton being called a lunch-bucket city. It's no crime to take your lunch to work."

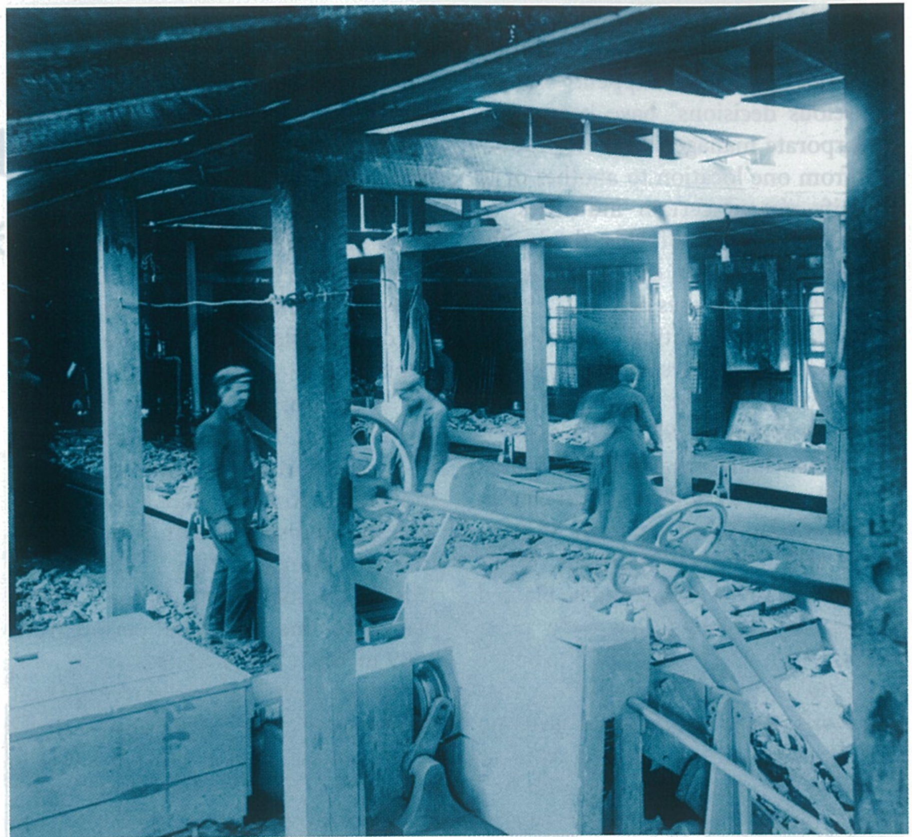
While deindustrialization has attracted considerable scholarly interest, most of the attention has been paid to cities south of the 49th parallel. In Canada, vanishing industries have been more commonly associated with the troubled resource sector. Mining, forestry, fishing, and farming have traditionally provided most of the employment in rural Canada. Whereas primary resource industries employed 1.1 million Canadians in 1951, that number had declined to just 868,000 in 1991. In terms of overall employment, the percentage of Canadians making their living in the primary sector fell from 21.3% to 6.1% during this forty year period. Rural depopulation and the accompanying termination of rural services (commercial, postal, banking, schooling and hospital) have reached crisis proportions in some areas. One United States study, for example, estimates that for every six rural families

that lose their farms to consolidation or foreclosure in a small town's hinterland, one small business closes as well.

Single-industry towns have been especially vulnerable to abandonment. The countless ghost towns scattered across the country attest to the "extreme dependence" of Canadian resource towns on a single enterprise and on nearby natural resources. In his classic study of Canadian communities of single industry, sociologist Rex Lucas calculated that there were 636 such communities. Isolated mining towns locked into a destructive cycle of boom and bust were most at-risk. The list of "one job" towns that have faced the closure of local mines continues to grow: Uranium City, Saskatchewan (1982); Schefferville, Quebec (1983); Pine Point, Northwest Territories (1987); Faro, Yukon (1990s) and Elliot Lake, Ontario (1990s) to name just a few.

Many forestry and fishing communities have also experienced the disastrous consequences of resource exhaustion. The closure of anything as large as a pulp and paper mill is a "disaster", advised the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association in 1972. Since then, British Columbia's 103 forestry-dependent communities have been hard hit by mill closings and mass layoffs. Numerous British Columbia salmon canneries have ended production as well. On the East Coast, fish plant closures and the cod moratorium declared in 1992 after several years of poor landings have had a similarly devastating affect on Newfoundland's coastal communities. Upwards of thirty thousand fishers and fish plant workers lost their jobs and thousands of others felt the ripple effects. In a recent study of the origins of this crisis, historian Miriam Wright shows that new technologies and harvesting techniques developed in the 1940s and 1950s could very well be responsible for the collapse of cod stocks.

There is clearly a gendered dimension to the changes sweeping the Canadian economy. With the exception of fish plants and textile mills, many of the "vanishing" sectors of the economy employed the "classic male proletarians" that formed the centre of traditional working-class identity. In the late 1980s,



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anthropologist Tom Dunk asked working class men in Thunder Bay, Ontario what made their city different? In response, he was told that it was a place where "men go to work in work clothes, work boots, and hard hats, and carry a lunch box." But as male breadwinners lost their jobs, this perspective began to change. This was particularly true as the new jobs being created were mainly in the service and public sectors, two areas in which women have traditionally found employment.

Canada's manufacturing and resource towns have grown old since their heyday during the 1940s and 1950s. The end of this aging process – the death of towns or industries – has been communicated in both spatial and linear terms. The most common, perhaps, are visual and textual representations of derelict buildings. A flurry of pictorial books published in Canada during the last few years haye celebrated everything from the "vanishing" grain elevators of the Prairies ("Wheat Kings") to the abandoned mine shafts of Northern Ontario ("Industrial Cathedrals of the North"). Alternatively, the local library is sure to have a helpful guide of the "ghost town" nearest you. The transformation of derelict landscapes into popular tourist sites and the nostalgia for vanishing landmarks is further evidence that there is a widely-held belief that an era is coming to an end.

In many instances, the economic decline of a region has caused it to be re-envisioned. In the United States, the "Rust Belt" became a no man's land between fading smokestack industries and the ascendant post-industrial economy. While Canada has not yet developed a "Rust Belt," it does have other perceived landscapes of failure. Atlantic Canada, for example, has long been viewed by Central Canadians as a "have-not" region. Historian Ian McKay, for example, found that the popular conception of archetypical Nova Scotians as a "purer, simpler, and more idyllic people" was, in fact, an invention of the province's tourism industry in the wake of the deindustrialization of the area in the early twentieth century. Some tourists' search for the simpler life has lead them to other marginal towns and areas which have seemingly been left behind. Romantic and picturesque images of rural Newfoundland have thus reconstituted declining fishing villages in terms of a tourist aesthetic of the "real" Newfoundland.

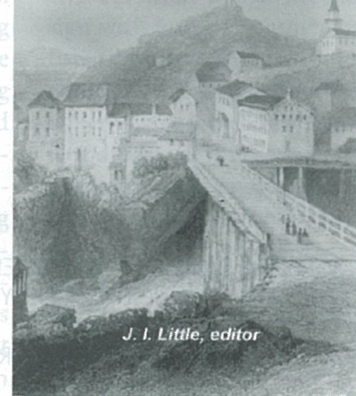
The end of an era is frequently marked by the ritualized toppling of the symbolic markers of the old regime. One example that comes readily to mind is the enthusiasm with which Eastern Europeans knocked down the statues of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin during the early 1990s. Having lived through that time, there was no mistaking that a new political era had dawned. Less obviously, perhaps, the end of the industrial era has been similarly dramatized in North America. In Kenosha, Wisconsin, hundreds gathered to watch the demolition of the assembly plant's 250 foot smokestack. Similar public spectacles have been re-enacted throughout Canada.

Images of falling grain elevators – both the wooden Prairie and concrete Great Lakes varieties – have likewise made their appearance in the print and electronic media. In 2000, for example, thousands gathered early one morning on the waterfront and roof-tops of Thunder Bay, Ontario, to observe the demolition of the giant Saskatchewan Wheat Pool elevator. As is often the case, the local authorities responded to uncertainty with order. The public spectacle was well publicized in advance and timed to occur at a precise moment. In the seconds that it took the building to crumble and fall to the ground, hundreds of local residents took photographs or filmed the event on their video-cameras. While observers viewed that morning's event in any number of ways, there was no mistaking that it provided further evidence of the declining importance of the port. Thunder Bay had been one of the largest grain ports in the world for more than a century; but, today, most of Canada's grain is exported via West Coast ports.

In part, these public demonstrations communicate to us that North America is changing in "new and important ways." While many onlookers might lament these changes, the orderly destruction of old economic landmarks are carefully choreographed to engineer consent and legitimate the economic changes underway. The ritualized nature of these public spectacles act as a rite-of-passage for Canadians into the new era of service and high technology. The repetition of this secular ritual – and the diffusion of the images that are produced through the media – reinforces the sense that older industries are literally vanishing before our eyes.

When analyzing economic transformation we need to avoid what historian Michael Frisch has called the "unhelpful scripts" of abstract labels such as "post-industrialism" that homogenize, essentialize and sanitize history. It is nonetheless important to take a closer look at how these "scripts" took hold and how they have informed our understanding of job loss. This paper has shown that rusted and derelict landscapes can be found in virtually every corner of Canada. As the physical stature of factory chimneys, mine surface works, and grain elevators made them stand tall in people's minds, the fall of resource and manufacturing industries from their privileged position in the Canadian economy played itself out in their ritualistic demolition. Dramatic images of falling landmarks, in turn, lent authority to those who claimed that these industries were "vanishing." To vanish is to pass out of sight, to disappear or to pass out of existence. But for many displaced workers, there is no forgetting. Having just witnessed the demolition of the blast furnaces that he had fed for thirty-two years, ex-steelworker Clem Smereck sadly acknowledged that he "had a lot of memories, a lot of good friends, in that dust there." The meaning of economic transformation is thus a matter of perspective and class interest.

Steven High is a post-doctoral fellow at Memorial University. His dissertation examined the economic and cultural destruction of North America's industrial heartland. He is currently working with Greg Kealey on the socio-economic consequences of military base openings and closings in twentieth century Newfoundland and Labrador.



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DIVING INTO the Chowder?

Social Research For Sustainable Fisheries (SRSF)
A Community-University Research Alliance

This essay has been prepared by Social Research for Sustainable Fisheries (SRSF) at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia

"IF FISHING WERE THE SAME AS IT WAS WHEN I STARTED, I WOULD GO INTO FISHING AGAIN; BUT, I WOULDN'T IF THE FISHERY IS THE SAME AS IT IS TODAY."

- A SMALL BOAT FISHERMAN FROM GUYSBOROUGH COUNTY, NOVA SCOTIA

BALLANTYNE'S COVE AND WHARF, ANTIGONISH COUNTY, N.S.

'THE CHOWDER'

In 1998 an enterprising wit, on the occasion of Newfoundland's 500 year celebration of John Cabot's 'discovery', produced a T-shirt portraying an image of Cabot kneeling before the English king Henry VII and proclaiming *Fish?! …Couldn't Catch 'Em All If We Tried For the Next Five Hundred Years!* By 1998 the Atlantic Canadian moratorium on fishing the great Northern Cod and the closure or down-sizing of other fisheries had stripped thousands of the basis for their livelihoods, reshaped coastal community inter- and intra-family dynamics, and fuelled a massive out-migration of young men and women. Recovery remains a distant hope, with some experts suggesting that the fish may never return to their previous levels of abundance. Of course, the present crisis is but the latest catastrophic event in a sequence of resource and economic crises that have held sway over much of Atlantic Canada's fisheries through the last fifty years or so.

The region's 'new' commercial fisheries feature much smaller fleets employing a dwindling number of people engaged in the seasonal pursuit of high value resources such as shrimp, snow crab, scallops, and lobster. Requiring comparatively little 'on shore' processing, a fishery based on these resources generates considerable export earnings and incomes for vessel owners and buyers; but they sustain little by way of coastal community–based processing, employment, and economic benefits. Many communities' remaining small boat fleets are now able to work only for only three or four months in one or two limited entry and highly regulated fisheries. Once the cornerstone in coastal community life and livelihood, small boat fisheries have been transformed from full-time, multi-species based livelihoods into part-time, specialised activities dependent for their well-being on the abundance of one or two marine resources, particularly lobster.

Understandably, this set of conditions has created a pervasive sense of disruption, vulnerability, and uncertainty among many small boat fishing families throughout the region. As if intending to deepen the misery, during these times the federal government insisted that fiscal and maintenance responsibilities for small craft harbours and wharves be 'devolved' to local harbour authorities, commonly composed of small boat marine harvesters. Many, already struggling with dramatic reductions in fishing, are now also required to develop and sustain the means to maintain their harbours and wharves. To cap all of this off, Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) also instituted dramatically increased license renewal fees, particularly in the lobster

fishery. This accumulation of demands and pressures has played off of the fact that many small boat harvesters' associations do not have the capacity to represent their memberships' interests effectively and have little or no political leverage. Consequently, many have been left feeling entirely powerless and victimised. A conspiracy-minded observer might be inclined to conclude that the opportunity presented by the groundfish resource crisis was being used by the federal government and DFO to force people out of the coastal fisheries through stripping away the ability of many to achieve a viable livelihood and by removing infrastructure that is critical to sustaining community-based, small boat fisheries. Even the most rosy-eyed optimist would be forgiven for concluding that Atlantic Canada's fisheries, given the recent developments, do not offer much by way of promise for the future of community-based, small boat fisheries.

This is the broad outline of the situation into which has been mixed the September 1999 Supreme Court of Canada's *Marshall* decision. The *Marshall* decision acquitted charges of illegal fishing against a Nova Scotian status Mi'kmaq. In so doing, the Court affirmed that the Mi'kmaq had a treaty right to participate in commercial fisheries for the purpose of realising a 'moderate livelihood'. Consequently, the region's commercial fisheries are now required to somehow accommodate the Mi'kmaq as largely new entrants in an environment completely stressed by down-sizing, 'devolution', single-species dependency, social upheaval, and pervasive feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness. For the Mi'kmaq, a First Nation that has been dispossessed from access to primary resource-based livelihoods including fisheries, the *Marshall* decision represents a key piece in developing the economic foundations essential to realising successful self-governance, to improving social and economic conditions within families and communities, and to further revitalising culture, identity and language.

The small boat lobster fishery was selected by many Mi'kmaq as the initial focus for the exercise of the treaty right. This choice makes perfect sense from the Mi'kmaq perspective since the lobster fishery is the sole remaining small boat fishery that continues to offer the prospect of economic success. Predictably, initial reactions among non-Mi'kmaq to this decision were charged with emotion. The resulting threats and confrontations grabbed national and international media attention. DFO, leading the federal government's response to implementing *Marshall*, has insisted that Mi'kmaq participation be contained within the existing fisheries management system. This is an allocation management system that controls access and participation through mechanisms such as limited entry licensing and the specification of annual catch quotas for particular species and fisheries. Supposedly intended in the first instance to assure resource conservation, the evidence of collapse and crisis in other fisheries suggests that the system has not been particularly successful at achieving its purpose. Nonetheless, DFO has refused to consider any approach other than its management system as the means through which the Mi'kmaq would gain entry.

Consequently, soon after the *Marshall* decision was announced the DFO initiated a license buy-back program, with the intention of redistributing licenses purchased from non-natives to Mi'kmaq band governments. Grossly inflated prices have been offered and paid in order to attract sellers and to accumulate licenses, particularly in the lobster fishery. But Mi'kmaq access to these licenses comes with a condition. DFO requires that each Mi'kmaq band intending to participate in commercial fisheries negotiate and sign a fisheries agreement in which, among other things, the band commits to compliance with the existing fisheries management system. As an inducement and sweetener, DFO offers to provide the bands that sign with boats, equipment, funding for fisheries infrastructure and training, in addition to a specified number of limited entry commercial fishing licenses. Hundreds of millions have been earmarked for this programme. Such bounty is almost irresistibly attractive to the region's resource-short and cash-strapped Mi'kmaq band leadership. Those resisting do so mainly on the grounds that treaty rights may be compromised fatally by signing the agreements. But DFO's strategy of negotiating agreements on a band to band basis, instead of with the Mi'kmaq's regional governance bodies such as the Atlantic Policy Congress of Mi'kmaq Chiefs (APC), has eroded regional solidarities and contributed to divisions among the Mi'kmaq as some band leadership surrender to the seduction while others continue to refuse the suitor.

A conspiracy-minded observer might be inclined to conclude that the opportunity presented by the groundfish resource crisis was being used by the federal government and DFO to force people out of the coastal fisheries through stripping away the ability of many to achieve a viable livelihood and by removing infrastructure that is critical to sustaining community-based, small boat fisheries.

'THE SPRINGBOARD' - SOCIAL RESEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

The above details key attributes of the social and political context within which the community-university alliance – Social Research for Sustainable Fisheries (SRSF) – was launched. To say the least, the situation on all fronts in contemporary small boat fisheries is charged with heated emotions and sincere concerns. It is also a situation brimming with conflict, misinformation, manipulation, and multifaceted distress. Yet some of the participants recognise that developing 'on the ground' and 'on the water' working relationships would be

CRIBBON'S POINT WHARF, ANTIGONISH COUNTY, N.S.

one essential step to resolving issues and to moving forward. In part to this end, the SRSF project arose to address several Mi'kmaq and non-native fisheries organisations' stated desire to achieve greater research literacy and capacity through the formation of linkages with university-seated expertise. SRSF partners the Gulf Nova Scotia Bonafide Fishermen's Association (GNSBFA); the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association (GCIFA) and the Mi'kmaq Fish and Wildlife Commission/Afton First Nation with social researchers seated in St. Francis Xavier University and other Atlantic Canadian universities.

The SRSF collaboration had began prior to the *Marshall* decision. It was formed in response to the opportunities offered by a new and innovative pilot programme of funding in support of applied research that had been initiated by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRCC). Titled the 'Community-University Research Alliances' (CURA), this initiative is designed to "...help organizations within communities and university institutions combine forces and tackle issues they have identified as being of common, priority concern....that will enhance mutual learning and horizontal collaboration between community organizations and universities; contribute to the social, cultural and/or economic development of communities; enrich research, teaching methods and curricula in universities, and reinforce decision-making and problem solving capacity in the community; and enhance students' education and employability through diverse opportunities to build their expertise and work-force skills in an appropriate research setting." (www.sshrc.ca/english/programinfo/grantsguide/cura.html)

SRSF was launched in January 2000, upon winning three years of SSHRCC - CURA funding. As an alliance, SRSF is governed by a Steering Committee composed of partner organization and social research representatives. Agendas, workplans, timetables, and tasks are identified and agreed to through a consensus decision-making process. One of the first substantial outcomes from this process was the development of a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU). All SRSF partners signed this document. This MOU details SRSF's goals, governance processes, and the broad outline of partner commitments to one and another as well as to SRSF, particularly respecting the perceived need to affirm operating principles such as transparency, inclusivity, and accountability.

Drafting a *Researcher Protocol* was another early focus and achievement. The SRSF alliance thinks it essential that all research affiliated with it be conducted in a manner that assures adherence to ethical procedures and the principles of transparency and accountability. SRSF partners also think it critical for all researchers supported through and engaged in the alliance's projects to understand their obligations and responsibilities, particularly the need to share all information gathered, to report results in a timely fashion, and to include the SRSF alliance in previews of data analyses and presentations of findings before public release and dissemination.

Another signifying early achievement was the design and launch of the SRSF website (www.stfx.ca/people/-adavis/srsf). The alliance is demonstrating its commitment to its central operating principles by employing the project website as a means through which all SRSF documents are archived in an accessible manner. As developed, the SRSF website contains copies of documents ranging from Steering Committee minutes, through workshop materials, to research instruments and reports. The website listserv is established for the purpose of providing a dynamic means through which SRSF's geographically dispersed partners can maintain mutual contact and engagement. These achievements are evidence of SRSF's commitment to a form of governance and conduct focused on realising specific and substantial outcomes that build social research capacity and understandings. While there have been several bumps in the road, SRSF has facilitated successful working relations between the partners as well as initiated a social research capacity-building process that is producing results.

'THE DIVE' – FORM, FOCUS AND SUBSTANCE

SRSF's central purpose is to build community-university capacity and linkages through interdisciplinary research workshops and social research projects. The workshops enable university researchers drawn from a variety of disciplines and traditions to engage community organization staff in a review of specific 'real world' research design and methodological attributes

and issues. University researchers are also provided with the opportunity to present their research results and to discuss the challenges of research processes. Additional research workshops are organized and run by SRSF staff and others on topics ranging from proposal writing, through working with particular software packages and statistical analyses, to preparing and presenting researched information in documentary forms.

SRSF mobilises workshop learning through the design and conduct of specific primary social research projects. Research issues are defined by the community organization partners in consultation with their membership. These issues are, then, discussed and refined within SRSF workshops, several of which have engaged researchers from throughout Atlantic Canadian universities. Once the specific research issues have been refined, attention focuses on developing appropriate research designs and methodologies. This aspect of our process engages all SRSF collaborators in a series of working seminars focused on building an understanding of the various attributes of and needs for credible and defensible social research. By consensus, documenting Mi'kmaq and small boat fisher local ecological knowledge respecting several specific fisheries became SRSF's initial focus for primary research. Various attributes of local understandings of lobster grounds, reproduction, and recruitment are the focus of research with GNSBFA and GCIFA. With the Mi'kmaq, relations with and knowledge about American Eel has been identified as the priority. While the research projects address specific issues as identified by each SRSF partner organization, all of the partners participate in the work of designing the research, of developing the research methodologies, and, where appropriate, of conducting the research. This approach and the associated experiences foster inter-partner working relations and engagements, creating a 'learning circle' of sorts to which all contribute and within which all learn.

During SRSF's first year, all of the research energy was focused on developing detailed background documents that review key attributes of the social, economic and political contexts within which the primary social research was to be seated. For instance, both GNSBFA and GCIFA gathered government and published information concerning core historical and present-day characteristics of their areas' fisheries. The data bases developed with this information provide a detailed and exhaustive review of characteristics, through time, of factors such as numbers fishing, licenses held, vessel attributes such as numbers, ages, and sizes, and landed weights and

landed values by species, sector and gear types. This information has been developed into detailed background documents profiling the historical trends and current condition of the GNSBFA and GCIFA region fisheries. The Mi'kmaq partner has focused on developing a document that accomplishes two interrelated objectives. The document reviews current scientific knowledge of American Eel, including commercial fishing data and marine biology. It also profiles key features of the Mi'kmaq relation with, understandings and use of American Eel. For example, Mi'kmaq words pertaining to Eel are documented and discussed, as are Mi'kmaq concerns about the current state of American Eel populations. In all cases, the background materials are understood as 'living documents' in that new information is always being incorporated. Additionally, these documents have been developed with the understanding that they provide essential background and context that will be critical to informing the focus, design and conduct of primary social research. SRSF's second and subsequent years are focused on conducting and completing the primary social research on the issues and themes outlined above. These projects employ a variety of research designs and methodologies that have been developed through SRSF workshops and seminars. Again, this approach facilitates working relations and experiences among all of SRSF's Mi'kmaq and small boat fishing partners, while continuing the social research capacity-building processes.

In addition to these core activities, SRSF has taken a lead in facilitating dialogue between Northeastern Nova Scotian small boat fishermen and the region's Mi'kmaq. Several well attended, informal and unpublicised roundtable discussions have been held. These focused on small boat fishermen's and Mi'kmaq concerns respecting Mi'kmaq exercise of their commercial fishing treaty rights within the local lobster fishery, as well as on 'on the water' relations between small boat fishermen and the Mi'kmaq participating in the lobster fishery. By and large, these meetings fostered a civil dialogue during which the depth of the concerns felt by most became fully evident. From the small boat fishermen's perspective, the main issues were containment of Mi'kmaq participation within the existing

SRSF has taken a lead in facilitating dialogue between Northeastern Nova Scotian small boat fishermen and the region's Mi'kmaq (...) during which the depth of the concerns felt by most became fully evident.

lobster fishing season as well as rules and regulations, the scale of Mi'kmaq participation, the relation of Mi'kmaq exercise of their ceremonial and subsistence fishing rights to the commercial fishing right. The Mi'kmaq and their leadership expressed concerns about being assured that they would be able to exercise their rights without harassment. The Mi'kmaq and small boat fishermen decided to develop means through which communication channels would be opened and sustained, beginning with a committee that work on developing co-operative relations. But, through the course of these discussions it became apparent that considerable misinformation and misunderstanding surrounded the 'Marshall decision'. As a result, the SRSF partnership developed a document titled *Highlights of the Marshall Decision*. This document reviews the key points of the decision through the means of direct quotations drawn from the September 19th, 1999 decision as well as from the November 19th, 1999 Supreme Court of Canada (so-called) 'clarification'. It also provides additional resources concerning matters such as the meaning of treaties and sources of additional information. This document has been circulated as *SRSF Fact Sheet #1* to the membership of all SRSF partners, as well as been made available to the general public. This seemed an appropriate area in which SRSF, as Mi'kmaq-small boat fishermen organisation collaboration, was positioned to provide a modest, yet possibly useful contribution to a very difficult and potentially explosive situation.

LESSONS AND MEANINGS?

SRSF's strength and substance resides in its specific focus on developing social research capacity and on conducting research projects that arise from partner priorities. The emphasis on learning and doing through collaboration builds positive and outcomes-oriented learning experiences among the partners. These have formed the basis for both achieving SRSF's goals and for building substantial relations between the small boat fishing organisations and Mi'kmaq participants. SRSF's partners have come to know and to trust one and another through this process. If nothing else, this process demonstrates that Mi'kmaq and coastal peoples can work together with tremendous effect when provided with means and issues that reveal shared concerns and needs.

Arguably, Atlantic Canada's rich fishing grounds were the primary reason why European peoples initially colonized the region. Of course, these are the very qualities that sustained much of the Mi'kmaq culture and way of life. For almost five centuries these marine resources supported the settlement, proliferation, and sustenance of the region's hundreds of European ancestry coastal communities and coastal peoples. Certainly many fortunes have been made, although a very few of these can be traced to individuals who began by labouring in the coastal fisheries. As in most imperial and colonial systems, the lion's share of the economic benefits and wealth flowed and, it must be said, continue to flow to those who control access to markets, supplies, and resource prices. From the very outset to this day, the vast majority of those making their living from fishing have had little choice but to take the resource prices offered them at dockside by the assemblage of merchants, buyers, processors and brokers controlling access to markets. For most Atlantic Canadian coastal peoples, those actually harvesting marine resources and working in processing plants, the fishery's political economy has meant intimate personal and family relationships with economic vulnerability and, at times, grinding poverty. The social welfare state has blunted some of this political economy's sharper edges over the last forty years or so, assuring that the federal state and tax-payers bear most of the costs of maintaining the political economic structure in times of economic and resource supply crises. Nonetheless, the economic system has maintained throughout the essentials of structural inequity, economic exploitation, and wealth appropriation.

> *'Knowledge is power' and knowledge is empowering. Social research know-how is particularly essential to confronting sources of marginalization, inequity, and vulnerability.*

Certainly the Mi'kmaq experiences since the coming of Europeans have been in many respects even more devastating, leaving these people among the most marginalized, excluded, and vulnerable. Nonetheless, when actually examined, Mi'kmaq and many small boat fishing communities have many common experiences and circumstances, particularly with respect to their material histories and social conditions. The experiences and outcomes of the SRSF partnership as well as the analytical capacities and information resources it marshals offer the prospect of assisting in the discovery of 'common ground' and mutual interests. Indeed, Mi'kmaq and small boat fishers are in a position to rewrite many of the basic principles of fisheries management once the 'common ground' has been transformed into the recognition of common concerns and purposes. Social research processes cast in the form of an alliance and dedicated to capacity-building offer those involved a means to dismantle dependencies and inequities and to achieve 'agency'. 'Knowledge is power' and knowledge is empowering. Social research know-how is particularly essential to confronting sources of marginalization, inequity, and vulnerability. Herein is found a 'common ground' wherein an alliance of small boat fishing peoples offers tremendous promise for achieving sustainable fisheries and fisheries livelihoods.

With contributions from Anthony Davis, SRSF Director - John Wagner, SRSF Post-Doctoral Research Fellow - Christie Dyer and Jessica Paterson, SRSF Project Officers and DFO Science Horizons Interns - Virginia Boudreau, the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association - Kerry Prosper, Mi'kmaq Fish and Wildlife Commission/Afton First Nation - Kaye Wallace, the Gulf Nova Scotia Bonefide Fishermen's Association - Patricia Rhynold, Manager of the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association

SRSF is supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) program

THE FISHERY HAS LONG BEEN A CENTRAL ELEMENT OF THE HISTORICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LIFE OF CANADA'S EAST COAST, PROVIDING THE ACTIVITY AROUND WHICH SOME OF CANADA'S OLDEST AND MOST UNIQUE COMMUNITIES HAVE GROWN AND FLOURISHED. LONG BEFORE EUROPEAN CONTACT, THE FISHERY HELPED TO SUSTAIN THE ORIGINAL ABORIGINAL INHABITANTS OF THE REGION. THIS ABUNDANT FISH RESOURCE WAS ALSO ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS THAT EUROPEANS CAME TO THIS PART OF THE WORLD 500 YEARS AGO. TODAY, THE FISHERY CONTINUES TO BE THE ECONOMIC MAINSTAY OF HUNDREDS OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES ACROSS ATLANTIC CANADA, PROVIDING OVER 100,000 JOBS FOR ATLANTIC CANADIANS.

CANADA'S ATLANTIC FISHERY: Forging Stability in a Sea of Change

BY Pat Chamut

In recent years, however, the Atlantic fishery has been through some difficult times. The past decade has seen unparalleled disruption, including the collapse of groundfish stocks, the loss of harvesting and processing jobs, and the requirement for very significant government investment to help individuals and communities adjust. These highly publicized issues have created the public perception that the Atlantic fishery is a declining, or "sunset" industry.

This perception, however, is misleading. In reality, the Atlantic fishery is showing signs of adapting — and adapting well — to the changes and challenges it faces.

For instance, Canada's fish and seafood exports reached a record high of $4.1 billion in 2000, its third consecutive year of growth. Fishermen, too, are seeing an improvement. In the Scotia–Fundy region, for instance, the past ten years have seen an average 65 per cent improvement in their vessels' landed values, and an average 49 per cent improvement in their individual landed values.

This strong economic performance is the result of an effective combination of industry adaptation, government response, and the inherent productivity of our Atlantic coastal waters.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE: INDUSTRY

Industry is responding to the challenges it faces in many ways. For instance, through a voluntary licence retirement program, industry has worked with the federal government to better match the number of fishermen to the resources available. The result is that the Atlantic fishery is smaller, but more productive, with the supply more in line with the available capacity.

Also, the species now being harvested are more varied than ever before; fishermen are discovering the strength in diversifying their catches. While groundfish stocks such as cod have been in decline, shellfish such as lobster and shrimp are now on the increase, resulting in some record landings throughout Atlantic Canada. In Newfoundland, for instance, the harvest of shrimp has gone from under 20,000 tonnes to over 66,000 tonnes over the last decade. The total value of landings in the Gulf Region was $326 million in 1999 — exactly double that of 1990 — including the record-breaking landed value of $188 million for lobster that year.

BALLANTYNE'S WHARF, ANTIGONISH COUNTY, N.S.

New and emerging species such as sea urchins and jonah crab are also being harvested. In fact, the sheer diversity of available species means that fishermen are now able to harvest a number of different species throughout the year, giving them the flexibility they need to target species depending on conservation arrangements and each stock's availability.

Science and technology are also having a positive impact on the industry. New gear technology — specially designed nets and hooks, for instance — is helping fishermen to fish more selectively and catch only those fish species and sizes they are authorized to catch. Science is also playing a key role in the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry in Canada. Through the farming of finfish, shellfish and aquatic plants, this vibrant, young industry is providing well-needed jobs and opportunities in rural and coastal areas of the country — many of which have been hit hard by the downturns in key stocks.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE: GOVERNMENT

As the federal department responsible for managing Canada's fisheries, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) must also adapt to these challenges. DFO's job is to create a climate that will help this important industry forge stability in the sea of change in which the Atlantic fishery finds itself. The department's policies and programs must reflect — and be responsive to — the present and future needs of the evolving Atlantic fishery.

In Atlantic Canada, the department manages close to 150 fisheries, comprising thousands of different stocks. Like industry, the federal government's top priority for the Atlantic fishery is also conservation — or ensuring that future generations are able to benefit from this valuable resource as we have. Quite simply, a balance must be struck between the short-term economic and social benefits of harvesting a valuable natural resource like fish, and the need to protect that resource over the long term. As the decline of some historically valuable stocks in the 1990s so plainly proved, fish populations are complex systems that respond to environmental change, human activity, and other factors in uncertain and variable ways. A strong, conservation-based fisheries management regime has never been as important as it is today.

DFO's job is to create a climate that will help this important industry forge stability in the sea of change in which the Atlantic fishery finds itself.

Each year, DFO scientists assess the size and health of hundreds of different fish stocks to determine conservation measures, including an acceptable annual catch for most species. Using this scientific advice as a basis, DFO's fisheries management team works closely with industry to establish the guidelines and conditions for harvesting. To monitor and enforce these rules, DFO's Fishery Officers conduct monitoring and surveillance activities, as well as enforcement, in cases where the rules of the fishery are not being followed.

DFO's commitment to conservation extends beyond Canada's borders. Canada has played a leading role in negotiating the United Nations Agreement on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, an international effort to manage and conserve fragile fish stocks on the high seas. Canada is also a key member of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), which regulates the Atlantic fisheries outside of Canada's 200-mile limit in the Northwest Atlantic. Along with the European Union, Canada regularly conducts surveillance and inspections in these fisheries, to ensure compliance with NAFO's conservation and enforcement measures.

These initiatives, as well as Canada's ongoing participation in other multinational forums, are providing excellent opportunities to build international support for the principles of conservation and sustainable use on a worldwide scale.

But this commitment to conservation begins at home; and it must be a shared commitment. To strengthen this shared commitment, the department is finding ways to more closely involve those people with a stake in the fishery in the decisions that affect them. Obviously, the economic well-being of entire Atlantic communities is linked to the fishery's strength. As world demand for seafood soars — and the number of people wanting access to this resource rises — DFO needs to work closely with fishery stakeholders, at all levels, to ensure that our fisheries are managed wisely, responsibly and inclusively. Fishermen, industry, Aboriginal communities and all levels of government must each be involved in the process.

Working with all of these groups, the department is finding ways to make progress towards a co-managed fishery that is environmentally responsible, economically viable and more self-reliant. Canada's fishing industry has long played a role in aquatic resource management and fisheries science. DFO has also worked with fishing communities all over Canada to develop fisheries co-management agreements, through which, for instance, industry participates in the decision-making process for a range of species.

An important milestone for Canada's fishing industry was the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing Operations. An industry-led initiative, the Code sets out the terms, principles and standards by which Canada's fishing industry will conduct its operations. The Code has now been ratified by over 80 per cent of Canada's fishing industry.

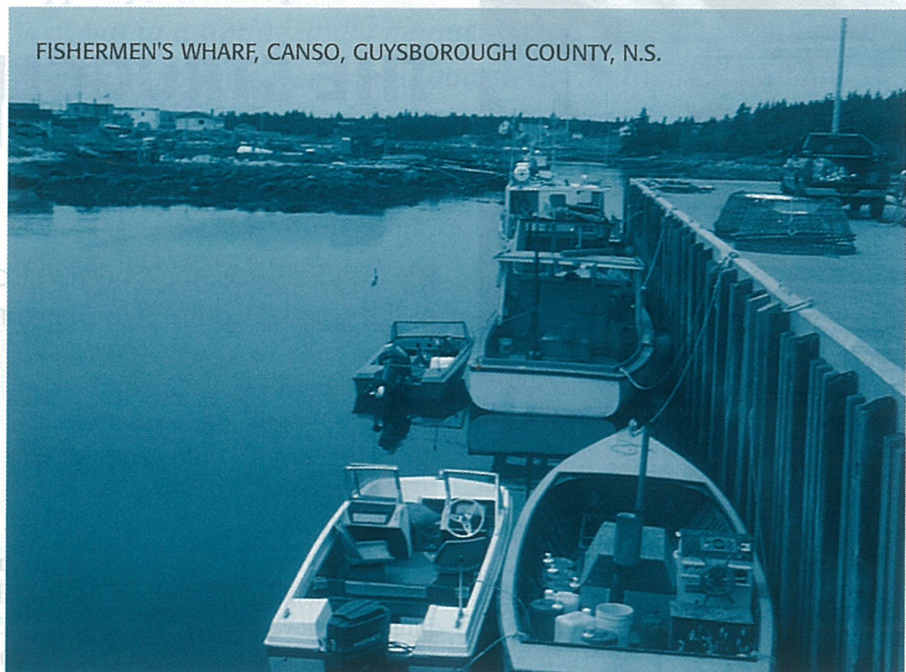
Aboriginal communities also figure prominently in Canada's fisheries. Across Canada, more than 200 First Nations fish for food, social and ceremonial purposes; many participate in the commercial fishery. Many have signed formal agreements with the Government of Canada that provide for shared responsibility for a range of fisheries management activities, including monitoring and enforcement, stock assessment, habitat rehabilitation and catch reporting.

Canada is blessed with having some of the most productive fisheries grounds anywhere in the world. This natural asset has become a part of our collective heritage. With wise management, it can continue to sustain Atlantic Canadians

Recently, the Supreme Court of Canada's 1999 *Marshall* decision affirmed a 240-year-old Treaty right for Mi'kmaq and Maliseet communities in Atlantic Canada to hunt, fish and gather in pursuit of a moderate livelihood. Since the decision, DFO has initiated significant changes in the Atlantic fishery. First Nations now enjoy greater access to the Atlantic commercial fishery than ever before, and their participation is expected to increase as they acquire greater fishing skills and capacity.

ATLANTIC FISHERIES POLICY REVIEW (AFPR)

To define the terms by which the evolution of the Atlantic fishery should continue, DFO is engaged in a comprehensive review of the policies and rules governing it. The Atlantic Fisheries Policy Review (AFPR) is the first such review in over two decades. The AFPR's goal is to bring DFO's fisheries management program into line with today's realities and stakeholder demands, and put in place a policy framework that will support the long-term sustainable management of the Atlantic fishery.


FISHERMEN'S WHARF, CANSO, GUYSBOROUGH COUNTY, N.S.

The review is being conducted in two phases. The first phase, currently underway, focuses on developing the required direction, objectives and principles, and incorporating these into a single policy framework. This phase also involves a number of public and industry consultations, to identify concerns and find ways to reflect these concerns in the framework being developed. The second phase of the AFPR process will involve putting the key elements of the framework into operation.

Public discussions around the many topics affecting the Atlantic fishery are contributing to the development of a comprehensive and inclusive framework that will guide our Atlantic fishery in the years ahead, and bring some well-needed stability and foresight to this key Canadian industry.

THE WAY AHEAD

Canada is blessed with having some of the most productive fisheries grounds anywhere in the world. This natural asset has become a part of our collective heritage. With wise management, it can continue to sustain Atlantic Canadians and our communities for generations to come.

To protect this rich natural resource in the future, DFO will continue to work closely with industry to manage the delicate balance between the present growth and competitiveness of the Atlantic fishery, and its long-term survival. The responsible, conservation-based harvesting strategies the department is developing and implementing — along with initiatives like the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing Operations and the Atlantic Fisheries Policy Review — will be instrumental in building the stable, inclusive and forward-looking Atlantic fishery Canada needs.

Pat Chamut is Assistant Deputy Minister, Fisheries Management at Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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THE STRUGGLE FOR Rural Sustainability

BY Dan Edwards and Cheryl Wilson
of the Coastal Community Network

IN THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS THE BATTLES BETWEEN FORCES FOR AND AGAINST GLOBALIZATION HAVE GATHERED WORLD WIDE ATTENTION. THESE BATTLES HAVE INCLUDED THE "THE BATTLE FOR SEATTLE" AND THE RECENT PROTESTS IN ITALY. FOR SOME TIME NOW, SMALLER, LESS SENSATIONAL BATTLES HAVE EXISTED. THESE BATTLES HAVE OCCURRED IN SMALL RURAL RESOURCE-BASED AND AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES OF CANADA. OFTEN THESE BATTLES ARE FOUND IN COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE BEEN SEVERELY IMPACTED BY THE INDUSTRIAL GLOBALIZATION AGENDA, THE COUNTERATTACK BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY AND THE SIGNIFICANT DOWNTURN AND CHANGES IN THE RESOURCE INDUSTRY.

One area whose communities have been involved in such battles is the West Coast of Vancouver Island, a rural area of B.C. comprised of fourteen First Nations politically aligned through the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and seven city and municipal governments represented by the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot, consisting of a total population under 40,000. In the early eighties, the largest center in the region, Port Alberni, had its secondary forest product workforce cut to a third of its original size as the largest forest company in the region, MacMillan Bloedel, shifted its secondary production to cheaper labour pools or totally cut secondary processing altogether. At the same time, Federal fisheries policies, focused towards privatization and consolidation, resulted in the rich fishing grounds adjacent to the west coast communities being disenfranchised from the local fishermen and community processors. In 1992, a major environmental battle over Clayoquot Sound left the logging communities in the Region in further economic turmoil. In 1999 the Sockeye Salmon Crisis meant, for many, the end of their livelihood. Continued downturning of the resource industry has left the rural communities in the region, like so many others in coastal B.C., struggling to survive.

Citizens recognized that the catalyst for rebuilding a viable, sustainable future in these West Coast communities had to come from within the communities themselves. The critical question remained, "are there enough people with energy or spirit left to rebuild and fight back?" Changes of this magnitude are often so devastating that, for those remaining in these communities all energies are focused on staying alive financially. Political action and community rebuilding become luxuries few can afford. However, the passion of those wanting their communities to survive serves as the fuel towards this rebuilding effort. It was this passion that sparked the spirits of the West Coast citizens to battle for their communities.

On the West Coast, one of the major responses to the significant changes that occurred was to have native and non-native leaders put their differences aside and

begin meeting to discuss how to fight for the sustainability of their communities. The Coastal Community Network hosted its first conference in Port Alberni in 1992, focused on the controversial Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy enacted that year by the federal government. This strategy created severe racial tensions in many fishing communities along the B.C. coast. One of the aims of the conference was to find common ground in the face of these tensions as an effective response to this strategy. These coordinated and collaborative efforts by native and non-native groups and sectors were critical to responding to the devastating impacts of the changes.

Over the next few years a series of local regional conferences were held which focused on principles of social economic sustainability and native/non-native and sectoral cooperation and collaboration. One of the outcomes of these conferences for the West Coast was to form a Regional Fisheries Board that would allow communities a voice in the resource policies that were negatively affecting their communities. Two organizations were formed regionally to promote this concept – the West Coast Sustainability Association (WCSA) and the Regional Aquatic Management Society (RAMS). These organizations focused on coordinating federal, provincial and local government agencies to support social and economic solutions to the transition and changes experienced by communities within the Region.

The purpose of the Area Based Management Board was to act as a protective policy umbrella as a variety of regional economic and sustainability initiatives unfolded. Problems were experienced as the ongoing policy initiatives of the federal government, particularly the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), ran counter to the policies needed and promoted by community. The result was lengthy delays in the formation of the board and slow implementation of the initiatives. A number of large industry organizations also put significant pressure on government to stall the process, as they saw their power to influence policy diminishing under a more consensus-based shared decision-making model. As of this writing, the board had still not being fully implemented. Several individuals and coalitions on the West Coast, in an attempt to get government attention to the crisis occurring in B.C. rural coastal communities, held hunger strikes, rallies and letter writing campaigns. These actions finally led to a review of the decision-making process within the DFO, whose own mandate called for community consultation.

Support from local, provincial and federal governments is necessary, but in a timing and a manner that is driven by community priorities, not by government, industry or individual agendas.

However, the actions taken by these individuals and coalitions did not result in the implementation of community solutions, such as that offered by an Area Based Management Board. The review resulted only in yet another report. Another impediment to implementing the Area Based Management Board and other solutions has been the recent HRDC crisis which has caused local offices to cut funding, so that small non-profits such as WCSA have been forced to shut their doors.

What are the solutions for communities struggling to regain their balance after major economic changes, manage their difficult transitions and rebuild their social and economic viability in a sustainable and resilient manner? Certainly history and experience tell us that collaboration, coordination, planning and diversification are necessary components to resiliency and sustainable rebuilding. A regional community approach is likely to be stronger than a single community response. Support from local, provincial and federal governments is necessary, but in a timing and a manner that is driven by community priorities, not by government, industry or individual agendas. Although B.C. does have small successes to celebrate in their work towards achieving community transition management and sustainable social economic viability, the long-term outcome of rural communities in B.C. remains a question in most people's mind.

In B.C. the governments' continued support of industry consolidation into the hands of a few trans-national companies, the continued push towards individual quotas in fisheries, the support of raw log experts and the consolidation of access to resources into the hands of fewer and fewer absentee landlords are examples of activities and policies that do not support rural community sustainability principles. Continuation of these actions and policies will most likely lead to rural bankruptcy and at the very least to an increase in the urban/rural divide and the economic disparity between those who have and those who have not.

The longer the delay in supporting and working with communities to implement principles of sustainability the more will be forever lost. There are many countries around the world where rural resource communities are now ghost towns or merely tourist traps with the remnants of the resource industry. B.C. is likely to follow this path if the provincial and Canadian governments continue in their present direction and do not respond or enact policies that support sustainability principles.

Is it too late? For many individuals in rural communities, yes it is, as the last few years of government ineptness have bankrupted them and left them on the beach. But in the words of Leonard Cohen, "some hope can always be found to allow those of us left to soldier on ... Forget your perfect offering, there is a crack in everything and that is how the light gets in."

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The Coastal Community Network is a not for profit Society committed to the sustainable economic and social well being of coastal communities in B.C.

FISHING IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE: Newfoundland and Labrador in the 21st Century

BY Melvin Baker

THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR HAS BEEN SHAPED AND INFLUENCED BY ITS FISHERIES, MORE SPECIFICALLY BY ITS SALT COD FISHERY. STYLING ITSELF AS BRITAIN'S OLDEST COLONY, NEWFOUNDLAND SINCE THE EARLY 1600S HAS BEEN SETTLED ON THE BASIS OF RESIDENTS BEING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE SEA AND THE FISHING GROUNDS, WITH THE EBB AND FLOW OF DAILY LIFE IN OUTPORT NEWFOUNDLAND DETERMINED BY THE DEMANDS OF THE FISHERY.

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By the mid-20-twentieth century Newfoundland had over 1,000 small settlements scattered along 10,000 miles of coastline. In 1990, historian Leslie Harris wrote that the Newfoundlander "hardly even thought of the land except as a convenient platform to exploit those underwater banks and shoals to which he did lay claim and whose feature he knew and named as farmers did their field and pastures." When Newfoundlanders speak of fish they historically mean cod, not any of the other species of fish to be found in local waters. The cod fishery was important to the diet of the aboriginal peoples who lived here prior to the arrival of settlers and fishers in the 16th century from Europe. For centuries, the cod was caught in the inshore waters by local fishers in small boats, dried onshore and exchanged to the local merchant in return for fishery supplies and household goods. This was essentially a cashless rural economy and the resultant 'credit system' left generations of fishers in debt to their merchants. The merchants found markets for the salt fish in Italy, Spain and Portugal, in the Caribbean and in Brazil.

The cod fishery remained critical to the economic and social lives of residents until 1992 when the Federal Government imposed a moratorium on the catching of cod off Newfoundland's east coast, disrupting the lives of 30,000 fishers and fish plant workers who had depended on the cod fishery for their livelihood. Today, the moratorium can be seen as representing an important watershed in the province's social and economic development for it removed the employment safety net which had kept rural communities alive for centuries. The movement of people to larger urban centers in the province and to the Canadian mainland, a rural-urban population shift so prevalent in the rest of North America during the past century, is now taking place in Newfoundland at an accelerated pace. In doing so, residents in the province have become resigned to the reality that their society has changed (and is still changing) and that the province's future economic prospects will depend more on the successful management of several major resource industries supplemented by employment in the service sector and the public service.

Since the late 19th century in particular, the Newfoundland fishery had been the employer of last resort. Successive governments attempted to find alternative sources of employment for a population whose demographic growth until the 1990s was greater than the ability of the economy to generate the required jobs. The historic problem faced by Newfoundland, economic historian David Alexander wrote in 1976, was "the burden" of having to "justify that it should have any people. From the Western Adventurers of the seventeenth century to Canadian economists in the twentieth, there has been a continuing debate as to how many, if any, people should live in Newfoundland. The consensus has normally been that there should be fewer Newfoundlanders – a conclusion reached in the seventeenth century when there were only some 2,000 inhabitants, and one which is drawn today when there are over 500,000." Historically, government policy has been directed to ensuring the survival of a strong inshore fishery as a large employer of labor, even if the politicians and bureaucrats personally recognized that it should be otherwise. In 1936, Sir John Hope Simpson, Commissioner of Government for Natural Resources, observed that "the

standard of the average fisherman's life is deplorable, and things will not be right till we get the numbers fishing down by 50% and the production up by another 50%. When I argue on these lines, people think that I am mad. Fishing is the local fetish. The island has always lived on the fish & therefore must always so live. The methods adopted in the fishery are sanctioned by 300 years of use, and so have proved that they are inevitable and right – and so on." Following Newfoundland's confederation with Canada in 1949, the Federal Government in the 1950s realized the need to reduce the number of fishers involved in the fishery, but the political will to do so was lacking and federal programs such as unemployment insurance eligibility for fishers only served to preserve the integrity of a substantial labor force in the inshore fishery. Although the Federal and Provincial Governments by the 1960s did successfully change the fishery to one based on the catch and processing of fresh frozen cod for consumers in the North American market, it still contained more licensed fishers than the governments desired. The fishery of the 1960s also involved the construction of additional fish processing plants scattered all over the province employing thousands of seasonal workers whose livelihood depended on employment in the fish plants supplemented by their unemployment insurance benefits claims. The implementation of the 200-mile territorial limit in the 1970s further served to stimulate growth in the inshore fishery by giving fishers and fish-processing companies access to even larger stocks of fish, and cod in particular.

Out-migration traditionally has served as an outlet for those who could not fine employment in the fishery. Before 1949, this generally meant immigration to the «Boston States» and to the coal mines of North Sydney. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the Canadian industrial heartland of Ontario was the preferred choice. With the development of the oil tar sands in northern Alberta, western Canada then became the popular destination of choice. During the 1990s, the closure of the inshore fishery and the absence of alternative employment has denuded rural areas of much of its young people as high school graduates quickly follow the worn paths of their relatives and friends to the mainland in search of work. Rural Newfoundland is fast becoming the general reserve of those individuals who were born before confederation with Canada. Fewer residents has not meant, however, less demands on the delivery of public services; rather, an aging population has placed even greater demands on a limited public treasury for health and other social welfare services.

The fishery that survived the 1990s has developed into a more centralized and professional industry and dependent upon less traditional sources of species for production, namely crab and shrimp. Ironically, good market demands for both species has proven more valuable to the local economy than the cod had ever been. The creation of a professional fishery and related labor force mirrors developments generally in the provincial economy which is becoming more diversified as industries based on information technology, tourism and an emerging offshore oil sector have taken hold. "How well Newfoundland and Labrador fares in the twentieth-first century, and what the social and cultural ramifications of major economic change will be," Memorial University sociologist Douglas House recently has observed, "depend crucially on how its leaders manage the new oil and natural gas industries and their impacts."

The local folk song *Let me fish off Cape St. Mary's*, written in 1947 by Otto Kelland, still captures the feeling Newfoundlanders, both resident and expatriate, still have today for the place of the cod fishery in their heritage and the song evokes a strong emotional response whether the listener has ever fished or not. In 2001, when the only fish (or cod) Newfoundlanders can catch is through a limited recreational fishery held briefly each year, the emotional hold of fishing remains strong as people risk their lives to catch the small number of fish allowed under the federal government's quota. In doing so, a new seafaring tradition has been born in both song and lifestyle, even if the once abundant cod fishery is no more.

Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's

Take me back to my Wes-tern boat, LET ME FISH OFF CAPE ST. MA-RY'S Where the hog-downs sail and the fog-horns wail With my friends the Browns and the Cleary's. LET ME FISH OFF CAPE ST. MARY'S.

Let me feel my dory lift
To the broad Atlantic combers,
Where the tide rips swirl and the wild ducks whirl
Where Old Neptune calls the numbers
'Neath the broad Atlantic combers . . . .

Let me sail up Golden Bay
With my oilskins all a'streamin' . . .
From the thunder squall—when I hauled me trawl
And my old Cape Ann a gleamin'
With my oil skins all a'streamin' . . . .

Let me view that rugged shore,
Where the beach is all a-glisten
With the Caplin spawn where from dusk to dawn
You bait your trawl and listen
To the undertow a-hissin'.

When I reach that last big shoal
Where the ground swells break asunder,
Where the wild sands roll to the surges toll.
Let me be a man and take it
When my dory fails to make it.

Take me back to that snug green cove
Where the seas roll up their thunder.
There let me rest in the earth's cool Breast
Where the stars shine out their wonder—
And the seas roll up their thunder.

—Otto P. Kelland.

The fishery that survived the 1990s has developed into a more centralized and professional industry and dependent upon less traditional sources of species for production, namely crab and shrimp.

Dr. Baker is an adjunct Professor of History at Memorial University of Newfoundland

EN ROUTE POUR la Gaspésie de l'avenir

PAR Johanne Castonguay

PARLER DE LA GASPÉSIE, CE N'EST PLUS SEULEMENT DISCOURIR SUR SES MISÈRES. C'EST SURTOUT PARLER DE SES GRANDEURS.

Certains seront surpris d'apprendre que, jusqu'aux années 1970, le chômage était presque inexistant en Gaspésie. L'explication réside dans le fait que l'éveil de la Gaspésie a commencé à la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale avec le développement fulgurant de ses richesses naturelles : la forêt, la pêche, les mines et l'agriculture.

La forêt a donné naissance à des entreprises autochtones de grande importance. Ce qui distinguait chacun des villages gaspésiens, c'est la présence d'un moulin ou d'une scierie qui était associé aux « grosses compagnies » comme Québec Lumber, St-Laurent Lumber et la Richardson. Ces compagnies exportaient le bois gaspésien au Canada, aux États-Unis et aussi en Europe. À cette époque, la forêt était intimement liée à l'agriculture. En effet, les Gaspésiens étaient à la fois forestiers et agriculteurs et assuraient ainsi leur autosuffisance. L'agriculture a connu son apogée entre les années 1950 et 1970.

La pêche, quant à elle, a toujours été une industrie de premier ordre en Gaspésie. Cette région maritime assurait sa survie par l'exploitation ainsi que l'exportation de son poisson, notamment la morue. Ce poisson des mers froides était exporté aux États-Unis par des courtiers québécois qui y avaient vu un filon pour le moins lucratif.

À compter des années 1950, et ce jusqu'à tout récemment, l'industrie minière faisait partie du paysage économique de la Gaspésie, avec le développement de gisements de cuivre à Murdochville et à Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, en plus d'une mine de plomb à Marsoui.

La création d'emplois dans ces quatre secteurs névralgiques et l'apport considérable de l'industrie touristique saisonnière expliquent pourquoi le chômage était presque inexistant dans notre région. C'est dans ce cadre artisanal et humain que les Gaspésiens réussissaient à se réaliser pleinement tout en assumant leurs responsabilités familiales.

Pour des raisons géographiques, climatiques et sociales, la Gaspésie n'a pas pris le virage industriel au même rythme que d'autres régions du Québec. Mais sans vouloir expliquer l'inexplicable, c'est à partir des années 1970 que la Gaspésie a connu une sorte d'effondrement économique. Les industriels de la forêt et de la pêche ont préféré s'approprier nos ressources naturelles plutôt que d'investir dans la transformation de la matière. À partir de ce jour, nous avons vu la mer se vider et nos forêts être littéralement pillées. La Gaspésie a été, bien malgré elle, victime d'une mauvaise gestion de ses ressources naturelles par l'état fédéral et québécois. Ces difficultés économiques ont tôt fait d'exacerber le problème de l'exode des jeunes, pour qui quitter la Gaspésie allait leur assurer un soi-disant avenir meilleur. Cette désertion laissait nos bâtisseurs de l'économie sans relève.

Malgré toutes les difficultés rencontrées, les Gaspésiens conservent un fort sentiment d'appartenance. C'est avec fierté qu'ils racontent qu'ils ont fait de ce territoire, privilégié par la nature, un produit touristique reconnu mondialement. Les descendants déserteurs, de passage sur leur terre natale, réalisent que, faute d'emploi, ils ont quitté une qualité de vie exceptionnelle et ils ne demanderaient pas mieux que de pouvoir revenir au bercail.

Les luttes quotidiennes et les difficultés vécues par les Gaspésiens ont fait d'eux des personnes fortes et engagées. Ils revendiquent avec ferveur le droit strict de vivre dans leur région et d'y travailler. En définitive, les Gaspésiens ont espoir en le retour à des jours meilleurs puisqu'ils réalisent peu à peu qu'ils doivent prendre sans délai le virage de la deuxième et de la troisième transformation de leurs matières premières. Les ressources naturelles ne pouvant à elles seules assurer la pérennité de son développement, la Gaspésie doit s'engager activement sur la voie de la recherche et du développement, des biotechnologies, du multimédia et de l'économie du savoir.

Pour réussir, il est essentiel de donner aux Gaspésiens les outils pour se développer par une décentralisation réelle du pouvoir décisionnel vers les communautés locales et régionales.

Les nouvelles technologies ont rapproché tous les habitants de cette planète. Soulagée de ses barrières géographiques, la Gaspésie est prête à accueillir de grandes entreprises qui pourront prospérer, animées par l'âme de cette incomparable presqu'île.

Johanne Castonguay est l'attachée politique de Matthias Rioux, Député de Matane

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THE VIEW FROM
Senator's Corner

BY David Frank

TWO YEARS AGO I WAS SITTING AT SENATOR'S CORNER IN GLACE BAY, AT THE MAIN INTERSECTION OF WHAT WAS ONCE THE BIGGEST TOWN IN CANADA. IT IS CALLED SENATOR'S CORNER BECAUSE OF THE TWO-STOREY WOODEN OFFICE BUILDING WITH A ROUND END THAT PRESIDED OVER THE LOCATION AND BELONGED TO BILLY "SENATOR" MACDONALD. HE HAD THAT NICKNAME BECAUSE PRIME MINISTER SIR JOHN. A. MACDONALD HAD PUT HIS FATHER IN THE SENATE FOR SUPPORTING CONFEDERATION. THAT WAS BACK IN THE DAYS OF THE NATIONAL POLICY, WHEN CAPE BRETON COAL WAS CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL TO THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANADIAN ECONOMY. THAT LANDMARK BUILDING HAS DISAPPEARED, BUT LIKE SO MUCH ELSE IN GLACE BAY, IT LIVES ON IN THE LOCAL CULTURE.

There was always lots of activity at Senator's Corner. This is where the streetcars emptied their passengers from the outlying neighbourhoods into the shops, offices, cafés, hotels, pool halls and blind pigs of the downtown. At the centre of a district with a population of some 50,000 people, Glace Bay considered itself the "biggest town in Canada". With a dozen operating coal mines in Glace Bay alone, and many more in the surrounding coal towns, Glace Bay was the capital of the coal country in eastern Canada. For generations this compact industrial community was the source of much of the power that fuelled the industrial revolution in Canada.

One of the local residents who ran a shop at Senator's Corner was a man by the name of Dawn Fraser, one of the many rural residents drawn to the industrial district by the expansion of the coal industry. Among other things, he wrote tall tales and local history in the style of Robert Service which he often posted in the shop window for the edification of passersby. One of his most popular verses began with echoes of Longfellow:

Listen, my children, and you shall know
Of a crime that happened long ago
In the dark and dismal days of old
When the world and all was ruled by Gold . . .

In his verses Fraser wrote a kind of contemporary local history which identified Glace Bay as one of the sites of the social conflict between labour and capital that has done much to shape the history of resource-based industrial communities across the country. The quoted lines introduced a long narrative verse Fraser wrote in 1924, under the title "The Case of Jim McLachlan". It was the first published account of the life and times of the union leader who embodied the local spirit of resistance to the outside companies and distant governments that shaped the history of the coal industry.

The biography of James Bryson McLachlan was a book that needed to be written. At least that is how it seemed to me, living in Nova Scotia as an apprentice historian back in the 1970s, when I started digging into the history of the coal miners. The late Senator Eugene Forsey, who had visited McLachlan in the 1920s, when Forsey himself was a student at McGill University, recognized the man as an extraordinary personality. McLachlan, he told me, was "a delightful old bird", and his biography was "one of the epics of Canadian Trade Unionism". McLachlan's followers repeatedly returned him to union office and supported his election to the House of Commons, where it was hoped he would join J.S. Woodsworth as a spokesman for Canadian workers in Parliament. Although he was denounced, demonized and persecuted, even when he was in Dorchester Penitentiary following his conviction for sedition, McLachlan never lost the affection and respect of his followers.

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In the broadest terms, McLachlan can be credited with helping to bring the coal miners out of the dependency of the 19th century and educating them to a sense of their own power in the 20th century. He saw his mission as both moral and economic, and he pronounced himself out to "redeem the world from the chaos of capitalism". In the end, his achievements were less revolutionary than he intended, but like Keir Hardie in Britain or John L. Lewis in the United States, McLachlan was one of the generation of union leaders who helped achieve a measure of social reform, including a recognition of the rights of labour under the law and a moderate redistribution of wealth through the creation of a body of social legislation.

McLachlan can be credited with helping to bring the coal miners out of the dependency of the 19th century and educating them to a sense of their own power in the 20th century.

As I sat there that afternoon at Senator's Corner, introducing the new biography of McLachlan to a local audience in the front lobby of the Savoy Theatre, it seemed an appropriate location, as this was one of the old moviehouses where McLachlan often held forth at public meetings. One by one they came forward, out of the past as well as the present. There was Nelson Beaton, a retired coal miner well into his 80s, but once a boy who sold papers in the streets of Glace Bay and counted himself a follower of McLachlan. There was a father thinking about his son, who like so many other Cape Bretoners has gone away into the labour markets of North America and needs to know more about the struggles that took place in his own home town. There was a young woman who works as a nurse at Glace Bay's one remaining local hospital; the story of McLachlan is important to her too, for he was her great grandfather. And then too there was the current president of District 26, United Mine Workers of America, Stephen Drake, and he asks the difficult question he and others have been asking for several years – what would J.B.McLachlan say to us today?

It has been impossible to give a full reply, but the question has stayed with me throughout the past two years, as Cape Breton has continued to pass through the slow dance of economic discouragement. The latest scene in this story was the announcement in May 2001 by federal Natural Resources Minister Ralph Goodale of the impending shutdown of the last surviving coal mine. Efforts to sell the Prince mine, he stated, were being discontinued, and the last 300 men employed there would be out of work by the end of the year.

For a few days afterwards the newspapers were filled with reports on the final demise of the Cape Breton coal industry. In these words one listened to a diagnosis of inevitability, as in the headline on a Canadian Press despatch, "Time Runs Out for Coal", and one heard the solemn tones of obituary tributes, as in the headline on the front page in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald, "King Coal, 1710 2001". Certainly there were words of praise for the men and women who had given their lives to the industry over the years, but one had the sense that the media almost welcomed the story as one that was long overdue. At last, the coal miners with all their problems would be departing the contemporary scene and getting back into the past where they could be honoured – and ignored. In a few days, the stories stopped.

The coal miners do not loom large in the Canadian cultural imagination, perhaps because this is an industry located far from the heartlands of population and industry in this country. It has been natural for the national media

to portray the people of the coal country as the unfortunate but inevitable victims of an old style industry whose time has passed. Relatively little has been said in the media about the long history of achievement among the Cape Breton coal miners. The most obvious is their pioneering role in the country's labour history, which established the right of workers to unions of their own choice. One thinks also of their early experiments in local medicare and adult education and cooperatives. But at a time like this it is also important to think in more general terms of the solidarity and resilience of a local community that valued the potential of its people and resources more than any outside governments or corporations had ever done.

Out of this vigorous local tradition of community activism have come successive demands for more responsible forms of economic development. Ever since the coal miners won union recognition early in the 20th century, they have been making the argument that the coal industry should be treated as a public enterprise. This argument can be traced back to the miners' reconstruction programme of 1918, and it was repeated decade after decade for the next half century. It was the coal miners' answer to the rivers of coal that left by rail and ship for the energy markets of Central Canada, an export trade that depleted local resources to provide cheap power to industrial Canada, that paid out dividends to shareholders in Montreal and Toronto and that produced the tax royalties that for many years provided the largest single source of provincial revenue in Halifax. Given the wasteful exploitation of resources promoted by corporations and governments, the coal miners supported public enterprise as a strategy for ensuring that returns from the coal mines were reinvested in local economic activity. And they wanted it to be a form of public enterprise that involved full participation for the coal miners in managing industrial affairs. In their view, this was the only way to repair the ravages of the social and human landscape in the coal country and escape from the cycles of dependency and depletion associated with resource-based development.

The news this year is especially sad, because for a short time in the 1960s and 1970s, it seemed as if the coal miners were finally beginning to win the argument about the destructive impact of private enterprise in running such an important resource industry. It was not exactly what the earlier generations of coal miners had in mind, but the Cape Breton Development Corporation, often referred to as Devco, was established in 1967 to take over from the Dominion Steel and Coal Company, the last of the private sector corporations to exploit the Cape Breton mines. When Dosco abandoned the coal industry, the era of private enterprise seemed to be coming to an end in the Cape Breton coal industry. The change was long overdue, and it presented an historic opportunity for new initiatives in local development.

Devco's mandate for local development was to use the power of public ownership and state support to reduce the area's chronic dependency on coal and help diversify the Cape Breton economy. It was true that the crown corporation represented a bureaucratic form of public ownership, far from the ideals of workers' control proposed by the unions or of economic democracy advocated by the cooperative movement. For some politicians, it was probably considered a form of social welfare rather than a plan for economic development. But it also represented a recognition that sooner or later a community dependent on a disappearing and difficult resource must develop an alternative economic base for the future.

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The most surprising turn in the history of Devco was its rapid conversion in the 1970s from economic diversification to renewal of the coal industry. The explanation for this change was the international energy crisis that drove up oil prices and gave the coal industry in North America a new lease on life. In Cape Breton this meant that old mines were closed down as planned – but they were replaced with new ones that represented a major new investment in technology and in people. In the 1970s, a new generation of coal miners in their 20s were recruited into the industry. Steve Drake, the last president of the now suspended District 26 of the United Mine Workers of America, likes to tell the story of how he had already bought his ticket to fly out west and find work as

an electrician when he was offered a job at home in a new coal mine.

By the 1990s the familiar cycle of boom and bust in the resource sector had revolved yet again. Just as Dominion Steel and Coal had before them, Devco faced contracting markets and rising development costs in the 1990s. And even though principles of redressing regional disparity through regional development had been written into the Constitution Act of 1982, this did not seem to count for much anymore. By this time the federal government was undergoing a rapid conversion to old economic ideas that placed priority on neo-liberal market principles and reduced intervention in the economy. Privatization was part of the package, and one by one the coal mines were shut down or put up for sale. For a Canadian public which had recently witnessed the tragic story of Westray – a case study in the disastrous consequences of unregulated private exploitation – it was simply more confirmation that the coal industry deserved to disappear.

Until the announcement this spring, the coal mines were officially on the market, and there were negotiations with potential buyers interested in operating one or more of the mines on a reduced scale. But the federal government's announcement in May put an end to these efforts. There has even been an enthusiastic offer from a group of local investors, inspired by cooperative principles and organized as the Cape Breton Miners' Cooperative, but the federal government has refused to consider their proposal to purchase the assets of one of the abandoned mines. Although hundreds of millions of tons of coal remain in place under the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the conventional wisdom is that large scale utilization of the resource remains uneconomic for the forseeable future. Most Canadian coal production is now concentrated in the surface strip-mines of western Canada. In Cape Breton "orderly closure" remains the order of the day. There will be various kinds of compensation available to the unemployed, much of it grudgingly offered by Ottawa as a result of a round of protests led by miners' wives over the past two years. But the larger issues of local economic development have largely disappeared from view, and Devco is being allowed to wind down its affairs with its mandate for diversification unfulfilled.

In any industrial country, the story of coal is central to the history of economic development. It has given rise to the emergence of compact single industry communities, especially in areas such as Cape Breton where the extension of the coal seams under the ocean floor has given the coal towns a greater permanence than in areas where settlements are more readily abandoned in favour of new locations. Like all coal communities, the Cape Breton towns have had to face the logic of dependence on a resource that is not only vulnerable to changing markets but is also by its nature non-renewable. These are challenges faced by resource-based communities throughout the modern world and should be of interest well beyond Cape Breton. In this age of restructuring, Cape Bretoners are reluctant to embrace the disappearance of a local identity that represents a social and human investment of considerable magnitude and worth. More than anything else, they want the right to make a constructive contribution to the Canadian economy without being forced to abandon the community that has sustained them.

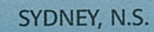
History does not provide a lot in the way of direct answers or instructions for the purposes of the present, but we can imagine that old-time radicals such as McLachlan would recognize the current events as the latest round in a struggle against dispossession and disinheritance.

Did it have to be this way? In his time J.B. McLachlan championed a strategy of public ownership and workers' control that we can recognize today as a form of community-based economic development. It was something the governments and corporations and much of the public rejected as much too revolutionary, and the proposition became increasingly unlikely as the energy markets shifted to new sources of power after the peak of the industry in the 1940s. History does not provide a lot in the way of direct answers or instructions for the purposes of the present, but we can imagine that old-time radicals such as McLachlan would recognize the current events as the latest round in a struggle against dispossession and disinheritance. The coal miners have not given up their habit of demanding attention to issues of justice and dignity, and it has been argued that this communitarian social ethic is one of the gifts of the hinterland regions to the public discourse in this country.

There has been much well-deserved praise lately for Alistair MacLeod's novel *No Great Mischief*, which is to a large extent a lament for the fortunes and sorrows of one family of Cape Bretoners over several generations. It is not so often noticed that the book is also about other workers pushed and pulled by the demands of the North American labour market. Nor have the literary critics paid enough attention to the title, which is a reference to the observation of General James Wolfe on his Highland soldiers, ancestors of a large part of the Cape Breton populace. It is the comment of a general looking down on his mercenaries with a good deal of cynicism: "No great mischief if they fall".

But at a time like this it also needs to be said that the indications of Cape Breton history are to the contrary. In the words of MacLeod's lament, these are a people who out of their experiences have acquired the virtue "to care too much and to try too hard". In the context of the coal industry, they remind us of the idea of economic development as if people mattered. The news of the past few years has shown that the coal miners no longer have the power they once had, but the questions they are asking belong to all of us and will not go away.

David Frank teaches Canadian history at the University of New Brunswick. He is the author of *J.B. McLachlan: A Biography* (James Lorimer & Co., 1999)


SYDNEY, N.S.

AN EYE ON THE Island's Future

BY Rick Beaton

CAPE BRETON ISLAND IS A UNIQUE BLEND OF PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS WHO ARE POSSESSED OF A DEEP LOYALTY TO THIS 'ROCK IN A STREAM'. GEOGRAPHICALLY, IT'S AN ISLAND AS RUGGED AND WEATHER-BEATEN AS CAN BE FOUND ANYWHERE IN CANADA. JUST A MILE OFF NOVA SCOTIA'S EAST COAST, THE ISLAND'S ECONOMY HAS RELIED FOR MANY GENERATIONS ON THE RESOURCE INDUSTRIES FOR ITS LIVELIHOOD. FOR OVER 300 YEARS COAL HAS BEEN MINED THROUGH ONE METHOD OR ANOTHER ON CAPE BRETON ISLAND; THE GROUND FISHERY HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT PART OF ISLAND LIFE FOR EVEN LONGER; WHILE STEELMAKING IS A RELATIVE NEWCOMER AT ONLY ABOUT 100 YEARS OLD. YET, OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES, EACH ONE OF THESE INDUSTRIES, CORNERSTONES OF THE ISLAND'S ECONOMY AND THE 'BREAD AND BUTTER' OF GENERATIONS OF ISLANDERS, HAS DISAPPEARED AS A WAY OF LIFE.

DRAMATIC ECONOMIC CHANGE

Cape Breton Island is witnessing a dramatic and fundamental restructuring of its economic base. For years it was known as the steel centre of eastern Canada and the industrial centre of the Maritimes. Coal was king and the fishery provided a way of life for countless families.

Once upon a time there were 40 active coal mines operating here employing 15,000 men. In 1961 the Rand Commission on Coal noted that in an area of approximately 87,000 people, roughly 50,000 residents were dependent on coal mining. Today there remains only one mine, and it will close before the end of 2001.

In its prime, Cape Breton Island was a prosperous community, with ample natural resources and a growing manufacturing sector.

In the 1950s and 1960s there were approximately 7,500 people working at the Sydney Steel plant. Today there are none and the facility is on the auction block, to be sold on a piecemeal basis, never again to operate in this community. In fact, in 1961, 24% of the workforce was employed in either coal or steel. By the end of this year that will be reduced to zero.

The third major pillar of the economy is the fishery. It has been hit hard by the collapse of the ground-fishery. Over 2,300 people have lost their jobs as a result of the closure. All of this has occurred on a relatively small Island with a population of approximately 158,000 people. What has happened here is more than just a shut-down or base closure. It is not the decline of a single industry. It is an almost total destruction of the economic raison d'être of this Island.

In its prime, Cape Breton Island was a prosperous community, with ample natural resources and a growing manufacturing sector. As a result new immigrants from across Europe and the Caribbean came in search of work. A relatively large community developed around these industries.

KING COAL

Due to an inordinate dependence on such a small number of industries, the economy of the Island did not have time to mature and diversify into other sectors. The community came to rely on its employers and there were very few independent entrepreneurs. Consequently with the decline of the principal industries there were limited alternatives. Furthermore, the jobs lost were, for the most part, full time jobs – not seasonal – and they paid well in relative terms.

Slowly but surely community and economic infrastructure slipped away. Passenger rail service has been eliminated and currently the Island is in danger of losing its freight trains. Other services have been consolidated into larger urban centres so as to create a critical mass and to improve efficiency. A costly reminder of the Island's isolation is the fact that a return airfare from Sydney to Halifax can cost over $900.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – THE CHALLENGE

The role of economic development entities that have been put in place by the Government of Canada is to facilitate the economic restructuring of the community, a restructuring that will result in sustainable long-term jobs in a more well-rounded or diversified economy.

The unemployment rate for Cape Breton Island in June 2001, according to Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, was 18.6%. This compares to an unemployment rate of 10.3% for all of Nova Scotia and 6.7% nationally. The participation rate for the Island is 54.3%, while in Nova Scotia it stands at 62.5% and 67% for Canada.

The fact remains, however, that despite these difficulties, the Cape Breton Island economy is making progress. It is evolving from a goods-producing economy to one based on services. Currently, the single largest segment of the economy is the service sector, which represents 79.5% of the Island's workforce as compared to 53% in 1961.

This change is due in large measure to the support for regional economic development that the Government of Canada has demonstrated over the years. Today the local economy is more diversified than it was in the past; Cape Breton Island is better positioned to withstand the collapse of the coal and steel industry and jobs have been created in new fields.

Reshaping and rebuilding of an area's economy is a long-term process and unfortunately there is no quick fix.

Reshaping and rebuilding of an area's economy is a long-term process and unfortunately there is no quick fix. Yet it is interesting to compare the Island's economy to the way things were just over 30 years when trouble in the Cape Breton coalfields first attracted national attention.

At that time there was no automotive parts manufacturer in North Sydney employing 320 people. The EDS customer interaction centres in Sydney and Port Hawkesbury with their soon-to-be 1,350 jobs were beyond anyone's imagination. The 800 jobs at Stora Enso did not exist. The University College of Cape Breton and the Nova Scotia Community Colleges with their 550 jobs were a pipe dream, as were the commercial developments now found in Sydney and Port Hawkesbury. The federal government's citizenship and immigration office with its 185 jobs was unheard of. Golf courses, and the hotels and resorts of Baddeck did not exist, nor did optical digitizing jobs or information technology jobs.

The problem, however, is that the rate of job creation has not been able to keep pace with the decline in the traditional industries. In many respects, economic development on Cape Breton Island is akin to a salmon swimming upstream. It's not easy, and at times, the downstream current can be very strong. Identifying new areas of growth and job creation and implementing programs to capitalize on these opportunities lead to the creation of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC) and the Cape Breton Growth Fund (CBGF).

RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

ECBC is a federal Crown corporation formed in 1987 by an Act of Parliament. It was born of the Industrial Development Division (IDD) of the Cape Breton Development Corporation (DEVCO), created in 1967 to run the Island's coal mines. At that time, DEVCO had a dual purpose that included industrial development and coal mining. The Act was amended in 1987 to restrict DEVCO`s mandate coal mining. ECBC has a very broad and flexible mandate for economic development on Cape Breton Island and in the Mulgrave, Nova Scotia area. That mandate is to create less reliance on the coal industry and it

covers virtually anything outside that sector that encourages job creation and the generation of income and wealth on Cape Breton Island.

In addition, as a result of its 1999 decision to downsize and privatize the assets of the federally-owned DEVCO, the Government of Canada established an incremental economic development fund of $68 million to assist the Cape Breton Island community in efforts to adjust to the economic impact of this decision. The Province of Nova Scotia added $12-million to the fund for a total of $80-million. Named the Cape Breton Growth Fund, it was further supplemented by an additional $28 million in May 2001, after efforts to find a qualified buyer for the DEVCO's assets proved unsuccessful. To avoid overlap and duplication, ECBC provides a full array of administrative support to the CBGF.

OPPORTUNITIES

KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

One promising sector of the economy is information technology and knowledge-based industries. Over the last several years, the Island has witnessed the growth of a number of small companies. Geomatics systems, distance education and digital animation are all happening here on the Island. Managing growth and access to capital are crucial elements to their ultimate success.

Most recently, a number of customer care centres have already been established, and EDS Canada is prominent among them. EDS is a world leader in this field and its Sydney centre is considered state-of-the-art. Furthermore, job growth has significantly exceeded expectations.

A second EDS facility was recently announced, bringing the total to 1,350 to be employed by the company. EDS is now among the largest private sector employers on Cape Breton Island.

The word is getting out. In the last two years the Government of Canada, through ECBC and the Growth Fund, has participated in the creation of over 2,000 customer care jobs on Cape Breton Island. Corporations are impressed with the quality and loyalty of the Island's workforce.

As Cape Bretoners, we must better position ourselves to generate and use knowledge – to innovate. We want Cape Breton to develop the capability to accelerate the development of new technologies.

> ***The problem, however, is that the rate of job creation has not been able to keep pace with the decline in the traditional industries. In many respects, economic development on Cape Breton Island is akin to a salmon swimming upstream. It's not easy, and at times, the downstream current can be very strong.***

The Government of Canada is playing an important role. Late in 2000, NRC announced it would establish an Information Technology and Innovation Centre at the University College of Cape Breton. The lab will carry out research and development in partnership with other companies in the wireless communications sector.

TOURISM

Knowledge-based/IT industries are not the only priorities identified as possible Cape Breton economic growth sectors. Many of the Island's traditionally-stable industries can also benefit from a change in attitude. Tourism, for instance, is seen as another area with great potential. The Cabot Trail, and other aspects of this Island, draw people from around the world. They come for the spectacular scenery that's inescapable anywhere visitors travel, the culture, the outdoor adventure and some of the best golf in Canada. And there's no shortage of accommodations, services and attractions to lure visitors and keep them entertained.

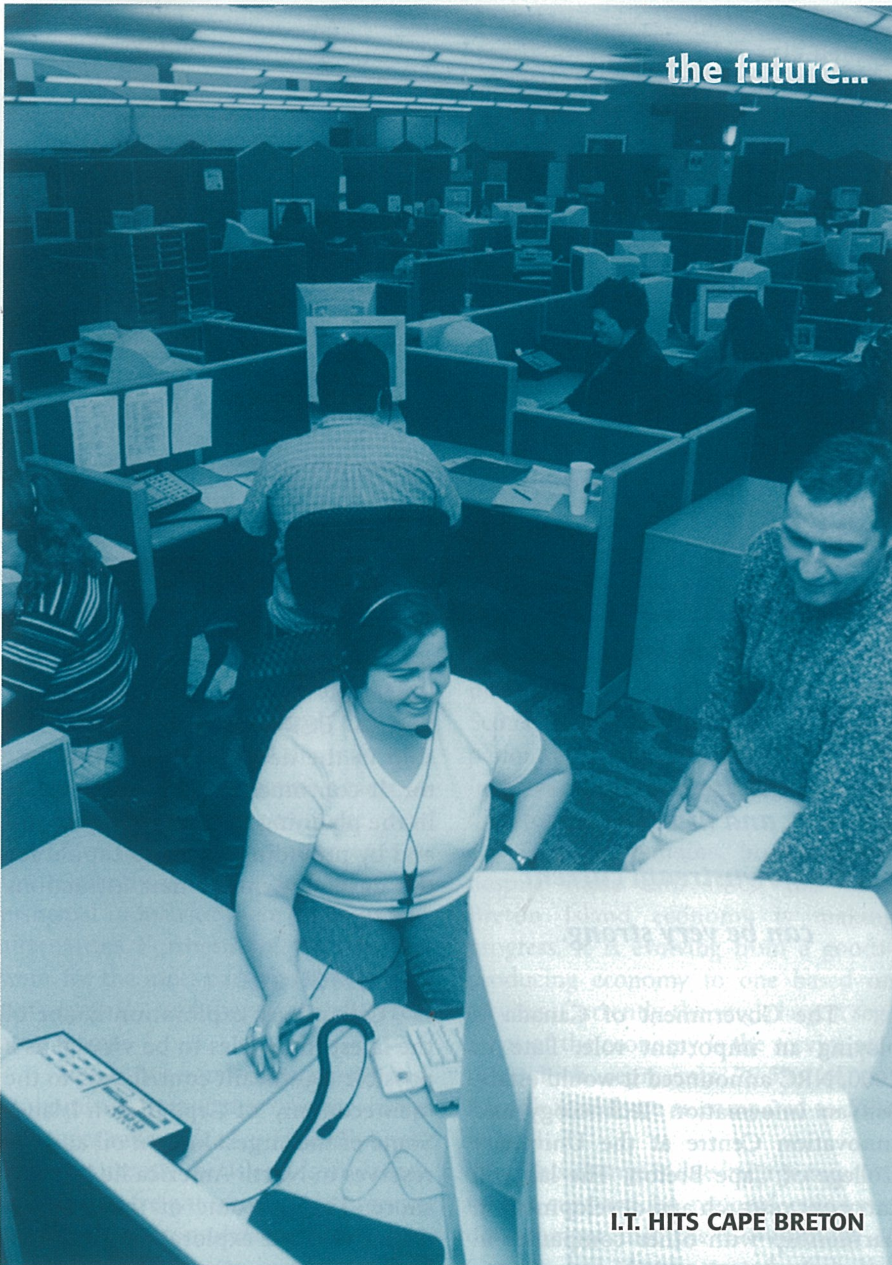
As for entertainment, Cape Breton's music industry is a major draw and a perfect complement to tourism. The musical diversity on the Island provides something for every taste, although the traditional music niche has exploded in recent years. Spurred on by the international recognition of performers such as Rita MacNeil, the Rankins, and the Barra MacNeils, and many others, traditional Celtic music is a staple at festivals and gatherings across the Island.

The Island's tourism sector now employs over 6,800 people and generates approximately $230 million in revenues each year. Past efforts, successful as they have been, have not yet matched the total opportunity. Potential exists for much more growth. ECBC has provided leadership in the development of this sector. It continues to play a major role in the planning for further expansion and by providing access to capital for the development of new attractions and services.

THE OFFSHORE

Oil and gas exploration is one of the latest industries to be viewed as a possible significant contributor to the 'new economy' of Cape Breton Island. Some of the largest known oil and gas reserves in North America lie just offshore. The outcome of the ongoing debate over the exploration boundary between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland will do much to reduce the element of risk for investors in this field. However, a timely resolution to this jurisdictional dispute is needed.

Interest in Cape Breton within the international oil and gas industry is building. Major projects for Cape Breton are under discussion and the nature and scope of the endeavors are varied. The potential outcomes for the Island are the same: new investment, expanded income, and employment. Industry can benefit from a pool of over 2,500 skilled workers with experience in trades associated with the oil and gas sector. That's good news for a company when it considers locating in the area. As for on-going training,



I.T. HITS CAPE BRETON

there is a petroleum institute located at the University College of Cape Breton (UCCB); the Nova Scotia Community College has programs and training targeted toward the skill sets required by the oil and gas industry. So Cape Breton is now positioning itself and training its workforce for future developments in this area.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental remediation is a fairly surprising 'window of opportunity' that has recently opened as a potential market for the Island. It is ironic that while 100 years of steelmaking and coal production have come to an end, there is now a need to develop the expertise to deal with their environmental legacy. Cape Bretoners can now develop the skill set necessary to provide remediation technologies and services. When that work is completed here, this expertise can be exported to other parts of the world.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

The Government of Canada through ECBC and the Cape Breton Growth Fund, has a role to play in the economic resurgence of Cape Breton Island. It can help in providing the tools to make the most of the opportunities ahead. Business supported by investment can take advantage of a stable, focused and competitive community with modern transportation and communication links, and a job-ready workforce capable of succeeding in the new global economy. This is the message that ECBC and the CBGF promote in their efforts to attract new investment.

These organizations are also working with numerous Cape Breton companies who are attempting to sell their products and services further afield. This includes assistance with market research, product development, export training and actual trade missions to new markets.

THE TEST OF TIME

I believe that the Government of Canada is helping to build a stronger and more vibrant Cape Breton Island. I am confident that when the history of this period is written, it will be said that Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation and the Cape Breton Growth Fund worked with the community to create opportunity for Cape Bretoners, that resources were employed wisely, and that a new spirit of entrepreneurship and optimism was fostered.

In the end, the goal is to create a legacy of sustainable employment at a globally competitive level, enabling the Cape Breton Island community to once again become net contributors to the Canadian economy.

In the end, the goal is to create a legacy of sustainable employment at a globally competitive level, enabling the Cape Breton Island community to once again become net contributors to the Canadian economy.

Rick Beaton is the Vice-president of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation and the CEO of the Cape Breton Growth Fund

MUSIC AS AN EXPRESSION OF CULTURE in the Mining Communities of Cape Breton Island

BY John C. O'Donnell

THE MEN OF THE DEEPS

MY INTEREST IN THE MUSIC OF CAPE BRETON'S MINING COMMUNITIES BEGAN IN 1966 WHEN I WAS ASKED TO BECOME MUSICAL DIRECTOR OF A NEWLY FORMED CHOIR OF WORKING AND RETIRED COAL MINERS NOW KNOWN AS *THE MEN OF THE DEEPS*. CAPE BRETON, OF COURSE, WAS THE SITE OF ONE OF THE FIRST COMMERCIAL COAL MINING OPERATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA, AND FOR MOST OF THE PAST THREE HUNDRED YEARS THE ISLAND HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT INDUSTRIAL CENTRE.

In the 1960s, in an effort to preserve some of the rich folklore of the island's coal mining communities, its citizens organized the Miners' Folk Society as a tribute to Canada's Centennial year, 1967. Two significant monuments emerged from the efforts of the Miners' Folk Society: The Cape Breton Miners' Museum and the *Men of the Deeps* coal miners' choir.

For most of the past thirty-five years, the group has been singing of the work and life-style of the Cape Breton coal miner to audiences in most of Canada and through parts of the United States; in 1976 they became the first Canadian performing group to tour the People's Republic of China after diplomatic relations between the two nations were restored four year before. And as recently as September 1999 the men traveled to Kosovo, Yugoslavia, at the request of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, where they performed in a gala festival organized by actress Vanessa Redgrave on behalf of the United Nations Children's Fund.

The music of the *Men of the Deeps* is drawn from mining communities around the world. Some of the group's songs are also "home grown" – composed by contemporary Cape Breton bards, while others are traditional songs which trace their roots to their Celtic forebearers in the old country. But all of it expresses the spirit of a special breed of people.

Now the coal industry, once so flourishing and vital to the island's economy, is about to come to an end – and one is prompted to ask: How vital a role has music played in shaping, defining and preserving the character of these communities?

Anyone who has visited Cape Breton Island will have observed that, like its neighboring island of Newfoundland, it is a treasure house of musical talent. Solo talents like Rita MacNeil and performing groups like the Barra MacNeils from Sydney Mines and

the Ranking Family of Mabou have carried the special musical heritage of Cape Breton far beyond the island's shores.

Allister MacGillivray of Marion Bridge is one of Nova Scotia's most successful songwriters. He has performed as a guitarist and singer with Celtic music groups and his songs have been recorded by such international artists as Anne Murray, the Garrison Brothers, Foster and Allen, Frank Patterson and Phil Coulter.

Leon Dubinsky of Englishtown has composed music for many stage productions and number of films. He is also the composer of the popular anthem *Rise Again* – a song which praises the indomitable spirit of a people who have known hard times.

Lillian Crew Walsh was born in the village of Neil's Harbour in 1884. She died in 1967 but many of her poems have been immortalized, thanks to her collaboration with Charlie MacKinnon. Charlie, a well-known balladeer who lived in Portage, gained great fame through his recordings of Maritime-flavoured material. His untimely death in the late '80s was a great loss to Cape Breton's musical community. Professional songwriters and balladeers such as these represent the contemporary voice of Cape Breton's mining communities. They have been steeped in and nurtured by the traditions of the island from their earliest years, and their music and poetry often reflect the spirit of their heritage in the same way that oral tradition molds the spirit of a people.

Why is it that the music emanating from the people of these two islands off Canada's East Coast often appears to dominate the contemporary music scene in Canada? One explanation can likely be traced to the insular isolation of the early pioneers. But surely a major influence to inspire such a wealth of music must be the difficult lifestyles imposed on these peoples by the demanding industries that, until recently, powered these islands' economies.

In Newfoundland, of course, it was the fishing industry (now rapidly in decline). And in Cape Breton it was coal that molded the spirit of its people.

Many of the songs popularized by the *Men of the Deeps* were the direct result of mine tragedies and rescue operations. But equally prominent – as though to "balance off" the serious reality of the dangers of mining – are those songs which express humour.

Workers subjected to the confines of close quarters and long hours have traditionally looked to humour and camaraderie for comfort and solace. America's famous industrial folklorist, George Korson, once observed: "Death, the colliery boss, the company, the miner's sense of security. Weighed down by these forces," noted Korson in *Minstrels of the Mine Patch*, "the miner felt frustrated and insignificant. But over any one of them, he acquired a temporary sense of superiority. In his triumph lay spontaneous humour."

Plain Ole Miner Boy reminds Cape Bretoners, in a humourous way, of the tough times endured during a series of severe strikes in the 1920s. Modeled on an American song, *Plain Ole Country Boy*, catchy phrases like the following show the humour that overrides the reality of depression when times are tough:

Ma makes their clothes from flour sacks
And things she can mend over;
And you can see old "Robin Hood"
Sometimes when they bend over.

Even the iron hand of the early company owners failed to dampen the resilient spirit of the Cape Breton coal miner. Until well into the twentieth century low wages forced miners to trade at company-owned stores. Such a system effectively placed the miner and his family in bondage to the company. The stores became known sarcastically as the "Pluck Me" because of the company's practice of garnishing wages to pay off accounts.

In Cape Breton, most of the Pluck Me stores were destroyed as a result of riots following the great strike of 1925. As John Mellor has noted, "Gone were the bulk foods and full sides of bacon and beef, racks of flour and sugar: gone too was the old potbellied stove, around which many . . . had loved to gather during the long winter months to smoke a pipe of tobacco and swap yarns."

Yet, the songs which recall that infamous page in Cape Breton history would seem to indicate that resilience overrode resentment and, instead, fostered nostalgia when the stores were gone.

We thought we were poorly treated boys
When no dough for work was found,
But many a briny tear was shed
When the Pluck Me burned to the ground.
. . . The Pluck Me Store (Ida MacAulay)

It was compassion that led Charlie MacKinnon to change the words of a traditional song that mocked scab labour imported from Newfoundland. The traditional song *The Honest Working Man* was harsh on those strikebreakers:

What raises high my dander, next door lives a
Newfoundlander
Whose wife you cannot stand her since high living she began,
Along with the railroad wrackers, also the codfish packers,
Who steal the cheese and crackers from the honest
working man.

In order not to offend his many Newfoundland friends, Charlie changed the words to the following:

I think I'll go meander with my friend the Newfoundlander;
His name it is John Allie; he's from the Codroy Valley.
He is the finest fellow to ever grace the land.
He works here in the coal mines with the honest working man.
. . . The Honest Working Man (Charlie MacKinnon)

Those special qualities of resilience, humour and compassion have always inspired the Cape Breton miner to look beyond depression and sadness to a brighter, more positive side of life and have contributed to the Cape Bretoner's sense of pride. The people of Cape Breton Island are a proud people: proud of their work, proud of their struggles and their ability to cope with hard times, and above all, proud of their island:

We are an island, a rock in a stream.
We are a people as proud as there's been,
. . . The Island (Kenzie MacNeil)

Cape Bretoners have an extraordinary love for the natural beauty of their island. Even the Gaelic-speaking forebearers who pioneered the coal industry on the island expressed their love for the island in song:

S'e Ceap Breatainn tir mo graidh;
Tir is aillidh leinn air thalamh

Cape Breton is the land of my love;
We deem it the most beautiful land on earth.

When Britain's famous actress Vanessa Redgrave attended a concert by the *Men of the Deeps*, she was struck by the sense of pride and hope emanating from the songs. Equating the plight of those employed by the dwindling coal industry in Cape Breton with the plight of those who had lost so much in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo, she invited the singing miners to bring their message of hope to the people of Kosovo in a festival to welcome the displaced refugees home.

The song which seemed to best express the message of hope which Ms. Redgrave wanted to impart to the returning refugees was the now famous anthem *Rise Again* composed by Leon Dubinsky:

When the waves roll on over the waters,
And the ocean cries,
We look to our sons and daughters
To explain our lives –
As if a child could tell us why
That as sure as the sunrise,
As sure as the sea,
As sure as the wind in the trees. . .

We rise again in the faces of our children;
We rise again in the voices of our song;
We rise again in the waves out on the ocean –
And then we rise again.

One can travel throughout the entire island of Cape Breton and encounter an inexhaustible array of musical talent: singers, step dancers, fiddlers and more – many of whom have made their mark on the world stage – and all of whom give testimony to the fact that music has indeed played an extraordinary role in shaping, defining and preserving the unique character of the people of Cape Breton. Industries may come and go, but the persevering spirit of the people of Cape Breton's mining communities will survive.

John C. O'Donnell, Musical Director of the *Men of the Deeps*, is a retired Professor of Music at St. Francis Xavier University

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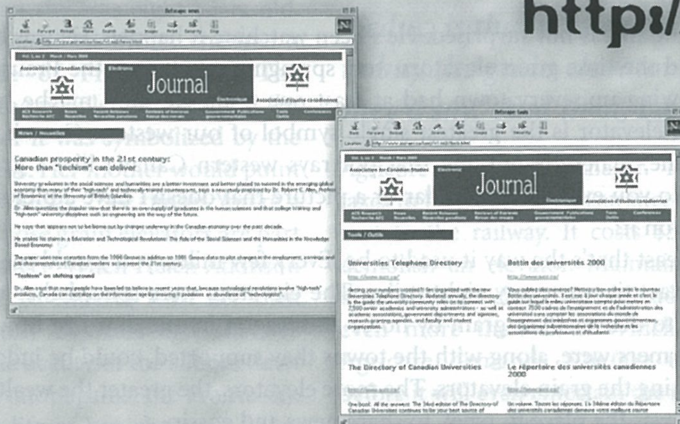

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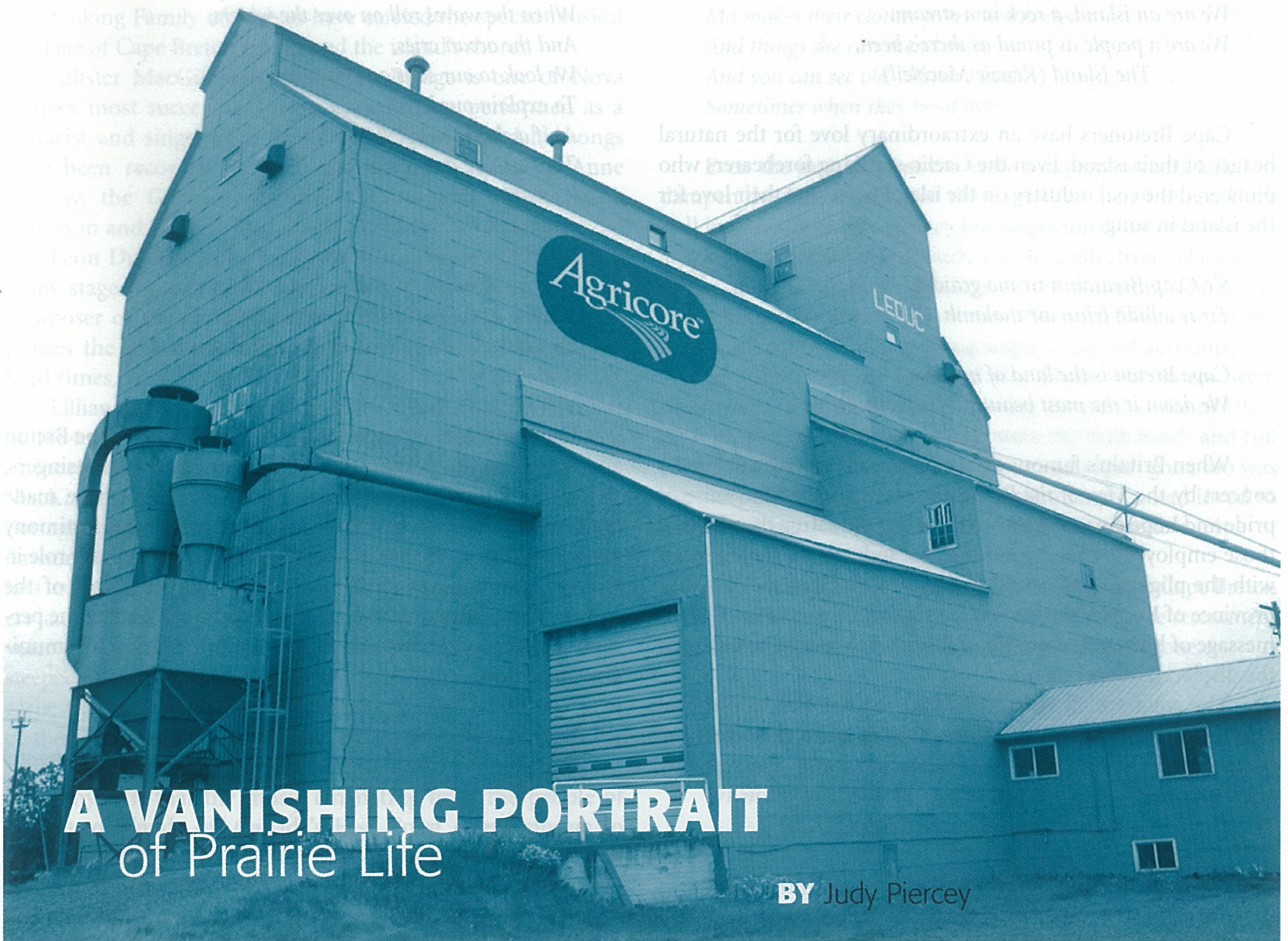

Photo by Diana MacLeod

A VANISHING PORTRAIT of Prairie Life

BY Judy Piercey

A FRIEND, PRAIRIE BORN AND BRED, WAS SITTING IN A GOVERNMENT WAITING ROOM, ADMIRING THE WINNING ENTRY IN A POSTER CONTEST. CANADIAN CHILDREN HAD BEEN ASKED TO SUBMIT THE IMAGES THAT REPRESENT CANADA TO THEM. THE WINNER WAS A GIRL FROM EDMONTON. SHE'D DRAWN PICTURES OF THE CN TOWER, A TOTEM POLE AND PARLIAMENT HILL. MY FRIEND THOUGHT SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH THE PICTURE. THERE WAS NO GRAIN ELEVATOR. HOW COULD A PICTURE, ESPECIALLY ONE DRAWN BY A PRAIRIE KID, NOT INCLUDE A GRAIN ELEVATOR?

Bob Caine is not surprised. He's been watching it happen. He was born in 1929 – around the time grain elevators were springing up all over the Prairies. When he was growing up, every town had at least one grain elevator, maybe two or three. "A grain elevator is the greatest single symbol of our western Canadian heritage," says Caine. "There is nothing that portrays western Canada like a grain elevator. Where do you ever see a calendar or a picture that doesn't have a picture of a grain elevator on it?"

At least that's the way it used to be. Every few miles, you would see at least one. To be exact, it was every eight miles. The elevators were spaced that way to allow farmers to deliver their grain by horse and wagon in one day. Just how prosperous those farmers were, along with the towns they supported, could be judged instantly by counting the grain elevators. The more elevators, the greater the wealth. The grain elevator was the place to meet, to share news and gossip.

Today, Tim Horton's is where Bob Caine and his buddies meet to shoot the breeze. It's also the unofficial 'world headquarters' for the Save the Elevator Committee in Leduc, Alberta. They are a grey-haired group of people who love to remember the days when grain elevators dominated the landscape. Bob Caine, like other Prairie travellers, counted on grain elevators to be his roadmap.

"As you went along," he says, "they were kind of a checkpoint on your trip. When you got to North Battleford, you'd know you were halfway to Saskatoon. And when you got to Davidson, there'd be seven or eight elevators, that was halfway between Saskatoon and Regina. And when you got to Weyburn, you knew you only had 54 miles left to go on your journey to Estevan."

It's a part of the past the Committee is determined to keep alive. They're fighting to save Leduc's one remaining grain elevator. They want to turn it into a museum. It's a fight against nearly impossible odds.

The grain elevator was the tallest building in every Prairie town. The name of the town was written boldly at the top. When Calvin Stienley was flying small planes, he relied on those tall, bold letters as a backup navigational aid. "I can remember getting lost in a storm. My radio went out. I had no idea where I was. And then I got down to 400 or 500 feet above, I could still see the ground and I passed the elevator at Richmond and I knew where I was." But more importantly, he thinks the grain elevator was a part of the town's identity. "It was almost as if you were a somebody by that identification mark."

The grain elevator was part of Helen Atkinson's own identity. Even though she didn't even see them while she was growing up. Mrs. Atkinson was born in the west in 1930, but moved to Ontario when she was eight years old. Her mother instilled in her children a strong sense of Prairie pride: The strength of the people, the land and the big sky. All of it was symbolized by the grain elevators. Her mother would point to pictures and say, "See those? You're a westerner. Those grain elevators are part of your heritage." When Helen Atkinson moved back to Alberta with her own growing family 20 years ago, she was moved by the beauty of the silhouette of the grain elevator against the Prairie sky. And for the life of her, she can't figure out why people are so blasé about allowing them to be torn down. "I suppose they've gotten used to the elevators being there." She pauses, emotion shining in her face, and smiles. "To me, they're special."

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It started two years ago when Agricore decided to shut down the Leduc Elevator. Like most of the old-fashioned wooden structures, the elevator was too small and too inefficient to compete in the modern world of agriculture. Grain companies are ripping down the old elevators as fast as they can to replace them with giant, computerized concrete structures that can do 10, or even 20, times the work of one. The Leduc elevator is one of 200 left standing across the Prairie provinces. But just 30 years ago, it was part of a much larger group: 6,000 grain elevators stood against the big Prairie sky from Manitoba to Alberta.

From Agricore's point of view, closing the Leduc elevator was a simple business decision. Once the decision was made, the company wanted to demolish it as quickly as possible. An elevator left standing is a liability, explains Phil Hyde, Agricore's regional manager. There are taxes to be paid, huge insurance bills and rent to the railway. It costs $50,000 to demolish an elevator. Maintaining one after it's been closed quickly adds up to even more than that. Which is why Agricore demands $20,000 up front before it will even entertain the notion of selling a grain elevator to conservation-minded groups. That way, if the group fails, Agricore isn't on the hook for the taxes or the rent.

Phil Hyde doesn't mince words. "How many museums can you have?" he asks. He's learned to be skeptical. Over the years, he's lost count of the number of inquiries he's received from people who want to save their elevators. But he can count on his fingers the ones that have succeeded. He knows it takes more than good intentions to save an elevator. "The ones that succeed have a tremendous commitment from within the group," he says.

When Bob Caine's group asked for a deadline extension, they also offered to pay the taxes on the elevator to give them time to raise the money. Hyde was impressed enough to grant them two extensions over the next seven months. Caine was jubilant. "I'm sure they had the bulldozers idling," he says, his eyes sparkling with the look of a man who relishes a good fight.

Caine is a cattle rancher and businessman. In a lifetime on the Prairies, he's had his share of triumphs and disappointments. His group is made up of like-minded people: people with faith that they will triumph; people who concentrate on remembering the triumphs and putting the failures behind them. They set out to raise the $20,000. Up against a tight deadline and public apathy, they started chipping in their own money. One farmer put in $1,000. Later on, he added another thousand. Two days before the May 31 deadline, they went to Agricore and handed Phil Hyde a certified cheque for $20,000.

"I would get on the phone to CPR in Montreal and say 'My name is Bob Caine and I'm calling from Leduc Alberta.' They'd say: 'Leduc, is that a town?' And I'd say, 'Yes, it is. I live there. We want to buy the grain elevator there and turn it into a museum.' 'Oh, they'd say.' And then, I'd be put on hold."

The group was in high spirits. But the work was just beginning. They had to move fast; saving a grain elevator is a complicated job. There are lots of hassles and many elements out of their control. Part of the complication is dealing with two landlords. Agricore owns the grain elevator, but the land on which it sits belongs to Canadian Pacific Railway. The group had to act fast to buy the land. The longer it took, the greater the chance that their $20,000 would be lost, gone to pay Agricore's rent to CPR. And buying the land turned out to be far more difficult than anyone had imagined.

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Caine remembers. "I would get on the phone to CPR in Montreal and say 'My name is Bob Caine and I'm calling from Leduc Alberta.' They'd say: 'Leduc, is that a town?' And I'd say, 'Yes, it is. I live there. We want to buy the grain elevator there and turn it into a museum.' 'Oh, they'd say.' And then, I'd be put on hold."

Eventually, Caine met personally with CPR's real estate manager in Calgary. "His name is Cole Crook, if you can imagine that," says Caine. "And he's an earnest young man, who really turned things around for us." Things started to happen. CPR had started out asking $168,000 for the land. The group knew it was too much. Cole Crook settled the matter quickly by calling in an appraiser. He valued the land at $98,000. That was good enough for CPR.

But now, the group had a different kind of struggle to contend with: internal discord. The cost of the land would actually be more than $98,000. There would be GST on top of that. Nearly $7,000 extra in taxes. Some people in the group were rankled at the very idea of turning that kind of money over the CPR. The way they figured it, the railway had made plenty of profit from western farmers for the past 100 years. And furthermore, the railway got the land for nothing in the first place. So it seemed a bit much to knock themselves out raising $105,000 to hand over the CPR and the federal government.

For the people in the group, working to save the grain elevator was a labour of love. And Bob Caine is the first to wear his heart on his sleeve. But at the same time, he understood that for both Agricore and CPR, this was just business.

For the people in the group, working to save the grain elevator was a labour of love. And Bob Caine is the first to wear his heart on his sleeve. But at the same time, he understood that for both Agricore and CPR, this was just business. "The truth is these are two big corporations, thoroughly decent in every thing they do, but they're business people. There's no give-aways. Every move has to be negotiated. They expect a fair deal, just as we expect a fair deal."

The matter came to head at a meeting in June. The group's volunteer lawyer, Len Zalapski, urged them not to drag out negotiations, dithering over the price of the land. Zalapski had dealt with CPR before. He told the gathered that the company could take longer to make a decision than 'even the government.'

He put it to them directly. "They almost have, in a sense, because of history and legislation, a godlike feeling about their presence in terms of the Canadian business environment. So, just keep in mind that your tools of negotiation with them are not normal. The leverage isn't there, there's nothing compelling them to do anything. They do it at their own pace. Realistically if things move at any kind of pace, you should give yourselves a pat on the back."

At the end of the night, the group voted 30-3 to pay CPR's asking price, plus GST. Bob Caine couldn't have been more pleased. He's got his eye on the big picture. "I believe once we show them what we can do, both Agricore and CPR will give us a substantial donation. I'm thinking five, ten, maybe twenty thousand. Yep, I bet they do."

The group will need every penny it can get. Caine figures it will cost $2 million to turn the grain elevator into a museum. "It's a daunting amount of money, especially when you're raising it with chicken dinners and bake sales and raffles." That's assuming people will come out and support the project. Not everyone agrees the grain elevator should be saved. Caine has tried to assure Leduc's mayor that his group will stick to the project. "The mayor is afraid that we'll go flat and council will be stuck with this old building that they'll have to demolish. He's afraid it

will be a liability. And some people are afraid council is going to put a big chunk of money into this museum project and all of a sudden, their taxes will go up. And even in my own family, we don't talk about the elevator. I think my kids are afraid I'm going to sell the farm to help save this thing."

He promises he won't do anything rash. But there's no question that saving this elevator is the last big fight of his life. He thinks it will take 10 years to get the museum up and running. He wonders if he'll live long enough to see that day. Still, he's dreaming of that day. And he's trying to infect everyone he meets with that dream.

Overcoming public apathy will be the biggest job of all. In just one generation, he's seen grain elevators disappear from public consciousness. So much so, that elementary kids don't even think of drawing them at all. It seems as if it took no time to go from using grain elevators as visual roadmaps to being lucky to even see one at all. Caine has no illusions, or even a desire, to turn back the clock. He just wants to people to wake up before it's too late. He believes the way to beat public apathy is by persuading every single person in Leduc that it's a personal responsibility to get involved.

"The other day I ran into one of my neighbours. I passed him in the truck and we rolled our windows down. He says 'What are you doing Bob, I don't see you around very much?'

I said 'I'm up to my shoulders trying to save the elevator.'

'Elevator? What elevator?' he says.

I said 'the Leduc elevator, Jerry. It needs to be saved. It's going to be demolished. There won't be an elevator left in the country.'

He shrugs and says 'well....'

I said 'Jerry, you should step up and put a nice bit of money into that elevator. Let me tell you why. You've got a houseful of girls in your family and when they start having babies, what a privilege it will be for you to take those kids by the hand and lead them through that elevator and show them where Great-Great-Great Grampa first came and sold his wheat. You should help preserve it so that you'll be able to show your grandkids how their ancestors made this country as great as it is.'

He nodded and says, 'Yeah, I guess so.'

"But he was glad to get rid of me. And this is the fact. This is the awesome task, the almost impossible task. To get to enough people, to talk to them that way. To keep the money coming. That's the responsibility this community has. Whether they know it or not."

Back at Tim Horton's, the group is planning its next move. There's an environmental assessment to be done. They're trying to get Agricore and CPR to foot the bill. Once that hurdle is out of the way, the fund-raising will begin in earnest. They've already approached the federal and provincial governments for financial help. They've got an architect ready to go. Every day, they're working out details. When they meet formally once a week, there's always progress to build upon.

Everyone in this group has persevered through one kind or another of business or farming trial. They're not to be daunted.

"You've just got to make up your mind that it's going to happen," says Bob Caine. "And stick with it. Just don't give up. Don't ever give up."

Judy Piercey is a reporter with CBC TV in Edmonton

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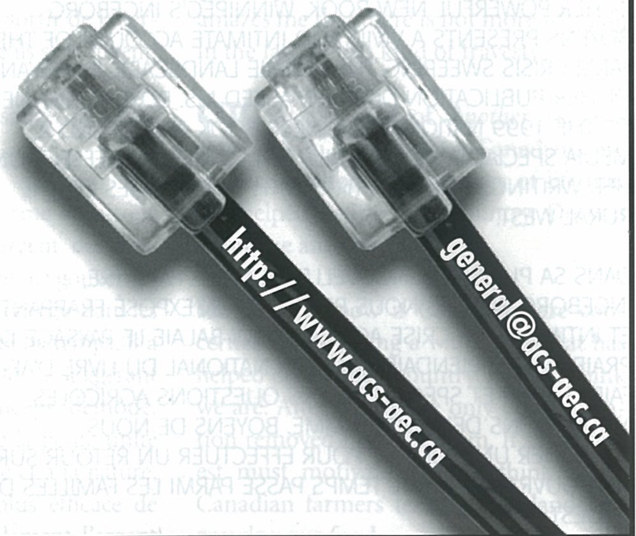
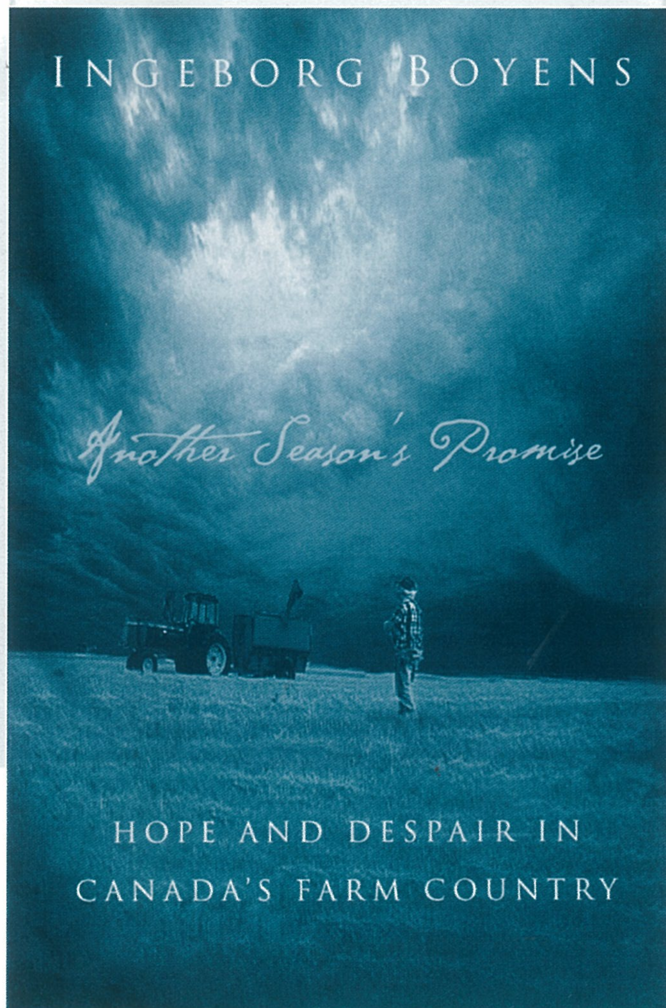


WITH INGEBORG BOYENS

author of *Another Season's Promise: Hope and Despair in Canada's Farm Country* published in August 2001 by Penguin Canada



IN HER POWERFUL NEW BOOK, WINNIPEG'S INGEBORG BOYENS PRESENTS A VIVID AND INTIMATE ACCOUNT OF THE FARM CRISIS SWEEPING THE PRAIRIE LANDSCAPE. IN ADVANCE OF HER PUBLICATION DATE, WE ASKED MS. BOYENS, WINNER OF THE 1999 NATIONAL BUSINESS BOOK AWARD AND A MEDIA SPECIALIST IN AGRICULTURAL ISSUES, TO REFLECT ON HER WRITINGS AND HER TIME WITH THE FAMILIES OF THE RURAL WEST.

DANS SA PUISSANTE NOUVELLE ŒUVRE À PARAÎTRE, INGEBORG BOYENS NOUS PRÉSENTE UN EXPOSÉ FRAPPANT ET INTIME DE LA CRISE AGRICOLE QUI BALAIE LE PAYSAGE DES PRAIRIES. RÉCIPIENDAIRE DU PRIX NATIONAL DU LIVRE D'AFFAIRES 1999 ET SPÉCIALISTE DES QUESTIONS AGRICOLES, NOUS AVONS DEMANDÉ À MME. BOYENS DE NOUS ACCORDER UN MOMENT POUR EFFECTUER UN RETOUR SUR SON OUVRAGE ET SON TEMPS PASSÉ PARMI LES FAMILLES DE L'OUEST RURAL.

CITC You begin each chapter with a few paragraphs detailing the lives of the Wieler family. Was this personal link to the real lives of farmers an attempt to better connect with readers from beyond the rural west?

IB Yes. Less than three percent of Canadians live on a farm. So it was not just a question of providing a glimpse into farm life for people outside the West, but also for the folks who live in western cities and have no connection with agriculture.

CITC From the coasts of Newfoundland, the Gaspésie and British Columbia, and through Cape Breton and much of the Canadian West, the loss of local industry has meant the death of community. As you explain in your book, once the farms are abandoned, the schools, hospitals and churches can no longer sustain themselves. Do you, a self-confessed 'urban Canadian', see a strong urban/rural split in understanding the meaning of such loss?

IB I worked as a documentary producer for "Country Canada," the CBC's national television current affairs program, for about nine years. And through that time, I was repeatedly struck by how little connection most people I would meet in my daily life had to stories that happened outside the urban perimeter. Most people these days know little about where their food comes from. They don't really understand that "Corn Flakes" come from those endless neat fields of cereal crops or that today's pigs are grown inside massive barns that look just like factories. A greater connection between urban and rural is essential if agriculture is to play a role in our society.

CITC Vous établissez d'importantes distinctions entre les attitudes prises à l'égard des fermiers en Amérique du Nord et celles adoptées en Europe. D'après vous, l'Europe maintient une forte loyauté envers ses fermiers, tandis que l'Amérique du Nord, en particulier le Canada, aurait tourné le dos à ses fermiers. Est-ce simplement une distinction « gouvernementale » démontrée par l'inégalité du financement ou une réflexion du sentiment populaire?

IB Il existe évidemment des gens qui se plaignent de la taille des subventions que reçoivent les fermiers européens mais la majorité des sociétés européennes appuient fortement leurs fermiers. La plupart des nations européennes ont ressenti l'impact des guerres sur leurs provisions. Aujourd'hui, elles ont un ardent désir d'être autosuffisantes en ce qui concerne la nourriture (un concept plutôt rare de ce côté-ci de l'océan). Aussi, puisqu'en Europe il y a tellement de gens qui vivent sur une surface si petite, ceux qui vivent en ville sont en fait voisins des fermiers. La Saskatchewan a la même superficie que la France et seulement un million de personnes y vivent, tandis que la France compte 56 millions d'habitants.

CITC Comme c'est le cas pour les pêcheries et les mines, les réalités économiques modernes sont peu sympathiques envers « un mode de vie » ou un sentiment communautaire. L'agriculture est-elle dans une situation où elle doit s'adapter si elle ne veut pas disparaître?

IB La dure réalité de l'agriculture a été de s'adapter ou de s'en sortir. Notre population rurale a déjà presque complètement disparue. Au dernier recensement de 1996, les chiffres indiquaient qu'il ne restait que 276 548 fermes au Canada, comparativement aux 733 000 fermes comptées en 1941. Sans aucun doute, d'autres industries ont aussi porté le poids de la rationalisation économique. Quand des mines ont été fermées, les mineurs ont dû s'ajuster, souvent en déménageant ailleurs. Une ferme n'est pas un lieu de travail conventionnel puisqu'elle est aussi une maison. Les fermiers perdent donc à la fois leur emploi et leur foyer. Les pêcheries ont probablement plus en commun avec l'agriculture. Par contre, il y a eu un support significatif de la part du gouvernement afin d'aider les pêcheurs à s'ajuster et assurer l'existence de petites communautés.

CITC You describe how the usual natural optimism of the farmer has been replaced with a 'depressing inevitability'. You write about abusive levels of stress, high divorce rates, depression, substance abuse and suicide. Is this crisis garnering the attention it deserves?

IB No, it is not garnering the attention it deserves. For most people, it is a case of out-of-sight, out-of-mind.

CITC The net income in 2000 for the average Saskatchewan family farm was predicted to be less than zero. Was this prediction accurate?

IB When the numbers were finally in, they did show some improvements in Saskatchewan's RNI for 2000, thanks largely to the government's AIDA program and other programs. Government program payments were up almost 45 percent from 1999 to $2.8 billion, the highest level since 1993 when the Liberals were first elected. The numbers fluctuated with every quarter in 2000; enough to say Saskatchewan's income was stable at the depressed levels reached over two earlier years of decline. Regardless of what the income numbers say, farm families on the Prairies can survive only if they have some other income.

CITC With your years of city living, did you develop a deeper appreciation of farming life through your research for the book?

IB Absolutely. Doing the research for this book has totally changed how I look at food and how I look at the people who take the incredible risks to grow it for me.

CITC Vous expliquez comment les subventions, les coûts élevés et les prix stagnants des aliments se sont combinés pour menacer l'agriculture dans l'Ouest. Y a-t-il un soulagement en vue?

IB Permettez-moi d'espérer : je pense qu'il y a un intérêt grandissant venant de la part du consommateur pour la manière dont est cultivée et préparée la nourriture. Les consommateurs veulent de la nourriture bonne, saine et nutritive. Cela veut souvent dire de la nourriture qui est sans pesticides, produite localement et en provenance d'animaux traités humainement. Les fermiers ont été pris dans une roue sans fin qui fait en sorte qu'ils doivent payer de plus en plus pour cultiver leurs aliments, tandis que le prix des commodités établi au niveau international continue de tomber. Si les fermiers donnent aux consommateurs ce qu'ils veulent, ils ont peut-être une chance de se sortir de la terrible situation dans laquelle ils se trouvent.

CITC Qu'est-ce qui peut sauver la ferme des Prairies?

IB Si cela était facile, la ferme aurait été sauvée il y longtemps. L'argent du gouvernement n'est pas suffisant. Le gouvernement a choisi d'investir son énergie dans les agri-affaires globales. En même temps, il a ignoré la « ferme familiale », suggérant qu'elle représente un concept démodé. Ottawa devrait réaliser que la petite unité familiale, accordée à la terre et à la nature, représente la manière la plus efficace de produire la nourriture. Idéalement, l'argent devrait être alloué à des recherches orientées sur les producteurs et il devrait être utilisé afin de soutenir de véritables efforts de diversification et de valeur ajoutée.

CITC How deep do both frustration with the federal government and a sense of Western alienation run on the Prairies?

IB Western alienation is alive and well, though much more strongly felt in the rural areas of the West - witness the last election results.

CITC Your writing injects an element of romance with Prairie life to the remarkable demands of operating a farm. Given the disappearing communities and the harshness of farming life, do you hope to make readers feel a sense of loss for a people they may hardly know?

IB Thank you. I have tried to inject a little romance into the idea of Prairie life, but hopefully not too much sentimentality. I was deeply touched by the stoic pride the Wielers showed even when life seemed impossibly difficult. I hope I have conveyed some of that.

CITC Through your time with the families of the Prairies, what has left the deepest impression with you?

IB We may have this sense that farmers are always whining. This research has shown me they are actually exactly the opposite. Quiet. Uncomplaining. Proud. You've seen the pictures of that incredible grasshopper infestation on the news. It amazes me that there is not more whining in the face of this kind of travesty.

CITC At the end of *Another Season's Promise* you ask whether Canadians are concerned about losing a way of life that has helped define their country. Do you know the answer?

IB I don't know if Canadians are concerned about losing a way of life that has helped define their country. I like to think we are. After all, we are only one generation removed from the farm. If self-interest must motivate us, let's think about Canadian farmers tending our land and growing our food.

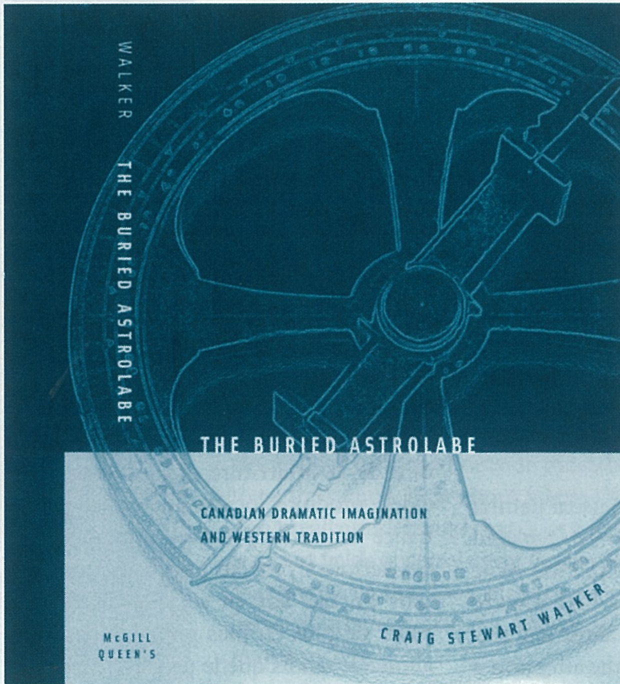
CRAIG STEWART WALKER'S

The Buried Astrolabe: Canadian Dramatic Imagination and Western Tradition.

(McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001)

REVIEWED BY Anne F. Nothof, Professor of English at Athabasca University

THE TITLE OF CRAIG WALKER'S EXTRAORDINARY EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN DRAMA IS AN APT INDICATOR OF ITS IMAGINATIVE RANGE: IT GUIDES HIS JOURNEY OF EXPLORATION OF THE WORK OF SIX DRAMATISTS, AND FUNCTIONS AS A TROPE FOR THE WAYS IN WHICH TRADITION INFORMS THEIR MYTHOPOEIA. THE PROLOGUE TO THE BURIED ASTROLABE BEGINS WITH AN ANECDOTE ABOUT THE DISCOVERY OF CHAMPLAIN'S ASTROLABE ONE MONTH AFTER CONFEDERATION IN A FARMER'S FIELD IN THE OTTAWA RIVER VALLEY, ESTABLISHING THE TANGENTIAL APPROACH THAT CHARACTERIZES THE STUDY AS A WHOLE: APPROACHING THE CENTRAL ISSUES FROM UNUSUAL AND ENGAGING POINTS OF VIEW THAT DRAW THE READER INTO THE MORE EXACTING ANALYSES TO FOLLOW. THE IMAGE OF THIS ASTROLABE APPEARS ON THE STRIKING DUST JACKET OF THE TEXT, AND INTRIGUINGLY IS ALSO THE PROMINENT IMAGE ON THE COVER OF THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN STUDIES 34.4 – PERHAPS AN INDICATOR OF ITS RESONANCE AS A NATIONAL SYMBOL. WALKER SIMILARLY STRUCTURES EACH OF THE SIX CHAPTERS AROUND A COMPELLING TROPE THAT PROMPTS A CLEAR VIEW OF THE SEMINAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH PLAYWRIGHT, WITHOUT PRECLUDING AN INVESTIGATION OF THEIR AMBIGUITIES AND COMPLEXITIES.



In the preface, Walker clearly establishes his main objective, which is to explore the nature of the mythopoeic context "within which a dramatic imagination could reconfigure Canadian experience in its own image, rather than a conspicuously borrowed disguise" (vii). He provides a rationale for the chronological ordering of the playwrights, and he also posits the criteria for his choice, those whom he regards as Canada's "most important" – James Reaney, Michael Cook, Sharon Pollock, Michel Tremblay, George F. Walker, and Judith Thompson: they have a substantive body of "excellent" work; and he has something to say about them. That his choice reifies a (critically challenged) canon established in anthologies of Canadian plays, is not an issue, nor does he attempt to cover regions, genders, languages. As is characteristic of the text as a whole, Walker makes his case confidently and convincingly. The Buried Astrolabe is not, however, an "introductory" study, as he claims: it provides an exhaustive analysis of the six playwrights in terms of a Western tradition that includes forays into the philosophies of Plato, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Sartre, Foucauld, the plays and poetry of Yeats, Synge, Eliot, Jacobean City Comedy and Greek tragedy, providing for readers who may be initially not much inclined towards Canadian drama a

rich experience of Western culture within which to locate their own. Walker is an unabashed proselytizer.

It is not lost on Walker, however, that the astrolabe was also the colonizer's instrument of mapping, in order to structure and control a land already occupied by others.

Like his mentor, Northrop Frye, he constructs an "anatomy of criticism" on the foundations of the Bible and William Blake. In identifying the "isotopies" in Canadian drama, he identifies his own as "a conceptual place in which self-reflexiveness may be resolved into a coherent vision."

Walker begins each chapter with an epilogue – eclectic quotes from Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Joni Mitchell, D. H. Lawrence that underscore the motifs he identifies in the plays under analysis. Perhaps the least fortuitous choice is that of Douglas LePan's poetry for the preface, which now appears dated in its images of a "desperate wilderness," and which, despite Walker's contentions, does not really function as a pervasive organizing principle for his text, although LePan's poem entitled "Astrolabe" does provide another dimension for the unifying trope – that the past predicates present and future courses for a nation's culture. It is not lost on Walker, however, that the astrolabe was also the colonizer's instrument of mapping, in order to structure and control a land already occupied by others.

Walker does not shy away from large statements, which he launches with conviction and underscores with evidence; e.g., "Hence, the most auspicious eras for theatre have been those in which history and location have yielded a strong and relatively unified sense of self-consciousness and, accordingly, a widely recognized lexicon of dramatic conventions." He recuperates unabashedly the terminology of romanticism and spirituality in order to locate the sublime in the Canadian experience, and casts a skeptical eye on more fashionable postmodern precepts, particularly the recent attempt to deconstruct Canadian "nationalism" as socio-political regions of race, ethnicity, and gender: "Personally, I can't see how that solution is a whit more promising than the discredited monolithic construction of national identity. To identify oneself electively in terms of such materialistic categories is one thing: but to universally ascribe identity to others wholly in terms of 'standpoint politics' is not only illiberal and dehumanizing by also demonstrably inaccurate."

Similarly, Walker identifies the mythopoeic characteristics of each playwright's work, his generalizations supported by a rigorous analysis of structure and style, and candidly "riding on the coattails" of those critics whose analyses "cannot be surpassed." Reaney's central myth is founded in Yeats's "ceremony of innocence," and in the vision that "a properly trained talent for metaphoric thought is a sort of alchemy through which the dress of the material, quotidian world is transformed into the precious spiritual element necessary to our redemption." Walker's summaries of Reaney's "major characteristics" are succinct and compelling, and his judgments unequivocal: The Donnelly Trilogy, "which undoubtedly stands as one of the greatest accomplishments in Canadian drama" is "a mythically resonant, socially defining, major historical epic." Michael Cook's Newfoundland, like Synge's Aran Islands, "exists in a state of poetic tension: a 'fallen' world haunted by its noble promise; a harsh and often brutal place that, not withstanding, still bears traces of an alternative, idealized cosmos against which the deficiencies of ordinary experience may be measured." In Sharon Pollock's plays, Walker locates the concern with "the difficulty of establishing truth, and hence an integrated self, in circumstances where personal agency is badly corrupted by the insidious and ubiquitous systems of social power and by self-serving distortions of reality." He interprets her plays in terms of "elegiac romance" in which "the narrator is involved in an act of self-recovery that is accomplished by telling the tale of his erstwhile hero" – a process of "careful, conscious, voluntary disillusionment." Walker identifies Michel Tremblay's "existential mythopoeia" in his construction of an "anti-mythology" as a means of overcoming "a sense of alienation and to create a healthy, whole self-image." He draws on Sartre's explication of Genet to illuminate Tremblay's gay texts. George Walker's "Postmodern City Comedy" he sees as fundamental articulations of contemporary conundrums: "what should or should not be destroyed in the name of creative progress; the difficulty of reconciling our distrust of exploitative social institutions and authorities with our need for civic order; the prospects of forging an ethical society in a world seemingly governed by moral relativism; the tension between specific human affection and abstract social idealism." He sees in Judith Thompson's plays a chthonian impulse – an exploration of psychic warfare, and "subliminal connections among the desires and taboos of the unconscious." He concludes his analysis with a humanist exhortation – one that underlies the exegesis of The Buried Astrolabe as a whole: "to transcend the barriers between our conscious selves and these four last things [death, judgment, heaven and hell] hidden deep within marks the first step towards transcending the barriers between us and our fellow human beings." The critic too has his mythopoeic vision.

He recuperates unabashedly the terminology of romanticism and spirituality in order to locate the sublime in the Canadian experience, and casts a skeptical eye on more fashionable postmodern precepts.

EMERGING COMMUNITIES, Fading Memories

BY Leonard J. Evenden

SOME FIVE OR SIX GENERATIONS HAVE PASSED SINCE CONFEDERATION. DURING THIS TIME, IN TERMS OF SHEER TERRITORY, CANADA GREW TO BE ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST NATIONS. THIS FACT UNDERLIES THE COMMON RHETORIC THAT THIS IS A COUNTRY RICH IN NATURAL RESOURCES. BUT WHAT OCCURS IN NATURE BECOMES A RESOURCE ONLY WHEN A USE CAN BE FOUND FOR IT. PHYSICAL SIZE MAY WELL BE RELATED TO MATERIAL ABUNDANCE, BUT IT MAY ALSO BE AN IMPEDIMENT TO DEVELOPMENT. IF ABUNDANT RESOURCES REPRESENT DEVELOPMENTAL ADVANTAGES, THE DIFFICULTIES OF CONNECTING POINTS OF EXTRACTION, OF PROCESSING, MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION, MUST BE WEIGHED AS THE DISADVANTAGES OF SIZE. ANALOGOUSLY, GROWTH WILL BE COMPLEMENTED BY DECLINE, AND BOTH WILL HAVE CONTINUALLY SHIFTING PATTERNS OF CONCENTRATION AND ACTIVITY.

As we strive to improve the productive base and quality of life, we must attempt to accommodate the shifts that are necessary in the forms of economic and social activity, their locations and organization. Industries of primary extraction, such as mining, fishing and lumbering, upon which we have depended greatly, have given rise to distinctive forms of community. These are scattered widely across the land and along the coastlines. Agriculture has provided the basis for a way of life and economy in which, historically, individual households have had a major stake in capitalization, planning for investment, physical labour and marketing. If these principal sectors together underlie a Canadian way of thinking about survival and prosperity in this middle and high latitude land, they must be accorded the necessary attention for their further development. But new problems and approaches, from issues of the addition of value to raw products of the first stage of extraction, or of habitat destruction and conservation, must now be taken into account in a way that may not have been so fully appreciated before. And these in turn must be complemented by new abilities to connect Canada with other parts of the world in complementary relationships of trade, the movement of peoples and political association.

Unlike territory, Canada's population is modest in size. It is more and more concentrated in and around a few major centres, and it will have to develop itself increasingly around education, training and skills. New belief systems will have to be understood and accommodated. But in so doing there is a real danger that individuals, and hence the population as a whole, will lose sight of the vastness of the country, with all that implies as to its physical nature. Newcomers once experienced the difficulties of travel by river, rail and trek, and the trials and impressions of such journeys stayed with families and communities as narratives of experience. Out of such experience was the character of the country created. This is mostly behind us now, and memories are fading. Today, in contrast, people know certain places well, but live largely indoors with little obligation to engage in hard physical toil. Newcomers may spend a few hours in an aircraft, descend from the skies to a paved and settled landscape, and be whisked by automobile or bus to a prepared location, perhaps without even going out of doors. The settling-in process is locally based, and the memory of the journey to the new home connects a location overseas with one here. A quite different narrative of the Canadian experience is thus being imagined, based upon a mental map of a few major clusters of population here, linked with points overseas, whether as points of origin or simply as points of business or recreational contact.

Such a view presents questions as to how the community is becoming transformed, and it also suggests many opportunities. If knowledge of Canada, as it has been experienced and interpreted to date, has emphasized its scale and the physical basis of prosperity, a new image is emerging that will sketch the outlines of an alternative vision. Who knows what shapes and colours this image will take, but it is bound to differ from the old one. It will be metropolitan in focus, tone and nuance, and less concerned with outlying national territories except as places to visit for recreation or long-distance exploitation. Experiential resources will rise in importance as compared with the extraction of naturally occurring materials, and may, in an educational way, support the growing awareness of the needs of the natural environment. A different calculus will inform how the physical base is to be appraised and thus transformed into a resource base, or preserved for its own survival. Let us urge that due attention be given to the concerns that new patterns of consumption of the nation's spatial resources are bound to produce, including the impact that such exploitation may have upon the lives of those who already inhabit these lands.

Leonard J. Evenden is a Professor of Geography at Simon Fraser University

Conference on the 20th Anniversary *of the* Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

April 17, 2002 will mark the 20th anniversary of the patriation of the Constitution and the birth of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Association for Canadian Studies (ACS) will commemorate this important date in Canada's history with a major conference to be held at the congress centre in Ottawa, April 17-20, 2002. The conference will examine the many dimensions of the Charter and its evolving influence on Canadian society. It will also explore the events that led up to patriation.

Participants will include several of the major actors involved in the enactment of the Canadian constitution (1982), as well as leading academics, journalists, elected officials, public policy analysts and jurists.

Partners and organizations involved in the conference include the departments of Canadian Heritage, Justice Canada and Foreign Affairs and International Trade, The Canadian Bar Association, universities and law schools, major Canadian law firms, community, 'Human Rights' and non-governmental (NGO) organizations as well as research organizations and the media.

A special banquet dinner is also being organized separately to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Charter on Wednesday, April 17, 2002.

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Une conférence sur le 20e anniversaire *de la* Charte canadienne des droits et libertés

Le 17 avril 2002 marquera le 20e anniversaire du rapatriement de la constitution et de la naissance de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés. L'Association d'études canadiennes (AEC) soulignera cette date importante de l'histoire canadienne lors d'une conférence qui aura lieu au Centre des congrès d'Ottawa du 17 au 20 avril 2002. La conférence portera sur les différentes dimensions de la Charte ainsi que sur l'évolution de son influence sur la société canadienne. Elle explorera aussi les événements qui ont mené au rapatriement de la constitution.

Parmi les participants, seront présents plusieurs acteurs importants impliqués dans la promulgation de la Constitution canadienne (1982), ainsi que des enseignants et des professeurs de marque, des journalistes, des analystes politiques et des juristes.

Parmi les organisations impliquées dans la conférence, on retrouve les ministères du Patrimoine canadien, de Justice Canada et celui des Affaires étrangères et du commerce international, l'Association du barreau canadien, des universités et écoles de droit ainsi que d'importantes firmes nationales d'avocats. De plus, des organisations communautaires, des droits de l'homme et non-gouvernementales (ONG) de même que des organismes de recherche et les médias seront de la partie.

Le mercredi 17 avril, un banquet spécial sera organisé en parallèle avec la conférence afin de célébrer le 20e anniversaire de la Charte.

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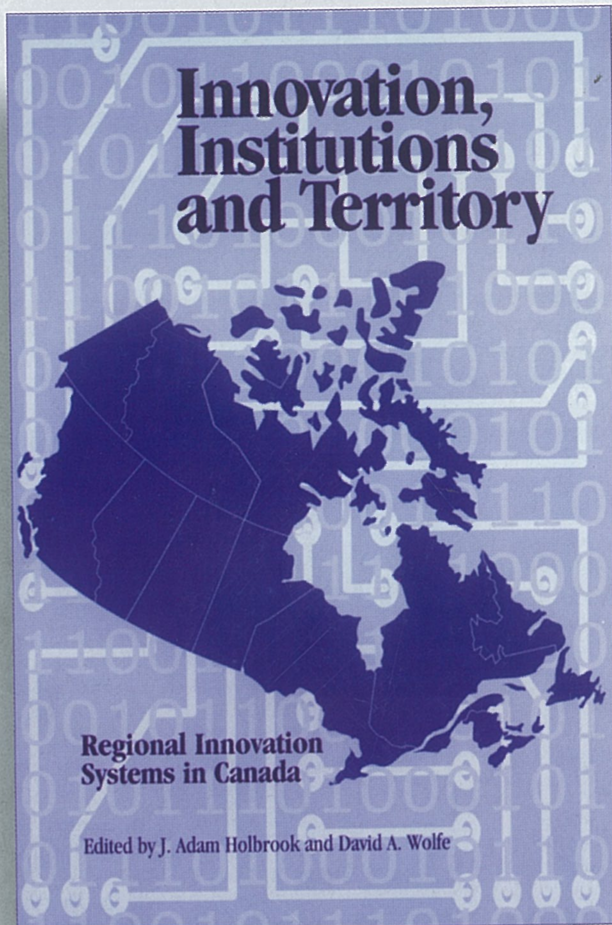

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